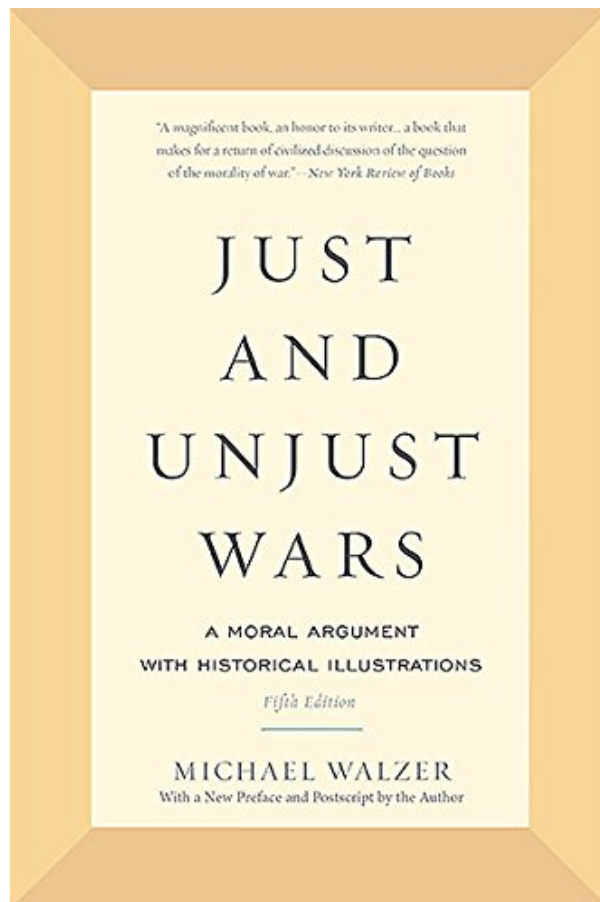
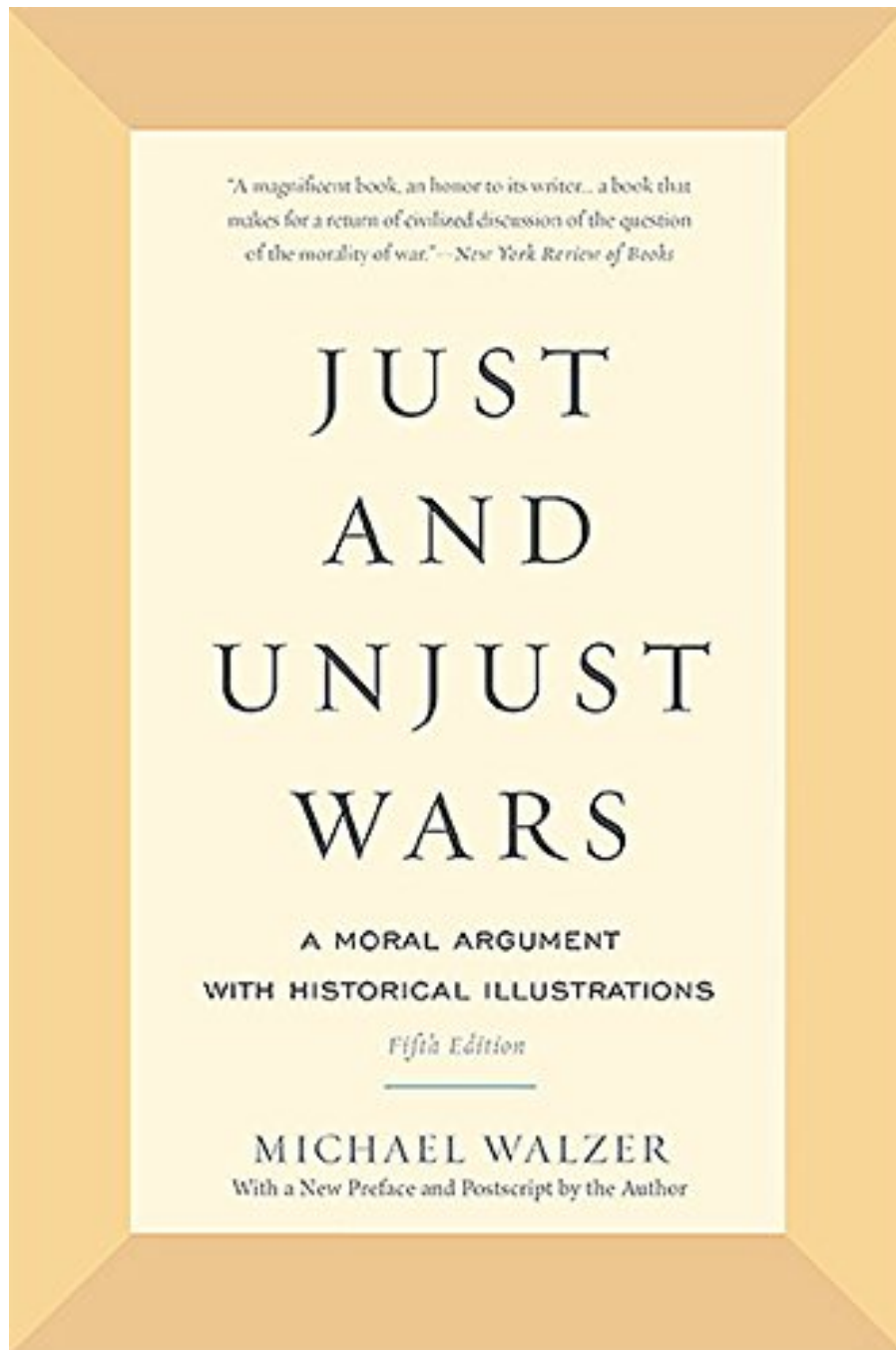


