

## **DECONSTRUCTING WAR, BUILDING PEACE**

Happiness lies in conquering one's enemies, in driving them in front of oneself, in taking their property, in savoring their despair, in outraging their wives and daughters.

Genghis Khan

Behind the ostensible government sits enthroned an invisible government owing no allegiance and acknowledging no responsibility to the people. To destroy this invisible government, to befoul the unholy alliance between corrupt business and corrupt politics is the first task of statesmanship of the day.

Theodore Roosevelt, 1906

The battle...has to begin here. In America. The only institution more powerful than the U.S. government is American civil society. The rest of us are subjects of slave nations. We are by no means powerless, but you have the power of proximity. You have access to the Imperial Palace and the Emperor's chambers. Empire's conquests are being carried out in your name.

Arundhati Roy

It always seems impossible until it's done.

Nelson Mandela

...But there come times—perhaps this is one of them—when we have to take ourselves more seriously or we die; when we have to pull back from the incantations, rhythms we've moved to thoughtlessly, and disentrall ourselves, bestow ourselves to silence, or a severer listening...

Adrienne Rich

Peace is a virtue  
War is a loss.  
That's my opinion,  
But I ain't the boss.

Owen Fagan, age 10

The problems we face today...are human-created problems which can be resolved through human effort, understanding and the development of a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood. We need to cultivate a universal responsibility for one another and the planet we share.

The Dalai Lama

## Framework

Until about twenty-five years ago, the nuclear threat and the Cold War defined much of the consciousness of thoughtful American people about war after World War II. In the early 1980s, President Reagan declared that nuclear war might be necessary and that this country would survive it. Due to peace movements here and in Europe, Gorbachev's decision to end Soviet domination of the former "satellites" in Eastern Europe, and the subsequent dissolution of the Soviet Union, the threat abated, even though it is not over. The US is now the only "superpower" in the world. Nationalism, racism, ethnicity, terrorism, religion, climate change, women's rights, sexual orientation, immigration, and issues like size of government, welfare, poverty, "crime," and "family values" are replacing the Cold War as loci of opposition and hatred in the world.

Or is the old Cold War being repackaged for this era in the form of United States and EU involvement in Ukraine. What is going on in Ukraine? What is Russia doing there? What is the US doing there? Who gains what from the painful, bizarre confrontation under way there? What is the aftermath of the US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq? What was the US doing there in the first place? What prices have who paid for those wars? What is the US role in the Syrian civil war? The ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestinians? Egypt?

On Sept. 11, 2001, terrorism struck the US in an unprecedented way. Is terrorism a form of war? Something other than war? A continuation of war? Can we understand its meaning and figure out how to move past it, or are we doomed to eternal vigilance, massive government surveillance, and frequent military actions to curb or stop terrorism, and chronic attacks from shadowy terrorist organizations and individuals? What uses does our government make of the terrorist threat and why? What lies behind terrorism and our government's response to it? Are governments, including ours, terrorists under certain circumstances? If so, why is that widely ignored?

Have war and violence always been part of human society, or are they historically limited and possible only under certain conditions? What of aggression and "human nature"? Is peace only a pipe-dream? Is ending terrorism, whether initiated by ad hoc groups or governments, just a wistful wish? Is there only one viable world view?

In the field of peace studies, a distinction is made between "negative peace," or absence of war, and "positive peace," the end of structural conditions (such as imperialism, social class, racism, sexism, and environmental degradation) that promote violence on many levels and that prevent most people on our planet from living full and gratifying lives.

Another useful distinction is between "war culture" and "peace culture." The former refers to all cultural elements, material and otherwise, that assume and support the war paradigm, the assumption that war is a permanent part of human existence. "Peace culture" is all cultural elements, material and otherwise, that assume and support a peace paradigm, the assumption that war is not inevitable and that peace is possible.

The course will consider the state of war in the world now and will explore structural conditions that perpetuate misery and discontent and will also examine social psychological and gender issues that help explain the persistence of war. It suggests that fundamental changes are

possible in how societies are organized and how conflicts are addressed. The basic method we will pursue is “paradigm shift analysis,” which will unfold early in the semester.

### Format of the course

The class will meet as a whole twice a week for 80 minutes (Tuesday and Friday, 9:30-10:50). Lecture and discussion will be combined, and there will be some videos, an occasional guest speaker, and possibly a project at the end. We will ordinarily analyze as fully and critically as we can the reading for the week and related topics.

