

George Mason University
Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution

CONF 795: Spirituality and Peacebuilding
Spring 2008

February 15, 6 – 8:30 pm, Truland Building Room 555, Arlington Campus
February 16, 10 am – 5 pm, Point of View
February 17, 10 am – 5 pm, Point of View

Instructors

Susan Allen Nan, PhD, Sariel Ende, MA, Danielle Brand-LeMond, MA
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Context & Content

The “Transformation” approach to peace holds that personal transformation—often through spiritual work—radiates outward and affects peace on every level from the intra-personal to the international world of peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Likewise, Mahatma Gandhi believed that "there is no way to peace, peace is the way" and his sentiments are echoed by contemporary spiritual leaders such as the Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh, Deepak Chopra, Joanna Macy, and Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, among others.

These spiritual teachers focus on the individual undertaking of living peace at the very deepest level of our beings, yet their work ventures into the outer territory of action in the world. It is this synthesis that we wish to advocate: the interconnections between living or "being peace," and bringing peace into human relations through individual interactions and through working as peacebuilders. As human beings, all of our realms of experience—physical, mental, emotional, spiritual—are so vitally and wholly connected that to ignore the role of spirituality in peacebuilding is to implicitly limit its potential. This course is dedicated to exploring these very links between “being peace” and “doing peace.”

Specifically, the Yogic and Buddhist spiritual traditions provide tools such as yoga, meditation, mindfulness and the cultivation of equanimity and compassion for becoming more centered peacebuilders who can embody peacefulness in personal and work contexts. This will have manifold benefits—not least of which is an increased sense of centeredness and inner peace for individuals who work in the field of peacebuilding. It will also allow peacebuilders to better facilitate the processes of peace and reconciliation in areas of conflict. Further, the themes drawn from these traditions can give insight and relief to those in conflict situations.

As the Transformation paradigm suggests, the trajectory of the course is from the personal, outward. The course is strongly interactive and experiential; we will guide participants in group and partner exercises, meditations, visualizations and yoga.

As a participant, you will have the opportunity to:

- reflect on your own attitudes towards conflict at the innermost level, the interpersonal realm, and the community and work realms;
- define and discuss spirituality and spiritual practices, different paths for practice, and how peacebuilders can benefit;
- explore examples of spiritual leaders who bring together spirituality and peacebuilding, spiritual themes that shed light on conflict, and practices to share in peacebuilding scenarios;
- plan peacebuilding activities with a spiritual grounding.

Participants

This is a course for those who study conflict resolution and work for peace. People of different backgrounds and faiths can share all of the exercises in this course.

A Note on Process

Please do not expect this course to be purely theoretical or academic; instead, be prepared to bring your entire physical, spiritual and mental self into the room and to be moved—even transformed—by spiritual experiences approached with an open mind and heart.

Before the Course

1) Reading

Please choose *one* of the following books to read completely before the beginning of this course (alternatively, if you would strongly like to read another book that is relevant to the subject matter of the course, contact the instructors with information about the book):

Chappell, D.W. (ed.). (1999). *Buddhist peacework: Creating cultures of peace*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Chopra, D. (2005). *Peace is the way: Bringing war and violence to an end*. New York: Harmony Books.

Gandhi, Mohanda K. (1983) *Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. New York: Dover Publications.

Gyatso, T. (The Dalai Lama) and Carriere, J.C. (1996). *Violence and compassion*. New York: Bantam Books.

Gyatso, T. (The Dalai Lama). (2001). *Ethics for the new millennium*. New York: Riverhead Books.

Hanh, T.H. (1996). *Being Peace*. Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press.

Hanh, T.H. (2003). *Creating true peace: ending violence in yourself, your family, your community and the world*. New York: Free Press.

Hanh, T.H. (2005). *Keeping the peace: Mindfulness and public service*. Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press.

Macy, J. (1998). *Coming back to life*. British Columbia: New Society Publishers.

