

PROPOSAL
for a
PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES CONCENTRATION
at
OBERLIN COLLEGE

December 8, 2005

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Who We Are

For three consecutive semesters, beginning in the Spring of 2004, a collection of college students and Oberlin community members participated in the Experimental College course entitled “We’d Rather Teach Peace,” a class with the aim of teaching topics in the study of peace to the sixth graders at Langston Middle School. Such an endeavor was fueled by the belief in the benefits of education about alternatives to violence, as expressed by Colman McCarthy: “Governments and citizens proclaim that mathematics, languages, and science are their goals, and students are required to take those and other courses, as if the future of the species depended on them. At commencements, graduates are told to go into the world as peacemakers. Yet in most schools, peace is so unimportant that no place is found for it in the curriculum.” As he questions, “If peace is what every government says it seeks, and peace is the yearning of every heart, why aren’t we studying it and teaching it in schools?”

Teaching sixth graders about peace led some students and community members to turn their focus towards education at the college level. It was noted that, despite Oberlin’s rich history of social consciousness and activism, there is no academic program that specifically addresses the topics of alternative approaches to conflict. Despite the increasingly global nature of our society, where war, conflict, and how we relate to one another are all pressing issues, Oberlin lacks a cohesive program to address conflict resolution and transnational communication.

This unfilled space is where the Fall 2005 Experimental College course, entitled “Creating Change within Oberlin College: Developing a Peace Studies Program,” entered in. It was designed to allow current students and community members to work together to research what constitutes an academic peace and conflict program, how it might be implemented at Oberlin, and the process of proposing its eventual inclusion in the college’s curriculum. The main goal of the Experimental College course was to initiate the design and proposal of a Peace and Conflict Studies Concentration. Thus, throughout the Fall 2005 semester, members of this Experimental College class collaborated to develop a general understanding of peace and conflict studies as an academic discipline, investigate its potential place in Oberlin’s curriculum, and study how such a program could better inform and cooperate with current departments. Its contents are as follows.

The Importance of Teaching Peace and Conflict Studies as an Academic Discipline at Oberlin College

The first undergraduate program in Peace Studies was formed at Manchester College in 1948. Since that time, colleges in the United States and all over the world have recognized the benefit of the academic study of peace and conflict, giving rise to hundreds of programs. Its establishment as a viable academic discipline includes the establishment of the Peace Studies Association (PSA), which acts as an organization for academic peace studies programs; the Consortium on Peace Research, Education, and Development (COPRED), which involves a wider membership of individuals, programs, and institutions; and the varied scholarly journals, conferences, and book series that have resulted.¹ Though each program varies, the general concern of peace studies scholarship is to examine and question the causes of conflict and injustice with the ultimate aim of developing practical ideas on their prevention and amelioration.

Though Oberlin does not yet offer a Peace and Conflict Studies program, the college has a long and distinguished history of visionary activism and progressive work for peaceful social change. From the very beginning, Oberlinians advocated the peaceful abolition of slavery – 25 years before the Civil War – and Lewis Tappan was closely involved with the freeing of the Amistad captives. Early student and faculty groups such as the Oberlin Non-Resistance Society, Oberlin Peace Society, and Oberlin Peace League emphasized the religious foundation of their non-violence movements. Other early Oberlinians were among those who advocated the formation of the organizations similar to the United Nations and World Court – almost 100 years before those bodies were established. In 1930, Oberlin students, foreseeing the gathering clouds of war over Europe, established the second Oberlin Peace Society and, together with college president Ernest Hatch Wilkins, they tried diligently throughout that decade to prevent World War II. Vernon Johns, an Oberlin graduate and one of the pioneers of the civil rights movement, was Martin Luther King’s predecessor at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. King himself, affirming Oberlin’s leadership, visited the college four times and delivered the 1965 commencement address, exhorting the students to remain awake during a great revolution.

In recognition of this history, the Statement of Goals and Objectives for Oberlin College relates that “[the college’s] heritage is one of respect for the individual and active concern for the larger society;” one of the school’s aims as stated in this document is “to expand [students’] social awareness, social responsibility, and capacity for moral judgment so as to prepare them for intelligent and useful response to the present and future demands of society.” In addition to having a distinguished history of social consciousness, the college places particular importance on the cultivation of current students’ concern for the global society of which they are a part.