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Review

"A magnificent book, an honor to its writer... a book that makes for a return of civilised discussion of the question of the morality of war." New York Review of Books "A passionate defense of the old principle of non-combatant immunity... (He) is both thorough and persuasive in his exploration of a very intricate subject." Washington Post"

About the Author

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Just and Unjust Wars forever changed the way we think about the ethics of conflict. First published in 1977 and now brought up to the present with a new preface and postscript, this classic work by political philosopher Michael Walzer examines the moral issues that arise before, during, and after the wars we fight. Reaching from the Athenian attack on Melos, to the Mai Lai massacre, to Afghanistan and beyond, Walzer mines historical accounts and the testimony of participants, decision makers, and victims to explain when war is justified and what ethical limitations apply to those who wage it.

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Most helpful customer reviews

40 of 42 people found the following review helpful.

Great insight

By G B

Professor Michael Walzer examines just war theory in a clear, methodical and rigorous fashion. Concrete examples clarify and flesh out the theory. It covers not just conventional warfare, but also several offshoots that have become much more relevant since the 1950: peacetime reprisals, guerrilla warfare, and terrorism. In addition, he dissects the notions of "war crimes" and official/bureaucrat/citizen responsibility for war. These analyses are especially useful as today's violent conflicts become more fragmented and in some ways "messier". Walzer's viewpoint is definitely from a left-of-center perspective (not *far* left), but I think people of any political persuasion would find reading it to be extremely insightful. He doesn't shy away from controversy yet his arguments are always well-reasoned. Highly recommended to both the layman and political scientist/philosopher, especially as we enter the uncertainty of the post-9/11 world.

33 of 34 people found the following review helpful.

Still relevant today (at 27 years old)

By Joel Velasco

After reading the Oct 2004 review of Seth J. Frantzman, I feel the need to answer his question of why Walzer does not deal with the question of Sept 11. The simple answer is that the book was first published in 1977. It is true that it is now in its third edition, but even the newest edition is 2000 and it is simply a reprint of the old edition with a new preface added. Granted, the reviewer is correct that Walzer focuses on Western conflicts (though again, the Iran-Iraq conflict also hadn't started yet when Walzer was writing) but I would have to say "Go with what you know." Walzer does a good job of setting the context for the situations that he does discuss.

In fact, the reviewer's comment that "The question of 'just wars' was obviously aimed at the recent Iraq war" just makes Walzer's case for him. The fact that his text is still clearly relevant today makes his historical points that much more powerful. In our philosophy department there has been a major resurgence in teaching Walzer in the last 3 years for just this reason.

Even though Walzer's opinions on the current US-Iraqi war can be fairly clearly determined from "Just and Unjust Wars", if you want a more explicit version of what he would say, you should pick up "Arguing About War" which is Walzer's 2004 book of recent essays. He discusses the Iraq war explicitly, although books published in May are already a bit dated. Walzer's philosophical arguments are timeless though and need to be thought about and discussed.

I would highly recommend the book and recommend that the reader keep current conflicts in mind while reading the historical episodes of other conflicts to help put Walzer's arguments in perspective.

27 of 29 people found the following review helpful.

As a cadet at West Point, I read this in 1991

By A Customer

This book was required reading in philosophy class when I was a sophomore at West Point. I recently pulled the book out of storage to review it. Was our invasion of Afghanistan a "Just War"? Would an invasion of Iraq be a "Just War"? It covers more about war than just these topics (and not specifically these actions), and it reveals that just and unjust war/fighting is not always so easy to define.

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