

The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of St. Augustine *presents a free*

Lecture-Discussion Series

offered in hope of better understanding and enabling conversation on the fraught topic of the

Middle East in Crisis

**Saturdays, from 3 to 5pm,
in the UUFSA sanctuary, 2487 A1A South, 32080**

Nov. 9th: Dr. John Young

**“Contested Language: The Use and Abuse of Historical Terminology
in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict”**

This presentation explores historical claims made by Israelis and Palestinians, with a particular focus on contested terms used by both national groups in the conflict. The talk will demonstrate that the co-opting of historical terminology held sacred by one side or the other has served to escalate conflict and forestall diplomacy.

Nov. 23rd: Dr. Rena Alcalay

**“The Paradox of Reason and Compassion:
Engaging with Controversial Beliefs”**

Join us as we explore strategies for tackling today’s most divisive ethical issues by blending sharp rational analysis with compassionate listening. Inspired by Lewis Carroll’s 1895 *What the Tortoise Said to Achilles*, we’ll delve into the paradox of holding firm to some of our most basic principles, such as the principle that empirical data explains facts about the world, with compassion for different, sometimes even contrary, beliefs—a puzzle with surprising relevance to modern-day skepticism, from vaccine hesitancy to flat-Earth beliefs. We’ll discuss approaches for fostering inclusive, community-focused conversations that balance prioritizing relationships over being right, while acknowledging the ethical complexities involved in addressing transgressions.

Dec. 7th: Dr. Katherine Sweet

“The Ethics of War and the Virtues of the State”

War is always and everywhere a non-ideal activity, a response to imperfect worldly conditions, and a kind of imperfect choice itself. Yet, some wars are downright good, and certainly some are better than others. So says the natural law ethicists who follow Thomas Aquinas, anyway. In this lecture, I will briefly distinguish between ethics and morality, showing how war has been discussed frequently as a kind of moral issue, when traditional virtue theorists such as Aristotle and Plato framed political governance and state action in ethical terms. I will then explain in detail Aquinas’ theory of the ethics of war. I will conclude with my own thoughts, aiming towards a combined framework that takes account of what I call “the virtues of the state”, which can explain our intuitions about real-world cases.

Please join us for this opportunity to learn and question!