¹ From Georgetown University’s Program on Justice and Peace website, found at <http://www.georgetown.edu/departments/pjp/mission.html>.

Coupled with Oberlin's value of social consciousness is the growing need for a study of conflict and of the options for its resolution. Already, Oberlin College acknowledges the value of studying global relations – politically, environmentally, economically, and culturally – and the diversity of internationalism, as well as historical examples of social movements. With such issues as world economies, international relations, and war affecting our everyday activities in the present and future, the importance of peace and conflict studies as an academic discipline grows. Such a program would aim to empower students with the knowledge to effectively manage conflict as citizens of our communities, nations, and the world at large. Our question is: how can we pull together the already existing curriculum to cohesively explore the roots of conflict, the goals of conflict transformation, and the tools by which we can achieve these goals?

Such an academic program would draw from a variety of already established departments – Anthropology, Comparative American Studies, Economics, Environmental Studies, History, Philosophy, Politics, Psychology, Religion, Sociology, and probably others – to cover a breadth of material. By bringing these varied disciplines into dialogue and collaboration, a program would enable a comprehensive understanding with which to address the topics of peace and conflict.

While one may question why the concentration needs to exist when the topics are already available in the curriculum, they must consider the advantages of a cohesive program. A concentration that would bring established fields of study together through course requirements would also bring students into dialogue. Each student, working towards his/her/hir own depth of study in both the concentration's elective requirements and an additional major, would bring unique perspectives and knowledge to the program. Thus, these students would benefit from an established concentration through their ability to question – and, consequentially, learn from – each other. Without the umbrella of an organized program, courses are less likely to come together in an ordered and functional manner, decreasing the chances of collaboration and dialogue between disciplines and those disciplines' students. Moreover, the concentration's nature would not merely be interdisciplinary, attempting to combine a variety of academic disciplines into one body of knowledge; rather, the concentration would aim to create a practical and thoughtful study with a focus on better understanding, and improving, our world.

Along with bringing together the traditional methods taught in response to conflict, we feel that through this concentration, the methods and theories of nonviolence could be brought out and highlighted. Creating an avenue for the study of non-violent resolutions would support and strengthen existing curriculum to provide a more comprehensive study of conflict. A basis of the program is the questions that it asks, leading students to work toward their own answers: What is conflict? What is non-violence? What is peace? The aim of the concentration is not to impose any method of thought upon students, but to provide them with the opportunity to study alternative solutions to conflict so that they can reach informed conclusions for themselves.

A Peace and Conflict Studies Concentration's Connection to the Strategic Plan and Oberlin College Goals

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." What greater need is there in our world than to improve our ability to manage conflict at the global, national, and community level? The social fabric of the world at large has been affected by governmental focus on violence to solve international and domestic problems. The world desperately needs citizens trained and informed about productive methods of conflict transformation.

Scattered throughout the various departments of Oberlin College are courses that relate the histories and techniques of resolving conflicts by non-violent means. However, there is no focus or pathway for students; up until this time, the only way that students with interest in peace and conflict studies could devote serious study to this discipline was to go through the laborious process of developing an Individual Major. Though some have chosen this path, surely others took the easier route of selecting another academic discipline to learn what they could about non-violence and its manifestations in history. Still others, as prospective students, might have looked elsewhere for colleges with peace and conflict programs.

In contrast, an academic program promoting collaboration between disciplines would aid Oberlin's stated goal of "creating new and innovative curricular collaboration among faculty and students, by paying more attention to creating meaningful opportunities for students to integrate and apply their learning." By providing a broad study of peace and conflict centered around key questions, the concentration would work as an interconnecting program "with an eye toward encouraging students to become informed social and cultural leaders," as the Strategic Plan states. Its focus on diversity and social engagement follows the college's stated commitment to "global perspectives, environmental consciousness, [and] concern for social justice" and prepares students to function in an increasingly diverse, global world. As the Strategic Plan suggests, "The major challenges that will face current and future generations of Oberlin students [are] climate change; the AIDS pandemic; racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural conflict; social inequality; and economic development." The college's long-standing concern of dealing with the greater society, as well as its desire to address – and produce students who are equipped to address – such social challenges, is a central focus of this proposed concentration, which aims to engage students with contemporary social questions and better examine concepts of conflict and of peace, to benefit the world.

