could help cover travel costs. She also offered practical advice for presenters: "be sure to bring a flash drive, charger for your device(s) and, clicker for your presentation, and HDMI cord to ensure your presentation runs smoothly".

When asked about preparation, Bryan emphasized the importance of following instructions and staying in touch with organizers: "Review the conference guidelines carefully to make sure you adhere to them, and don't be afraid to reach out if you have any questions or concerns," she advised, noting that follow-up emails can be extremely helpful for easing logistical stress and ensuring a smooth experience. Bryan also highlighted the broader value of participation: "Participating helps you to build communication skills, network, and learn from those around you. It also makes for a memorable conference experience!" she said.

Finally, she reminded us that abstracts of 250 words, outlining original research, projects, or panel proposals, along with a current C.V. should be submitted via the official submission form by Friday, January 16, 2026. Final papers are due on Friday, February 13, 2026, and should be 15 double-spaced pages, excluding endnotes. The registration fee for presenters is $50.

April 3-4, 2026: Peace in the Age of Forever Wars

On April 3-4, 2026, Temple University will host the symposium "Peace in the Age of Forever Wars" at the Center City campus. Organized as part of the *Challenging War* initiative, the event will bring together scholars from various disciplines to reflect on enduring questions of war and peace. The symposium is organized under the auspices of CENFAD. To learn more about the ideas and goals behind this project, I spoke with **Dr. Lee-Ann Chae** and **Dr. Petra Goedde**, the symposium's organizers. More information about the symposium and the Challenging War initiative can be found at challengingwar.com.

Marcella Aline Toledo: Hello Dr. Chae and Dr. Goedde, I really appreciate you taking the time to respond to these questions. Could you start by introducing yourselves and sharing a bit about your academic background and main areas of research?

Dr. Lee-Ann Chae: I'm an Associate Professor of Philosophy at Temple. I work in social and political philosophy, focusing on pacifism, nonviolent resistance, and just war theory. The central question I consider is: What would it take for us to live together without war and large-scale violence? I show how hope, trust, and solidarity help to orient

us towards a nonviolent and peaceful future, and I raise critical questions about the necessity and utility of using violence as a response to violence.

Dr. Petra Goedde: I'm a professor of history specializing in US foreign relations and transnational history with a special emphasis on the intersection between state and non-state actors, as well the influence of culture and gender on transnational relations. My most recent books have been *The Politics of Peace* (Oxford 2019), and a co-authored book with Akira Iriye, *International History: A Cultural Approach* (Bloomsbury 2022)

MAT: How did the "Challenging War" series begin back in 2020? What inspired you to create a long-term, interdisciplinary space to reflect on topics like war and peace?

LAC: In philosophy, questions about the morality of war are largely decided by the framework of the just war tradition. This tradition has a long and venerable history, tracing back to Augustine, and its central questions persist unchanged: When is it permissible to go to war, and, once at war, how should the war be fought? I recognize that just war theory's central questions are enduring and difficult, but by focusing our attention almost exclusively on these two questions, many other important questions concerning the morality of war are obscured from view. For example, the just war tradition holds that the aim of a just war is a just and lasting peace, but the tradition offers almost no discussion of what peace itself is, or how exactly war is supposed to contribute to it. So, one of the main aims of the *Challenging War* series is to bring questions of peace and nonviolence to the forefront.

The other main aim of the *Challenging War* series, as you note in your question, is to bring an interdisciplinary analysis to questions of war and peace. War is one of humanity's most enduring challenges. Whether it's framed as a tool for defending national sovereignty or as a means of securing peace, war occupies a central position in our understanding of statehood, political order, and justice. It's a deeply embedded feature of our social, economic, and political life. The hope is that by promoting dialogue across disciplinary and doctrinal boundaries, we may come to better understand the challenges of war and peace.

"I think critically examining the assumptions, terms, central questions, and methodologies of war justifying frameworks is the first step in orienting ourselves towards a peaceful future"

MAT: How has the project evolved over the years, and how does the upcoming symposium, "Peace in the Age of Forever Wars," continue that conversation?

