

# Walzer talks ethics to USAWC audience

*Thomas Zimmerman, Army War College Public Affairs Office*

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*Dr. Michael Walzer, professor emeritus at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton University, spoke to Army War College students in Bliss Hall Feb. 5 about the importance of ethics in military planning. Photo by Spc. Jennifer Rick.*

Feb. 5, 2009- A renowned writer and scholar spoke to Army War College students, staff and faculty in Bliss Hall Feb. 5 about the roles and effects that civilian casualties play in the planning and execution of military actions.

**Dr. Michael Walzer**, professor emeritus at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton University, shared his thoughts about civilian casualties during military operations. Walzer went on to point out the effects that pictures of civilians killed during the Israel-Hezbollah conflict in 2006 had on public opinion.

He said that the responsibility in safeguarding those civilians trumped the need for proportionality in terms of winning the battle. He spoke about the ethical dilemmas that arise when faced in the planning of a military operation that may incur civilian casualties.

"Necessary carefulness is a very important responsibility," he said. "It's good to be averse to fighting as long as we understand that sometimes it is necessary. We need to insist that the responsibility decision comes first."

After his remarks he took questions from the students which ranged in topic from the merits of preemptive war to the factors that go into planning an operation.

Walzer was a great speaker to tackle the tough topic according to **Col. Norm Allen**, student.

"He is one of the most respected and influential writers in this field."

Walzer spoke to the class as part of the Commandant's Lecture Series, which is focused this year on Ethics in Strategic Military Leadership: Theory and Practice. Each year a number of lectures are invited to speak at the College on a designated theme or area of emphasis.

### **Walzer background**

Walzer has been a permanent member of the faculty at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey since 1980. He joined the institute after teaching for 14 years at Harvard University, which followed four years, beginning in 1962, on the faculty of Princeton University.

He has written on a wide range of topics, including just and unjust wars, nationalism, ethnicity, economic justice, the welfare state, radicalism, tolerance, political obligation, and the history of Jewish political thought. He is also on the editorial board of the academic journal *Philosophy & Public Affairs*.

He received his bachelor's degree from Brandeis in 1956 and spent the following year at Cambridge University on a Fulbright Fellowship. He earned a Ph.D. from Harvard in 1961.