Though the college "has long emphasized the significance of inter-connectedness among the different modes of inquiry that enrich our curriculum, and . . . done so with an eye towards encouraging students to become informed social and cultural leaders," its academic offering lacks any major, department, concentration, or other program of study that specifically addresses the questions of peace and conflict resolution.

Oberlin is truly concerned with the ability of its students to change and better their societies. “A liberal education is not only a private good but also a social good,” states the Strategic Plan. It is this very focus on education and social betterment that is the core of a Peace and Conflict Studies Concentration: through this program, we are able to look at our society, question our knowledge of it, and hopefully find in our studies a path to a more peaceful world.

The Benefits of a Peace and Conflict Studies Concentration to Oberlin College

Since the middle of the twentieth century, the field of peace studies has been available as an academic discipline at an increasing number of colleges and universities throughout the United States. Especially with the contemporary salience of war, there are a number of qualified prospective students interested in the academic study of peace and conflict who might bring the criteria of a peace and conflict studies program into their ultimate college decision. As Oberlin already has the resources and program components in place for this program, there is no reason that the college should be unable to compete with similar schools, and to draw these students in, with such a program. This view was greatly reinforced by discussions during the *Symposium on Local Realities, Global Responsibilities: Conflict Resolution at Oberlin and in the World*, which featured distinguished alumni in careers related to our proposed Peace and Conflict Studies program.

Moreover, one of Oberlin's strengths is the connection established between faculty members and students. One of the main goals of a liberal arts college is to encourage academic exploration outside of students' focal area of interest. Therefore, one of the faculty's challenges is to engage students who are not pursuing majors in the professors' fields of expertise. A program like the Peace and Conflict Studies Concentration would attract students into these professors' courses, stimulating interest in departments that might not have been considered otherwise. Thus, students, professors, and departments all benefit from establishing connections of interest, providing a better dialogue on peace and conflict studies with the college's academic setting.

Another benefit to the college would be the opportunities the concentration would provide for the development of unique projects between departments. Through the involvement of faculty members in collaborative, co-taught courses, professors could have the opportunity to expand their curriculum without putting the strain on their departments that additional or alternative semester courses would cause.

Additionally, a Peace and Conflict Studies Concentration could operate as a mechanism to connect students with summer jobs and internships, drawing on an impressive field of alumni involved in professional fields dealing with conflict resolution. With their interest, an effective network of student internships in conflict resolution could be established, giving the students both practical experience and connections in the field. This program, especially created as a required component of the concentration, would not increase the demand on the college's resources by competing for existing sources of internships and jobs; instead, it would work with new sources of alumni support, increasing the connection of alumni to Oberlin.

Finally, this increased connection between certain alumni in the conflict resolution field and the college could act as a unique draw in Oberlin's fundraising campaign. By providing a program that appeals specifically to alumni who may not be directly involved with current

college departments, Oberlin enhances its academic presentation, thus improving its competitive edge in receiving funds. Such a concentration could also draw relevant alumni involvement as short-term adjuncts or lecturers in mini-courses, which would enhance the peace and conflict studies program and provide students with expertise from those in the conflict resolution field.

Suggested Design of the Peace and Conflict Studies Concentration

The Peace and Conflict Studies Concentration (PACS) will be designed as an interdisciplinary approach to conflict and its solutions, including non-violent alternatives, providing both historical and theoretical studies, as well as a focus on contemporary social issues. It will focus on the relationships between individuals, between communities, and between nations, as well as the consequences of these interactions.

The Peace and Conflict Studies Concentration would provide a breadth of material designed to supplement the major while pursuing its own goals of building knowledge. The concentration would allow for a focus on cross-cultural and social conflict, both in theoretical and practical approaches, and a greater understanding of peace and its manifestations in conflict resolution and non-violent paths to change. By spanning disciplines, the concentration would provide the breadth necessary to complement a major, while in turn benefiting from the depth of study a major allows.