LAC: The theme changes every year, and past themes have included "Contemporary Challenges for Just War Theory," "Peace and Nonviolent Resistance," "Women and War: Feminist Approaches to War and Violence," and "War in the 21st Century: What Can It Accomplish?" When Petra and I first started talking about collaborating on a conference, we knew we wanted to focus on the issue of peace. And we wanted to find a theme that was timely and would be interesting to both philosophers and historians.

As we explain on our conference website, many scholars have noted that we now live in an age of forever wars. In the context of these forever wars, the relationship between war and peace, which has always been complex and uneasy, stands in even greater need of examination and theorization. Sometimes, war and peace are understood as opposites – war is bad, and peace is good, war is destructive, and peace is constructive. Sometimes, the relationship between the two is seen as much more sympathetic, such as when we justify going to war so that we might have peace. War is seen, then, not the opposite of peace, but a means of producing peace. We hope that our conference will provide an opportunity to reexamine old frameworks and to bring to light new ones, to understand more deeply the core questions of peace and conflict in historical and transnational context. We're grateful to Alan McPherson for supporting the idea of the conference, and to CENFAD for its incredibly generous funding!

PG: My own ideas about the concept of peace as a historical subject have evolved in tandem with a larger conversation about war and peace that preceded the publication of my book on the politics of Peace and have continued since. Most influential for those of us in the field of US foreign relations history has been Marilyn Young's Presidential address to SHAFR in 2012, in which she mused about the constancy of war in American history, particularly its recent history. Another important voice in this debate is Mary Dudziak's 2012 book *War Time: An Idea, Its History, Its Consequences*. Lee-Ann and I realized that we were tackling similar questions from different angles and that it would be great to bring our respective disciplines into conversation with each other.

MAT: Nowadays, social media play a crucial role in shaping how societies perceive war, sometimes minimizing the reality of ongoing conflicts or even normalizing them. What are some of the dominant narratives or misconceptions that the symposium might invite reflection on?

LAC: Two of the most dominant narratives that come to my mind are: (1) war is inevitable, and (2) war is a discrete event with a beginning and an end.

First, on war's inevitability. If we look at the principal frameworks that are used to examine war and ultimately to justify it, such as just war theory and realism, we find a shared assumption – that war is inevitable, which makes preparedness for defensive war always a necessity. I think this assumption produces a methodology that propels us, in our thoughts and in our deeds, towards war. Because if we split the world into us and them, good and evil, then we will continue to entrench ourselves in segregated moral communities (i.e., states) from within which peace will never be possible.

Second, on war as an event. In evaluating the morality of war, theorists of war tend to treat wars as individual events – having clear beginnings, easily identifiable aggressors and defenders, and concluding decisively – and ask whether some particular war can be justified. In reality, wars have much more indefinite boundaries, and the preparations for war, as well as the aftermath, affect societies in ways that philosophers generally do not contemplate. As I see it, war is better understood not as an event, but as a practice, which requires that we turn our attention away from evaluating particular wars and towards evaluating the practice of war.

The speaker list for the conference has not yet been finalized, so I can't say what narratives or misconceptions in particular will be discussed. But whatever topics emerge, I think critically examining the assumptions, terms, central questions, and methodologies of war-justifying frameworks is the first step in orienting ourselves towards a peaceful future.

PG: We also want to re-focus part of the conversation on the subject of peace, to explore from multiple disciplinary perspectives how we can study peace as a historical, political, philosophical, legal, and moral subject in its own right while acknowledging the practical obstacles that stand in the way. This is especially important in the current environment of escalating conflicts and violence in so many different parts of the world as well as here at home.

"Instead, we should teach children to contribute to the possibility of peace through nonviolence"

MAT: In your opinion, why do stories and ideas about war seem more compelling or dominant than those about peace?

