

Peace and Conflict Studies Concentration Proposal

What is Peace and Conflict Studies?

Peace and Conflict Studies is an interdisciplinary field that:

1. studies the factors that lead to human conflict and aggression, including those that are psychological, sociological, anthropological, environmental, political, economic, religious, and historical in nature;
2. examines levels of conflict ranging from the micro- or interpersonal-level to the macro- or international-level;
3. explores the potential causal links between issues of social and environmental justice and violent conflict, including the relationship between different forms of violence, such as structural versus episodic violence, and perceptions of injustice;
4. critically examines ways to resolve conflict nonviolently, including potential links to systems of social and environmental justice; and
5. can augment the intellectual study of peace and conflict with experiences outside of the classroom in the form of fieldwork and internships.

Rationale for establishing a peace and conflict studies concentration at Oberlin

- Historically, Oberlin has been a leader among American colleges and universities in the emphasis it has given to the values of social justice and international understanding. A prominent feature of Oberlin College's Strategic Plan of March 2005 is the statement that "Oberlin's genius has always been bound up with the conviction that men and women can change their societies – and the world at large – for the better." Yet, regarding peace and conflict studies, there is a gap in Oberlin's curriculum, and as a result it lags behind a growing number of colleges. In fact, over 160 colleges and universities in the United States (and over 450 programs in the field worldwide), including several of those in its peer-reference group, such as Swarthmore, Bryn Mawr/Haverford, and Grinnell, offer Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) programs.
- For students, the proposed concentration will provide a coherent, representative, interdisciplinary program of study. In line with the Strategic Plan of March 2005, the proposed concentration identifies many intellectual interconnections across Oberlin's curriculum that will create a coherent curricular pathway for students interested in this area of study. Presently, a substantial number of courses that fall under the rubric of PACS are scattered throughout the various departments of

Oberlin College. The proposed PACS concentration would thus add to the curriculum with little additional demand on faculty time or College resources.

- This concentration has the strong backing of faculty and students. This support was demonstrated by the large attendance at the Symposium to Promote Peace and Conflict Studies held in February, 2007. First year seminar classes on issues related this concentration have been well received by students; two of these classes will soon be offered as 200-level courses, and a third one will become a co-taught “Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies” in the fall of 2009. The EXCO class on peace and conflict studies, designed by students who sought to fill the gap in the curriculum, has been offered now for the three years with high enrollments and the participation of many faculty as guest speakers. A significant number of students in recent years have sought to pursue this field of study through an independent major. Furthermore, the proposed concentration will establish a more formal context for nurturing scholarly discussions about peace and conflict issues.
- With many opportunities for students to continue their training in this area of study, the peace and conflict studies concentration will also help students prepare for graduate study. Moreover, this field is increasingly popular outside the classroom as well, and there are jobs for students with knowledge in this area. There is strong alumni interest as well, as reflected in the generous gift by the class of 1958 aimed specifically at the development of PACS at Oberlin, and a number of alumni have offered to assist with internship and fieldwork opportunities for students.
- The peace and conflict studies concentration will also encourage increased interactions among faculty across disciplines. Such interactions could lead to new collaborations in teaching, such as the new Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies course taught by Steve Crowley and Steve Mayer, as well as research. The new concentration would also serve as a vehicle for sponsoring interdisciplinary symposia and workshops. There is also the possibility for post-doctoral students to receive funding from the NEH to offer courses on the topic at Oberlin. Overall, we anticipate that the concentration would enhance the intellectual life of the faculty, with very little additional administrative burden.

Concentration requirements

The concentration is designed to:

- provide a curricular structure at the core and seminar level, flexibility at the intermediate level, and a practical experiential component.
- be interdisciplinary. Besides each course varying in the degree to which it is interdisciplinary in nature, students will be required to take courses from at least 3 different departments.
- encourage students to be intentional and reflective about the intellectual coherence of their work in the Peace and Conflict Studies concentration.

The concentration consists of five components.

1. Introductory Core Course. In order to introduce students to this area of study, a newly developed core course, which provides a broad overview of this field of study, will become a regular course offering taught in the fall of each academic year.

Psych 118/Polt 119 Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies
(new course to be offered by Crowley/Mayer)

2. Intermediate courses. Students will be required to take a minimum of 4 of the following courses and they must be from three different departments.

Aast 202	African American History Since 1865
Anth 278	Human Rights, Universalism and Cultural Relativism
Anth 416	Race, Racism, and Human Variation in Global Perspective
Cast 241	Living with the Bomb
Envs 101	Environment and Society
Hist 180	Global Environmental History
Hist 293	Dirty Wars and Democracy
Polt 211	Revolutions
Polt 227	War, Weapons, and Arms Control
Polt 229	Peace and Conflict (Kristina Mani's course, to be first offered in the fall of 2010)
Psyc 204	Cultural Psychology
Psyc 218	Social Psychology
Relg 244	Religion, War, and Peace Ethics in Christianity, Judaism, and Islam
Soci 222	Introduction to Social Psychology
Soci 233	Gender, Social Change, Social Movements
Soci 277	Race and Ethnic Relations

3. Advanced Courses. In order to insure breadth and depth of the student experiences in this subject area, students will be required to take at least 1 of the following courses.

Psych 430	Seminar in Social Conflict
Hist 357	Non-Violent Opposition to British Imperialism: M. Gandhi
Envs 311	Seminar in Environmental Justice
Private Reading	To insure flexibility and the ability for students to tailor this concentration to their individual needs, students will also be able to fulfill the advanced course requirement through a private reading. For this requirement to be fulfilled in this manner, in addition to obtaining the approval of the professor conducting the private reading, the student will also need to obtain approval from chair of the PACS concentration.