There will be a TA-led discussion section of an additional 50 minutes each week to examine course materials, reactions, etc. more fully than is possible in class. Students will have several options as to when to take this section.

The class is asked to engage in “cooperative learning,” with students working in groups of two or more to study, write, and prepare together. See below for a fuller discussion of the problems and virtues of cooperative learning.

### Practicum

There will be a practicum offered for this course, but it will be next semester. Students opting to take it will earn two course credits. It will be led by one or two TAs, with some participation by the professor. It will meet at least one hour per week and is to involve three more hours per student per week in practicum work. The meeting time will depend on participants’ schedules.

Practicum students will be required, if their schedules permit, to attend the Friday 20 minute peace vigil (12:20-12:40) held every week during both semesters. All other students in the course will be urged to do likewise.

The practicum program will be presented at the first meeting of the group, by the TAs organizing it. In addition, practicum students will be asked to attend three or more nonviolent demonstrations—at least two of them off campus—on peace-related issues of concern to them. They will be asked to observe and reflect on uses of and problems with nonviolence in demonstrations. (See nonviolence scholar Gene Sharp’s 198 methods of nonviolent action: [http://aeinstein.org/organizations/org/198\\_methods-1.pdf](http://aeinstein.org/organizations/org/198_methods-1.pdf) and other links to Sharp’s 198 methods.) What methods are used in the demonstrations you attended? With what effects? Students will be asked to observe a campus protest closely and analyze it or alternatively, to organize a protest on some issue dear to them and related to war and/or structural violence and analyze the planning and execution of it. It is quite possible that the upcoming presidential election will provide relevant materials for some of these considerations.

Practicum students will be asked to report in writing their reactions and reflections on the assignment immediately above and the assignments below. These reports will be due biweekly and will be commented on by the TAs facilitating the practicum.

Practicum students will be assigned some additional readings on nonviolence in theory and practice. They will also be asked to find on their own a book on a topic or example they believe to be important in understanding the nature and effectiveness of nonviolence. They will be asked to present and discuss this book in weekly meetings with the other practicum students and to examine it further in their weekly reflection papers.

Students in the practicum will be graded on the conscientiousness and fullness of their participation in the practicum, their mastery of the additional readings, the rigor and quality of their reports and reflections, and their follow through in the projects they undertake. Near the end of the semester, practicum students will present their projects and reflections to the entire class.

Since it is not for us to create a plan for the future that will hold for all time, all the more surely what we contemporaries have to do is the uncompromising critical evaluation of all that exists, uncompromising in the sense that our criticism fears neither its own results nor the conflict with the powers that be.

Karl Marx

*Written and other requirements.* ALL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE COURSE, WRITTEN AND OTHERWISE, MUST BE COMPLETED IN ORDER TO PASS THE COURSE.

- 1) Response papers. These will be 3 of these during the semester. They are to be rather short (3-5 pages), to be written cooperatively, and to deal with issues raised in the readings, class sessions, media, etc. What is expected in these papers and their due dates appears later in this syllabus.
- 2) **Cooperative learning. We will try to create mutuality within our classroom and discussion sections. Toward this end, students will be required to write papers in groups of two or more. If this is a new experience, so be it. TAs and the instructor will do their best to help facilitate this way of working. Students will be required also to write final papers in groups of two or more. If you are convinced you cannot learn to, or bear to, write with others, please do not take this course.**
- 3) There will be a final, take-home assignment covering the topics and materials of the course directed at integrating them and to explore the student's relationship with them. Although it will not require non-assigned reading and can include anything beyond the reading list that students deem relevant, the final work is to focus primarily on the texts and ideas of the course. Students must write these papers in cooperative learning groups.
- 4) **There will be many extra-curricular programs on campus related to the topic of the course. Students are required to attend at least three of them and, as part of the final assignment, to submit a paragraph describing each event, its relation to our course, your assessment of the event, and what you learned from it.**
- 5) Students, TAs, and the professor are asked to commit themselves to attend class

regularly, keep up with the assignments, and work with each other to improve the course where any of them find it lacking.

- 6) **The course challenges many preconceptions about war, peace, oneself, and society. As we want to cover much and work well together, attendance in class and in discussion group meetings is most strongly urged and expected, as are preparation and participation. If you find the class dissatisfying in any ways, please take the responsibility to let the instructor and/or TAs know, so that we can try to address your concerns.**

Every breath his senses shall draw, every act and every shadow and thing in all creation, is a mortal poison, or is a drug, or is a signal or symptom, or is a teacher, or is a liberator, or is liberty itself, depending entirely upon his understanding; and understanding, and action proceeding from understanding and guided by it, is the one weapon against the world's bombardment, the one medicine, the one instrument by which liberty, health, and joy may be shaped or shaped toward, in the individual and in the race.