2) Items to bring with you to the course

- An item that has sacred meaning to you. We will be creating sacred space together; please bring something that helps you stay in touch with your center, or your sense of spirituality. It can be a photograph, a small object from nature, a ritual item, or anything that helps you reconnect. Be prepared to tell the group a few words about your chosen object.
- A journal
- Loose or stretchy comfortable clothing for movement and yoga
- A bag lunch

Schedule

Friday 6-8:30 pm

- Introductions
- Establish process guidelines for trust and transformation
- Explore and define the terms “spirituality” and “peacebuilding”
- Experience meditation and mindfulness

Saturday 10 am-5 pm

- Journal and share with a partner regarding your attitudes towards conflict
- Experience and discuss different types of spiritual practice including meditation, mindfulness and body-centered techniques
- Discuss how and why peacebuilders can benefit from regular spiritual practice

Sunday 10 am-5pm

- Discuss spiritual leaders who engage in peacebuilding
- Explore spiritual themes that can assist in conflict resolution

- Practice spiritual techniques that can be used with people in conflict
- Plan spiritual peacebuilding activities
- Reflect and share in closing circle
- Respond to evaluations

Assignment

The 5-7 page reflection paper, due within two weeks of the end of the in-person portion of the course, should address your overall reaction to the content and process of the course, as well as at least three specific skills or insights you learned concerning spirituality, peacebuilding, and hopefully the bridging of the two. Please link theory to your personal experience and vice versa. Draw out the interconnections between “being” and “doing” peace. Feel free to share any spiritual experiences you had during the workshop or have previously experienced that shed light on conflict resolution.

Grading

This course will be graded on a pass/fail basis as follows:

75% attendance, participation and an open mind
25% 5-7 page reflection paper

Instructor Bios:

Susan Allen Nan (Ph.D. Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University) is Assistant Professor of Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University. Her main focus is on intermediary roles and coordination amongst intermediaries. She also works on evaluation of conflict resolution initiatives, and community conflict resolution approaches. She has engaged long-term in conflict resolution in Eurasia, as well as contributing to a variety of conflict resolution initiatives in Eastern Europe, the Caribbean, South America, and Africa.

Susan Allen Nan joined the ICAR core faculty in 2005 after two years teaching International Peace and Conflict Resolution as Assistant Professor at the School of International Service at American University. This was a return to ICAR. Susan Allen Nan’s Ph.D. (2000) and M.S. (1995) degrees are from ICAR. Between graduate school and joining the faculty at ICAR, she co-founded and directed the Alliance for Conflict Transformation (ACT) and served as Senior Program Associate for the Conflict Resolution Program at the Carter Center in Atlanta, GA.

Susan Allen Nan’s research has focused on coordination in conflict resolution. Her work on this topic has been supported by the US Institute of Peace (Peace Scholar award), and

the William and Flora I. Hewlett Foundation, Compton Foundation, and Catalyst Fund (with ACT). She is the co-editor of a 2006 special issue of the journal *International Negotiation* focused on coordination in conflict resolution. More recently, Dr. Nan has begun research on consciousness and conflict resolution, supported by the One Foundation.

Danielle Brand-LeMond (MA International Peace and Conflict Resolution, American University) is a yoga teacher and freelance writer in the Washington, D.C. area. Currently, she enjoys teaching yoga and related practices in order to help foster people's sense of delight and comfort in their bodies while emphasizing the yogic ideals of peacefulness and compassion. Previously, she worked at the United States Institute of Peace researching peace processes, constitution writing, social peacebuilding and the role of the international community in conflict zones. Prior to that, she worked as a writing counselor at AU's Academic Support Center where she practiced training and facilitation skills while giving workshops on research and the writing process. Danielle has had a life-long interest in spirituality and spiritual practices; her research as a Master's student led to the development of this course. In her free time, Danielle enjoys hiking and other outdoor activities with her husband and dog.

Sariel Ende (MA International Peace and Conflict Resolution, American University) has over six years of experience as a trainer and facilitator, ranging from inter-cultural group facilitation to domestic violence education. She is currently the Volunteer Coordinator at IONA Senior Services, coordinating nearly 600 volunteers in social service to seniors. Previously, as a Domestic Violence Education Specialist, Sariel conducted workshops throughout the DC area on the basics of domestic violence, healthy relationships, the effects of domestic violence on children, and staff trainings geared toward supporting victims. Prior to that, she worked with Montgomery County Study Circles to initiate and facilitate a dialogue for high school students around race, ethnicity, and student achievement. Sariel also practices yoga and volunteers on the Steering Committee of the Capital Kehillah, a community nurturing Jewish spirituality in the Nation's Capital.