4. **Experiential Component.** In order to provide students with practical experience in this area, at least one winter term experience, a study away, or summer experience should focus on skills directly related to the concentration. We anticipate that this requirement will be fulfilled through an internship experience. Oberlin College is fortunate to have many alumni working in the area of peace and conflict studies. The generous financial gift from the Class of 1958 will also be used to help defer the expenses of students who partake of this experience. Lastly, we will require that students' winter term experience be sponsored by a member of Peace and Conflict Studies Committee.

5. **Intellectual coherence statements.** Students will be required to submit a plan for their concentration at the time of declaration, outlining their intended course of study and their understanding of how this will be an intellectually coherent course of study. No later than the last semester of their senior year, students must also register for a non-credit course with a member of the Peace and Conflict Studies Committee that requires them to submit a five-ten page paper reflecting upon their actual work in the concentration. (We do not envision this requirement as being so time-intensive as to merit course credit. By making it a non-credit course, however, we employ a mechanism that makes it easy for the registrar's office to track compliance on this requirement.)

Rationale for Choice of Courses

The concentration primarily focuses on factors that lead to violence and alternatives to the use of violence when confronted with conflict. There is also an emphasis on how promoting conflict, especially through the use of non-violent strategies, can be effective in promoting positive social change. The introductory core course is designed to provide a broad framing of the issues that are addressed in this area of study. More specifically, this course will directly address each of the first 4 statements that we initially presented when defining this field of study. Similar to the way, then, that Introductory Psychology introduces students to the broad field of psychology with subsequent psychology courses focusing on more specific aspects of this broad field, we also view this introductory Peace and Conflict Studies course as serving a similar role. Crowley and Mayer intend to develop this course in such a way that in future years other interested faculty members will be able to help teach this course. Crowley and Mayer are committed to regularly offering this course; however, the committee also wishes to insure that this course is offered each year, even when either Crowley or Mayer is on leave. The intermediate courses are less interdisciplinary, less focused solely on Peace and Conflict studies, and more focused on a specific issue, such as race or gender. That is, they each touch upon issues related to the causes of violence and to varying degrees the use of non-violent strategies. For instance, among other things, Aast 202 focuses on the civil rights movement in the United States, while Anth 278 considers how and when human rights violations might lead to conflict and potentially violence. Issues related to race and gender and conflict cut across many of these intermediate courses (e.g., Anth 416, Psyc 204, Psyc 218, Soci 222, Soci 233, & Soci 277), while more macro-level international conflict also is well represented within this set of intermediate level courses (e.g., Anth 278, Hist, 180, Polt 211, Polt 227, Psyc 204). The advanced courses are seminar-type

courses that provide a more in-depth focus on the critical Peace and Conflict Studies issue of specific ways to promote positive social change through the use of non-violent strategies.

Sequencing of Courses

Although it might be ideal for students to first take an introductory core course followed by the intermediate and then advanced courses, in order to promote flexibility in the concentration no sequence will be imposed upon the student. That is, they will not be required to take the introductory core course before the intermediate and advanced courses. We think that the intellectual coherence statements that they formulate will suffice to provide them with the coherence for the set of courses that they have chosen.

Implementation and administration of the concentration

A Peace and Conflict Studies committee will be formed, comprised of faculty members who have appointments in existing departments and programs. Members of the committee will be from different departments and programs involved in the concentration with no more than one member from each department or program. The responsibilities of this committee will be to advise students who are interested in the concentration and periodically review the concentration requirements in light of new curricular developments. If needed this committee will bring any proposed changes in the concentration requirements to the concentration to the attention of EPPC. The chair of this committee will also submit to the dean an annual report of the student involvement in the concentration and the activities of the committee.

Final Thoughts

The development of interest in the PACS concentration at Oberlin College has evolved over the past five or so years as faculty, alumni, the broader Oberlin community, and students have increasingly seen the need for such a concentration at the College. The members of the faculty involved in this work are greatly indebted to these supporters, who have contributed so much time, effort, and financial assistance to make this concentration possible. Moreover, in creating this concentration, the faculty has been very conscious of the budgetary constraints that the College faces. This proposal requires no financial assistance from the College. Except for the core introductory course, the classes that make up this concentration already exist. Additionally, the holdings of the library in terms of books and journals more than meet the needs of faculty and students interested in this concentration. For instance, between JSTOR (*Journal of Peace Research*) and EJC (*Peace and Change; Cooperation and Conflict; Journal of Conflict and Security Law; Conflict Resolution Quarterly; Media, War, & Conflict; Journal of Conflict Resolution*) we already have access to the major general journals in this field, while in our specific disciplines we have access to a wide variety of other journals and monographs relevant to this area of study. Lastly, with the enthusiasm that all of these different groups bring to this concentration, coupled with the generous financial gift from

the class of 1958, support for student internships, speakers, and workshops should make for a vibrant concentration that will benefit all parts of the Oberlin community.

Affiliated Faculty Members

Joyce Babyak, Religion
Steve Crowley, Politics
Michael Fisher, History
Cynthia Frantz, Psychology
Shulamit Magnus, Jewish Studies/History
Kristina Mani, Politics
Stephan Mayer, Psychology
John Petersen, Environmental Studies
Baron Pineda, Anthropology
Ben Schiff, Politics
Clovis White, Sociology