James Agee

Required readings

**BOOKS**

Stephen J. Ducat, *The Wimp Factor*, Beacon, 2005

Gordon Fellman, *Rambo and the Dalai Lama*, SUNY Press, 1998

Chris Hedges, *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*, Anchor Books, 2002.

Robert Holmes and Barry Gan, *Nonviolence in Theory and Practice*,  
Waveland Press, 2005

Mark Kurlansky, *Nonviolence*, Modern Library, 2006

Thich Nhat Hanh, *Peace Is Every Step*, Bantam, 1992

Daniel Quinn, *Ishmael*, Bantam, 1995

Marshall Rosenberg, *Nonviolent Communication*. Can be downloaded free:  
<http://www.ayahuasca-wasi.com/english/articles/NVC.pdf>

Gene Sharp, *From Dictatorship to Democracy*, Albert Einstein Institution. Can be  
downloaded free: <http://www.aeinstein.org/organizations/org/FDTD.pdf>

**CHAPTERS AND ARTICLES**, on LATTE or links on syllabus

Carol Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, chs. 1 and 2 (New York: Continuum, 1990)  
on LATTE

Smedley Butler, *War is a Racket*. Can be downloaded free:  
<http://ia600308.us.archive.org/16/items/WarIsARacket/WarIsARacket.pdf>

Mark Twain, "The War Prayer" Can be downloaded free: <http://warprayer.org/>

Schedule of Readings [RP = response paper due. Say what you want to say in any way that makes sense to you, shows real struggle with our course materials, and is intelligible to readers.]  
A few films will be added later, some on class and some to view on LATTE.

Week 1, F 8/29 First class. Introduction to the course

**Please read a page or two of Thich Nhat Hanh, *Peace is Every Step* every day throughout the course. We will periodically talk about what you find of value in TNH and what you find problematic.**

#### Ambivalence toward war

Week 2: T 9/2 Hedges, Introduction and chs. 1-3 Film *First Kill*  
F 9/5 Hedges, chs. 4-7

#### Theoretical perspective

Week 3: T 9/9 Fellman, Foreword and Parts I and II (The film analyses are illustrative;  
ignore them if they do nothing for you.)  
F 9/12 Fellman, Part IV. Skim Part V.

Week 4: T 9/16 NO CLASS  
F 9/19 Mark Twain, "The War Prayer":  
<http://www.quanta-gaia.org/MarkTwain/warPrayer.html>;  
Butler, "War is a Racket":  
<http://www.scuttlebuttsmallchow.com/racket.html>  
H & G, Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience," pp. 48-63  
H & G, Nonviolence as a political tool, pp. 247-260

*RP #1, on weeks 1-4. Please write your own questions for response papers, covering Hedges, Fellman, Thoreau, Twain, Butler and the film First Kill in this one. Due 9/23.*

#### The spinning of war

Week 5: T 9/23 No class.

F 9/26 No Class.

Week 6: Sunday 9/28 Compassionate Listening Workshop 9-1 REQUIRED

T 9/30 H & G, Mohandas Gandhi on Satyagraha, pp. 77-84

H & G, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, pp. 23-40

F 10/3 H & G, Martin Luther King, Jr. "Letter from Birmingham Jail," pp. 101-113

Week 7: T 10/7 no class (Brandeis Monday)

*RP #2, on wks 5-7. See if you can combine what you learned in the Compassionate Listening Workshop with what we read in Gandhi and King. Due 10/10.*

### Violence and non-violence

F 10/10 Gene Sharp, *From Dictatorship to Democracy*

Week 8: T 10/14 H & G, Women and nonviolence. Pp. 119-135  
Marshall Rosenberg, *Nonviolent Communication*  
F 10/17 continue Rosenberg

Week 9: T 10/21 H & G, Albert Schweitzer, "Reverence for Life," pp. 283-285  
F 10/24 Kurlansky, entire.