LAC: This is a great question! In philosophy, at least, when we look at theories of self-defensive killing, we see that they are built up around a very specific type of case, namely, a random, sudden, one-off encounter between roughly equally matched strangers. And this is the case that is at the heart of just war theory: You are about to be lethally aggressed against, and the only way to defend yourself is to kill your attacker. What should you do? Just war theory assumes that war is a necessary response to aggression because theorists often equate nonviolence with weakness or passivity. This equation imputes two kinds of failure to nonviolence – moral and pragmatic. The moral failure consists in the fact that the pacifist's refusal to choose war is a dereliction of her moral duty to stand up for herself and her fellow citizens. The pragmatic failure consists in the fact that violence is the only effective response to aggression.

When we think through just war theory's central example, what we are imagining is a situation where we are looking out at the world comfortably occupying the moral high ground. We are the just and innocent party. They are the unjust and guilty party. And so we regard others with fear, suspicion, or distrust. I think just war theory has been enormously successful in aligning the martial with the moral, such that we understand fighting and killing as a moral obligation. So, there's this moral narrative, that fighting back is the right thing to do. I think there's also a really powerful ideology about violence at work, too. We can think about the myth of the good guy with a gun, which I think underlies American gun ownership: If good guys carry guns, they will be able to defend against and deter bad guys with guns, making us all safer. There is a particular ideology of violence that drives this myth. We understand violence as a tool – one that is effective and precise, which we can use or put aside at will. And this tool produces specific, desired outcomes through a predictable, causal chain of events. The myth of the good guy with a gun is a potent example of what I call our faith in violence, which makes us immune to evidence of war's inability to reliably produce the outcomes we seek.

MAT: I recently heard that teaching about war should also involve educating for peace. How do you interpret that relationship?

LAC: I love this question! I think a lot about how we should teach children about war, and how we actually teach them about war. (I have a paper on this, called "Talking to Children About War.") From a young age, children are exposed to scenarios of violence (for example, in books, toys, and advertisements). My conjecture is that we often intentionally surround children with

scenarios of violence in order to teach them to enjoy the "good" kind of violence and to abhor the "bad" kind. We teach children that defensive war is the good kind of violence, and aggression is the bad kind.

In the narrative of heroic killing - where the good guy kills the bad guy because he must - children learn to train their attention on the spectacular, the violent, the momentary, rather than on the patient, the peaceful, the quotidian. These narratives teach children how they should react to what they see. They learn that the story of violent conflict is worth paying attention to, that the story is fun and entertaining, that the violent resolution of the conflict is a good ending, and that we ought to we admire the hero and disdain the villain. Perhaps most importantly, we teach them that killing is the right thing to do.

But I think that if we raise children in the expectation of war, and shape their moral development to accommodate this perceived reality by teaching them that killing is sometimes necessary and good, we mold their moral personalities and constrain their imagination in ways that make it difficult for them to seek genuine peace. Instead, we should teach children to contribute to the possibility of peace through nonviolence.

MAT: In *Perpetual Peace*, Immanuel Kant essentially argues that lasting peace depends on nations working together. In our current era of "forever wars," how might we bring that idea back into practice?

PG: Kant very much anticipated organizations such as the League of Nations and the United Nations. But, writing in the late 18th century, he underestimated the power of nationalism and the vehemence with which nations insisted on national sovereignty that came into force in the 19th century. If we can shift the balance between national sovereignty and international cooperation, between nationalism and internationalism, or rather if nationalism and internationalism can coexist in a cooperative symbiotic relationship, we might get closer to Kant's ideal. There have been moments like this in the past - ironically often after devastating wars - but they have been fleeting.

MAT: The deadline for the abstract submissions is now closed. However, for those who might want to get involved: is the symposium open to graduate students? And what do you think they might gain from listening to and engaging with these conversations?

LAC: This symposium is open to the entire Temple community and the general public, and graduate students are especially welcome to attend! While the conference schedule has not been finalized, we have

confirmed some keynote speakers. We'll be ready to divulge more details by early spring. We'd like for the conference to be not only an interdisciplinary space, but also one where scholars at all different stages of their careers can fruitfully and collegially interact.

MAT: Thank you so much for your time!

LAC: Thank you for your time and interest!