

Principles and Practices of Peace  
SIS 349-003  
American University  
Prof. Colman McCarthy  
Spring Semester 2011

## Syllabus

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

If every government claims it wants peace, and if every human heart yearns for peace, why is there so little of it? Why is violence routinely used as the way to settle conflicts, whether across an ocean or across the living room? And one more question: why are so few of the nation's 78,000 elementary schools, 34,000 high schools and 4,100 colleges and universities offering courses on peaceful solutions to conflicts?

This course is a modest effort on offering a chance for students to break away from conventional thinking, worn-out politics, quick-fixes and slow progress. Studying nonviolence is not for the faint or weak of heart, nor conformists or the close-minded. Instead, it is for those who are intellectually brave, spiritually alive, socially engaged and lovers of long-shots.

### METHOD

The course is discussion based. Dissents and debates are welcomed. One skeptic enlivens the class more than a dozen passive agreeers. Let's be good listeners. Listening to others is an act of caring.

### COURSE TEXTS

Solutions to Violence  
Strength Through Peace  
We Who Dared Say No To War  
I'd Rather Teach Peace

### WRITING REQUIREMENTS

A paper and a journal. The paper should be a minimum of 1,000 words. More is okay. Due date for the paper: November 2. It should not be a conventional research paper. Instead, try the unconventional: research your own life, your experiences with violence or nonviolence, how you have dealt with conflicts with your family and friends, how you have shaped your personal or political values. Another possibility is to write your reflections on one or more of the essays in our texts and how those ideas relate to your own life. It's fine to use the first person pronoun. In fact, it's often better that way: to write the kind of paper that only you could write because it contains only experiences or reflections you have had.

For the journal, make weekly entries: 300 words or more. Due date: December 19. The entries can be your reflections on what was discussed in class, or the readings. Or your reflections on events in your own life or topical events in the news. Write it so that 40 years from now, someone in your family can read it and say, "So that's what you were like in college. No wonder you turned out so well!"

Papers and journals that are exceptionally well-written, creative and unique earn As. Ones that are above average, flow with well hewn prose and have occasional flashes of creativity earn Bs. Papers or journals that show only an ordinary command of language and aren't especially noteworthy in either style or intelligence, earn Cs. Ones that are plodding, dull or give the appearance of being recycled from old material from other classes, or cause the professor to fall asleep after the third paragraph earn a D—or F, depending how long the sleep lasts.

The papers should be typed or computer printed and turned in at class. The journals can be handwritten or typed. Neither should be emailed. Grade deduction for lateness.

### FINAL EXAM AND GRADES

Based on the course texts and handouts, the exam will list approximately 20 quotes as well as a list of approximately 20 of their authors. Students are expected to match the quotes with the authors. Only those quotes which were read aloud in class will be on the exam. If absent, check with a classmate on what was covered.

Final grades are based on thirds: one third the first paper, one third the journal and one third the exam. Exam date: Monday, December 19.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

If the readings are completed, as well as the written assignments, a student will have intellectually mastered both the principles of pacifism and the methods of nonviolent conflict resolution. Both the principles and methods can be applied to a student's personal life as well as her or his political life.

## ATTENDANCE

The best reason for missing class is a death: mine or yours.

Poor attendance can effect the final grade. What's poor? Three or more absences.

AVAILABILITY I'm reachable at the Center for Teaching Peace, 4501 Van Ness St., Washington DC 20016. Phone 202 537-1372. Email: [cmccarthy@starpower.net](mailto:cmccarthy@starpower.net). Appointments easily arranged.

The following is a plan of what's ahead. Like all plans, it is subject to changes when needed, including when guest speakers come in.

Week One An introductory discussion of the relationship between personal and impersonal violence, including the differences between alternatives to both as found in practical nonviolence and spiritual nonviolence.

Week Two Among nations, where has nonviolence worked? The question is perennially asked. For an answer or two, read chapter one in "Solutions to Violence," as well as chapter six in "Strength Through Peace" on the Danish resistance in World War II.

Week Three What about peace and justice in our personal lives and relationships. It often breaks down when verbal or emotional violence is inflicted on someone we know. Or perhaps don't know—as in catcalling, a common form of violence against women. For class, read chapter 9 in "Solutions to Violence," starting with "The Art of Loving" by Erich Fromm on page 135.

Week Four With the U.S. military encamped in Iraq and Afghanistan, plus bases in more than 100 countries, what drives the policies behind the wars, as well the media coverage? Read chapter 9 in "We Who Dared To Say No To War." The documentary "War Made Easy" will be shown.

Week Five A discussion of legalized violence, as in the death penalty. Readings: chapter seven in "Solutions to Violence" and pages 95 to 110 in "I'd Rather Teach Peace."

Week Six The documentary film from "Fury to Forgiveness" will be shown, followed by a class discussion. The film is about families of murder victims who are not only opposed to the death penalty but actively work to abolish it. Readings: chapter 10 in "Strength Through Peace."

Week Seven The longest war in recorded history, and mostly before historians got around to recording, is the war on animals as waged by humans. Readings: chapter 12 in "Strength Through Peace."

Week Eight A discussion of the difference kind of violence inflicted on animals, as found in the documentary "To Love or To Kill" which will be played in class. Readings: chapter 8 in "Solutions to Violence."

Week Nine Time now for Gandhi, the Indian peacemaker. Readings: the Gandhi essays in "Solutions to Violence" (chapter three) and in "Strength Through Peace" (chapter five).

Week Ten Are Americans undergoing war fatigue? Twenty years ago in 1991 war against Iraq was waged. Ten years later in 2001, it was Afghanistan. The United States military remains in both countries. For class: chapter 9 in "We Who Dared To Say No To War."

Week Eleven What about civil disobedience? How does it work? Is it effective? For class, read chapter 6 in "Solutions," including Henry David Thoreau's "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience" and Andrea Ayzavian's "War Tax Resistance."

Week Twelve The similarities and differences between the U.S. wars in Vietnam and Iraq. Read Martin Luther King's essay on Vietnam, p. 69 in "Solutions" and "What Would You Do If?" by Jan Baez on p. 197-99.

Week Thirteen Are the methods of nonviolent resistance practical in our personal lives? Readings: chapter one in "Solutions to Violence."

Week Fourteen A summing up, a time to relax and say farewell.