Week 10: T 10/28 Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, chs. 1 and 2  
F 10/31 H & G, animal rights, pp. 291-294 and 299-304

*RP#3. How do the chapters in the Sexual Politics of Meat connect with all the other readings for weeks 8-10? Due 11/4.*

### What does masculinity have to do with it?

Week 11: T 11/4 Ducat, Preface, Introduction, and chs. 1-3  
F 11/7 " , chs. 4-5

Week 12: T 11/11 Ducat, chs. 6-7  
F 11/14 " , ch. 8

### The role of a foundational Western narrative in war

Week 13: T 11/18 H & G, Nonviolent resistance against the Nazis in Norway and Holland, pp. 332-335  
H & G, Nonviolence and the end of apartheid in South Africa, pp. 328-331  
F 11/21 no class (Thanksgiving holiday)

Week 14: T 11/25 Quinn, pp. 1-91

F 12/28 Quinn, pp. 95-184  
Week 15 T 12/2 Quinn, pp. 187-263  
F 12/5 film TBA  
Week 16 T 12/11 Conclusion

*There will be no response paper for weeks 11-16; rather, the texts assigned will be covered in the take-home final assignment.*

**THE FINAL PAPER WILL BE DUE TUESDAY, DEC. 16 BY 5 PM. SEND ELECTRONICALLY TO THE PROFESSOR AND TO EACH TA AS THEY SPECIFY. SEE DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS NEAR THE END OF THE SEMESTER.**

## GRADING STANDARDS

The course assumes serious interest in its topic and does not assume background in the subject, sociology, social psychology, or peace studies. The premium is on understanding and working with the concepts and readings of the course and on thinking creatively with them. It is assumed that real learning involves risk and re-thinking assumptions and familiar paradigms (with no preordained or “right” outcome of this process) as well as learning new information. We will pay attention to such matters as involvement, keeping up with the reading, attendance, and particularly in discussion sections, participation. All students are encouraged to take active part in the larger class, but we respect that some people are reluctant to do so.

A—mastery of readings, concepts, and exercises; full participation, engagement, *risk-taking, and growth*; grappling with the course and coming to your own insights about its issues, its implications, its relation to yourself.

B—clear understanding of course materials and conscientious participation but little evidence of risk-taking and growth or grappling with the course toward one's own insights.

C—fuzzy, incomplete, lethargic relationship with course materials, minimal involvement of self in course, little risk-taking and growth, no insights of one's own.

D—same as C but moreso.

E—trying to wing it by leaning too much on others' understanding, not writing papers fully germane to the readings and central concepts of the course, erratic participation, not completing all course requirements, etc.

## RESPONSE PAPERS

A course goal is to have a conversation going among all of us—students, TAs, and professor. One way to do this is through written reflections on course materials. Toward that



end, we ask you to work together in groups or two or more. Here is what we have in mind:

1. It is well to learn to write succinctly. Practice getting to the point quickly and saying what you mean. The papers should be held to about 3-5 pages, although if you really get caught up in something and wish to do so, negotiate for more.

2. If you find the reading difficult, summarizing it to get ahold of it can be useful. This means you are asking if your interpretation of the author makes sense to the reader. *Do not restate* what the author said. Quotations may be used to illustrate a point or ask a question, and we urge you to work directly from the texts, but do not just repeat the author or quote extensively; write in your own words.

3. Remember that all reading is interpretation. We never focus on it all, we never comprehend it all, and we do not know exactly what the author had in mind. Nor does that matter. What matters is what the reader makes of what is read.

4. If you are comfortable with the reading, explore your questions, your critical reactions, your hesitations, reservations, etc. *And most important: your own insights.* Strive to make connections among readings with central ideas and issues in the course, with your own understanding of the world, and your reactions to what you see in society and in your own life.

5. The premium is on showing the reader that you are *grappling with the course materials*, have opened yourself up to the possibility that there is something in them for you, and can think creatively with them. The premium also is on integrating what may seem like disparate materials, and struggling to make sense of them in your reality as a citizen and a thinking, feeling, viable actor in society as well as in your reality as a student taking a course.

6. In response papers, you may work with class discussions, professor's and TAs' views, world events, whatever, but *always in the context of the readings.* I.e., no riffing from the top of your head on interesting things that may be relevant to the course. That is, of course, easy to do in sociology classes but is not helpful. We are looking for *real struggle* with course materials.

7. Pay attention to the process of working together, and work with your section, your TA, and/or the professor on any problems you have in cooperative learning. This comes easily to some people and with very great difficulty to others. Accept where you begin and struggle on from there, drawing on help if, when, and as you wish it. Cooperative learning is meant to be a part of peace culture.

**If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see the instructor immediately.**

