

Digging Deeper XVIII: The War and the Law

Since July 2004, **United for Peace of Pierce County** has been conducting “Digging Deeper,” a Monday-night book discussion group, often in the form of a study circle. Topics have included peak oil, climate change, the corporation, and Iran, as well as abiding themes of war, peace, politics, and social change. Occasionally, we have spent several weeks reading longer works, like Daniel Yergin’s *The Prize* or Robert Fisk’s *The Great War for Civilisation*. On July 3, 2006, *Digging Deeper XVIII* will begin a three-week discussion of a group of books that examine the Iraq war and the laws governing warfare. This study circle is inspired by the courageous act of Lt. Ehren Watada of the United States Army, who announced at a press conference in Tacoma on June 7, 2006, that he will refuse to deploy to Iraq because the war there is “illegal under American law.” **UFPPC invites you to join in an exploration of the legality of the Iraq war and of actions taken in the name of the Iraq war.**

- **Michael Byers, *War Law: Understanding International Law and Armed Conflict* (Grove Press, 2006).** The author of *War Law* is professor of law at Duke University and director of the law school’s JD/LL.M. Program in International and Comparative Law. His new volume details the history of laws governing war, and of the United Nations Charter of 1945. He devotes three chapters to the complicated issue of self-defense, and three more to the question of humanitarian intervention. The final chapter addresses recent U.S. foreign policy. Brendan Driscoll of *Booklist* writes: “For readers used to hearing political justifications for military action, such legal nuance may be a refreshingly concrete respite from familiar logic-of-power arguments. Yet this account is nevertheless about politics—in particular, about the politicizing of particular legal positions—and as such remains consistent with Byers’s earlier work, which dealt with the challenge to international harmony posed by the contradiction of legal equality and socioeconomic inequality. Succinct, highly readable, and important.”
- **Noam Chomsky, *Failed States: The Abuse of Power and the Assault on Democracy* (Metropolitan Books, 2006).** “Forget Iraq and Sudan—America is the foremost failed state, argues the latest polemic from America’s most controversial Left intellectual. Chomsky (*Imperial Ambitions*) contends the U.S. government wallows in lawless military aggression (the Iraq war is merely the latest example); ignores public opinion on everything from global warming to social spending and foreign policy; and jeopardizes domestic security by under-funding homeland defense in favor of tax cuts for the rich and by provoking hatred and instability abroad that may lead to terrorist blowback or nuclear conflict. Ranging haphazardly from the Seminole War forward, Chomsky’s jeremiad views American interventionism as a pageant of imperialist power-plays motivated by crass business interests. Disdaining euphemisms, he denounces American ‘terror’ and ‘war crimes,’ castigates the public-bamboozling ‘government-media propaganda campaign’ and floats comparisons to Mongols and Nazis. Chomsky’s fans will love it, but even mainstream critics are catching up to the substance of his take on Bush Administration policies; meanwhile his uncompromising moral sensibility, icy logic, and withering sarcasm remain in a class by themselves. Required reading for every thoughtful citizen.” —*Publisher’s Weekly*.
- **Robert Jay Lifton, Richard Falk, and Irene Gendzier, eds., *Crimes of War: Iraq* (Nation Books, 2006 paperback).** This volume promises “a comprehensive legal, historical, and psychological exploration of the war in Iraq from the same editorial team whose 1971 *Crimes of War* was a landmark book about Vietnam and the revelation of American war crimes. The editors apply standards of international criminal law, as set forth at Nuremberg after World War II, and by subsequent developments regarding individual responsibility and accountability. . . . Explorations of psychology and human behavior include levels of motivation and response in connection with torture . . . the phenomenon of the atrocity-producing situation in both Vietnam and Iraq . . . the behavior of doctors and medics . . . emerging testimony of American veterans of Iraq concerning the confusions of the mission, and the widespread killing of civilians; and accounts of broadening unease and psychological disturbance among men and women engaged in combat.”

MEETING SCHEDULE — Mondays from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on July 3, 10, & 17 at the Mandolin Café, 3923 S. 12th St., Tacoma, WA.

No charge for participation. Books available for borrowing or purchase. Contact Mark Jensen (jensenmk@plu.edu; 253-756-7519).