The Utopia of Peace and the Origins of Non-Violent Militancy: From Erasmus to Nelson Mandela
Alhelí de María Alvarado-Díaz

Mohandas Gandhi during Salt Satyagraha, 1930

Introduction

This seminar will introduce students to the intellectual origins of non-violent militancy and to foundational texts on the topic. Students will explore the meaning of the concept of peace in both philosophical and political documents, studying the transformations of the idea throughout time and through diverse cultural contexts. The course will reflect on the transnational reception of non-violent thinking in the writings by Henry David Thoreau, Leo Tolstoy, Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Leonardo Boff, Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu, among others. Students will study the myth and paradoxes of non-violent revolutions, reflecting on the limits of translating non-violent theory into political practice. Is peaceful resistance a feasible alternative to anarchy, violence and terrorism? Can peace become a long-term condition of the lives of national and multicultural communities? Or is it a mere utopia limited by the unpredictable turns of human behavior and the international order of politics?
This course will adopt an interdisciplinary approach, covering literature and debates from the disciplines of intellectual history, political philosophy, religion, ethics and political science. Transnational case studies will orient the program of this advanced seminar allowing students to follow the international evolution of non-violent politics at a global level. The course will conclude with a discussion on the topic of peace enforcement by international organizations, the politics of forgiveness, and the legacies of non-violent militancy today.

**Evaluation**

Students will prepare an oral presentation on a figure, event or text included in the course syllabus. Presentations will last no longer than 15 minutes. A mid-term article review (7-8 pages) on one of the course’s secondary source texts will be due in mid-March. A final paper on an original research topic will be due the last day of class. Papers should be 20 pages in length. Active class participation, attendance and respectful and responsible behavior in all seminar related activities will determine the final course grade.

The grade breakdown will consist of

- 20% Oral Presentation
- 20% Class Participation
- 60% Papers (Mid-Term 20%, Final 40%)

**Required Texts**

Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays* (Hackett, 1983)


David Barash, *Approaches to Peace: A Reader in Peace Studies* (Oxford University Press, 2009)

Martin Luther King, *Strength to Love* (Fortress Press, 2010)


Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness* (Image, 2000)
Non-Violence and the Utopia of Peace: Theory and Practice from Erasmus to Mandela

Session I:  **Peace as Utopia**

The Politics of Peace-Making  
Introductions to the Idea of Peace  
Concept of Peace in the History of International Relations

**Reading Assignments:**


Session II:  **The Intellectual Origins of Peace**

Erasmus’ Idea of Peace  
Locke’s Idea of Toleration  
The Utopia of Perpetual Peace in Kant

**Reading Assignments:**


Jürgen Habermas, “Kant’s Idea of Perpetual Peace and the Benefit of Two Hundred Years’ Hindsight”, *Perpetual Peace: Essays on Kant’s Cosmopolitan Ideal* (MIT Press, 1997).


Session III:  **The Logic of Imperial Expansion and the Challenges of Peace**

The Possibilities of Peace in a World of Empires
Colonizers and Colonized
Barolomé de Las Casas and the Early Days of Human Rights Politics

**Reading Assignments:**


Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Grove Press, 1995).

Albert Memmi, *Decolonization and the Decolonized* (University of Minnesota Press, 2006).


Session III:  **The Origins of Civil Disobedience and Non-Violence**

Emerson and the American Civil War
The Idea of Civil Disobedience in the Work of Thoreau
Tolstoy as Predecessor of Non-Violent Politics

**Reading Assignments:**


W.B. Gallie, “Tolstoy from War and Peace to The Kingdom of God is Within You”, Philosophers of Peace and War: Kant, Clausewitz, Marx, Engles and Tolstoy (Cambridge University Press, 1979).


Session IV: Gandhi and the Idea of Non-Violence

Non-Violence as Method of Resistance
Philosophy of Non-Violence
Legacies of Gandhi in the Postcolonial World

Reading Assignments:


Session V: Conscientious Objectors and the Resistance to War

The Politics of Conscience
Democracy and the Right to Dissent
The Legacies of War Resistance

Reading Assignments:


Session VI: **The Idea of Justice and Liberation Theology**

- The Origins of Liberation Theology
- The Politicization of the Church in Latin America
- Religious Intervention in Radical Politics

**Reading Assignments:**


**Movie Screening:** *Romero* (John Duigan, 1989)
**Session VII: The Human Rights Paradox**

- Constructing World Peace in the Postwar World
- The Dilemma of Humanitarianism
- The Peacekeepers and the Institutions of International Peace

**Reading Assignments:**


**Session VIII: Non-Violent Resistance in Eastern Europe**

- Anti-totalitarianism and the Charter 77
- The Politics of Solidarity
- The Legacies of the Velvet Revolution

**Reading Assignments:**


**Session XI: Martin Luther King and Civil Rights Movement**

- The Remaking of Society through Agape
- Martin Luther King’s Re-reading of the Bible
- The Method of the Sit-Ins and the Program of Civil Resistance
Reading Assignments:

Martin Luther King, *Strength to Love* (Fortress Press, 2010).


Session X: **The Politics of Nelson Mandela**

- Overcoming Apartheid
- Mandela’s Discourse of Freedom and Unity
- The Politics of Reconciliation

Reading Assignments:


Nelson Mandela, “Mandela’s Address after his Release from Prison”, “Statement at UN Special Committee against Apartheid”, “Speech to the Organization of African Unity”, *Selected Speeches* (Red and Black Publishers, 2010).


**Movie Screening:** *Invictus* (Clint Eastwood, 2009)

Session XI: **Music and Peacemaking**

- Said and Baremboim’s Western-Eastern Divan
- Music, Politics and Peace
- The Possibilities of Middle Eastern Reconciliation

Reading Assignments:


**Session XII: The Possibilities of Peace Today**

- Peace and the Making of Social Justice
- The Missionaries’ Commitment to Peace
- The Society of Dialogue and Deliberation
- Cities of Hope

**Reading Assignments:**


