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Liberating Nonviolence: The Spirituality and Practice of Christian Nonviolence

Instructors

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Objective

This course will investigate the spirituality, dynamics and strategies of Christian nonviolence. It will examine the ways in which the practice of active nonviolence can be a liberating force in our lives and the life of the world. The course will draw on the teachings and practices of the Christian peace and justice tradition; Christian feminism; and Gandhian nonviolence.

Course Requirements

1. Class attendance and participation.
2. Reading of the required texts (see below). For each class, you are asked to write a brief comment (a paragraph or so) on each of the readings. You might want to identify their main theses, or you could raise critical questions about them. This is a tool to help all of us to engage these texts. Then, at the beginning of each class we will reflect on the readings, first in small groups, and then in the large group.
3. Keeping a nonviolence journal, reflecting on personal experiences of violence and/or nonviolence. Volunteers are encouraged to share entries with the class, though class participants are not required to do so.
4. Observing, or participating in, one nonviolent activity during the semester, and writing a short reflection paper (two or three pages long) on this event. This paper is due on the last day of class, May 19. Three possibilities: 1) International Women's Day activities on or near March 8; 2) The "Covenant of Compassion" Prayer Service and Nonviolent Witness on Sunday, March 9 at the Presidio in San Francisco (see us for more information); and 3) The Good Friday Witness at Livermore Nuclear Weapons Laboratory on March 28. There will quite likely be many other public nonviolent activities held in the Bay Area during the semester from which to choose.
5. A 10 page paper, due to us April 7 (at class).
6. A 10 minute presentation of your paper during one of our class sessions beginning April 7. (We will try to have three student presentations per class through the remaining classes of the semester).

Required Course Texts

We have access to a number of fascinating videos on "nonviolence in action". We are open to showing a number of these videos after class, beginning at 3:30, in the same room. We will talk more about this in class.

- John Dear, The God of Peace: Toward a Theology of Nonviolence (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994).
- Walter Wink, Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992).
- Ken Butigan, From Violence To Wholeness: A Ten Part Program in the Spirituality and Practice of Active

Nonviolence (Berkeley: Pace e Bene Franciscan Nonviolence Center, 1996).

Course Sessions

February 3: Introduction: The Journey from Violence to Wholeness

February 10: Confronting the Woundedness: The Experience and Dynamics of Violence

READINGS: Wink, Introduction, Chapters 1-2, pp. 3-49.

Dear, John, Forgetting Who We Are (IN: From Violence To Wholeness, pp. 69-71).

February 17: No class

February 24: The Faithful Nonviolence of Jesus

READINGS: Wink, Chapters 3-5, pp. 51-104.

HANDOUT: James W. Douglass, The Nonviolent Coming of God (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), pp. 1-28.

March 3: Francis, Clare and Nonviolence

READINGS: Wink, Chapters 6-8, pp. 105-168.

St. Francis of Assisi, "The Canticle of Brother Sun" (IN: From Violence To Wholeness, p. 87).

March 10: Gandhi and the Nonviolence of Soul-Force

READINGS: Wink, Chapters 9-13, pp. 169-257.

HANDOUT: Thomas Merton, Gandhi on Non-Violence (New York: New Directions, 1965), pp. 1-20.
Gene Sharp, "Gandhi's Political Significance" (IN: From Violence To Wholeness, pp. 77-86).

March 17: Nonviolent Social Change in Action: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the U.S. Civil Rights Movement

READINGS: Wink, pp. Chapters 14-17, 259-324.

M.L. King, Jr., "King's Principles of Nonviolence" (IN: From Violence To Wholeness, p. 57).

_____, "Letter From the Birmingham Jail" (IN: booklet: Martin Luther King, A.J. Muste Memorial Institute)

_____, "Loving Your Enemies" (IN: booklet: Martin Luther King, A.J. Muste Memorial Institute)

HANDOUT: Martin Luther King, Jr., "Nonviolence and Social Change," Trumpet of Conscience (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).

March 24: No class (Reading Week)

April 1: No class (FST holiday)

April 7: Jesus: The Sacrament of Nonviolence

READINGS: Dear, pp. ix-42, Forward, Chapters 1-3.

April 14: Nonviolence and Feminism

READINGS: Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, "Introduction," *Violence Against Women*, Fiorenza and Shawn Copeland, eds. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), pp. vii-xxiv.

HANDOUT: Pam McAlister, *You Can't Kill the Spirit: Stories of Women and Nonviolent Action* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1988), pp. 19-31, 190-209.

K. Louise Schmidt, "Violence Against Women and Children" and "You Can't Kill the Spirit" (IN: *From Violence To Wholeness*, pp. 72-76).

Dear, Chapter 14 ("Feminism and Nonviolence"), pp. 134-143.

April 21: Violence, Nonviolence and the Earth

READINGS: Dear, Chapters 4-7, pp. 43-75.

April 28: Nonviolence and Social Transformation; Case-Study: The United Farm Workers

READINGS: Bill Moyer, "Strategic Assumptions of the Movement Action Plan" (IN: *From Violence To Wholeness*, pp. 90-92).

Dear, Chapters 8-11, 76-114.

Cesar Chavez, "Letter from Delano" (IN: *From Violence To Wholeness*, pp. 88-89).

Servicio Paz y Justicia, "Preparing for Nonviolence" (IN: *From Violence To Wholeness*, pp. 93-96).

May 5: Case-Study: Nonviolence and Nuclear Weapons

READINGS: Dear, Chapters 12-13 and 15, pp. 115-131 and pp. 144-157.

May 12: Case Study: Nonviolence and International Conflict


READINGS: HANDOUT: Lisa Schirch, *Keeping the Peace: Exploring Civilian Alternatives in Conflict Prevention* (Uppsala, Sweden: Life & Peace Institute, 1995), pp. 1-15.

Dear, Chapters 16-17, pp. 158-177.

May 19: Building Nonviolent Community

READINGS: Dear, Chapters 18-20, pp. 178-197.

Bill Cane, "The Church Universal: Circles of Faith" (IN: *From Violence To Wholeness*, pp. 97-100).

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http://www.wlu.ca/~wwaar/syllabi/liberating_nonviolence-butigan_and_vitale.html

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