The Peace and Conflict Studies Concentration would ultimately consist of several components, covering introductory material, electives, a capstone seminar or final course, and practical applications through an internship requirement. One suggested example of its organization is:

1. A core introductory course to provide a framework for the other studies in the Peace and Conflict area.
2. Approximately five additional courses drawn from an approved list. These would satisfy distribution requirements designed to create a broad basis of study as well as a specialization (i.e., a 300 or 400 level course in one area).
3. A capstone seminar that might include individual research or study of case history, while allowing students from different majors to share their varied perspectives with each other.
4. An internship experience in the practical application of peace and conflict studies.

Such an example should be viewed as only one possible way the program could be organized, as the exact format of the program has been left unspecified to accommodate ongoing research into how to best work with, and not against, other academic programs, as well as input from the curricular committee on the program's focus and central core. Student members of our ExCo committee are willing to assist or serve on the Curricular Committee; moreover, the community members will assist the Committee's work in any way that is appropriate.

Our aim is to create a community of scholars interested in the Peace and Conflict field at Oberlin, not isolated students as in the present individual major approach. Practical experience in dealing with actual cases of conflict is deemed very important.

Students completing a Peace and Conflict Studies concentration will develop:

- (a) an understanding . . .
 - of the goals of conflict resolution, and the nature of peace in the community and in the world.
 - of the causes and conditions shaping human conflict, oppression, and injustice on four different levels: interpersonal, community, national, and international.
 - of the theoretical models, from various disciplinary fields, that examine conflict and instigate social change, including theories of non-violence and just-war.
 - of the factors for selecting the means of conflict resolution in given situations.
 - of multicultural perspectives on conflict and conflict resolution.

- (b) skills . . .
 - to relate and apply theories and models of conflict resolution to their major field of study, expected profession, and daily activities through mediation, political strategy or judicial methods.
 - to enter the professional field of conflict resolution.

- (c) opportunities . . .
 - for study and practice of conflict analysis and conflict resolution through internships outside the Oberlin campus environment.
 - for engagement with a broad network of scholars and practitioners in the area of conflict resolution, including students, faculty and alumni that would enhance the base structure of the program.

Any student, regardless of major or minor, can pursue a Peace and Conflict Studies Concentration. The Peace and Conflict Studies Concentration would not substitute for a major or minor. Its completion will be noted on the student's final transcript along with majors, minors, and honors. Students wishing to pursue this concentration should consult with a member of the Peace and Conflict Studies Concentration Committee.

Appendix I: Representative Colleges and Universities with Peace and Conflict Studies Programs

As we began our study of translating peace and conflict into the academic arena, we turned our attention to other colleges with programs related to peace, conflict, justice, and global studies. In a brief search for such colleges and universities, we came up with over 125 in the United States alone. To get an idea of how such programs were implemented at other places, and comparing their programs to Oberlin's own unique offerings, we focused on several colleges that suited our purposes well: Colgate University, Earlham College, Wilmington College, and Swarthmore College. A brief overview of each is provided.

Colgate University: Peace and Conflict Studies

Colgate University is located in the small town of Hamilton in central New York State. Its recently renamed **Peace and Conflict Studies Program (P-CON)** offers both a major and minor concentration and there is a Department of the same name which offers 14 courses. The Program, founded in 1970 "presents a unique and challenging course of study that integrates trans-disciplinary academic approaches to war and peace with the study of particular regional conflicts. . . The concentration offers students three distinct areas of specialization: Collective Violence, Human Security, and International Social Justice. . . After taking advantage of . . . the resources at Colgate, Peace and Conflict Studies concentrators have pursued careers in various international arenas, including law, government, development, journalism, and the private sector."

The **faculty** of the Program consists of 19 individuals from 12 departments (Anthropology, Art and Art History, Educational Studies, English, Film and Media Studies, Geography, History, Peace and Conflict Studies, Philosophy and Religion, Political Science, University Studies, and Women's Studies). The chair of the Program is Daniel Monk, Professor of Art and Art History.

The **course work for a concentration major** consists of 11 courses and advances through four levels.

Level 1: The required Core Courses

Introduction to P-CON; War in Lived Experiences; War, State, & Society

Level 2: Three courses from one area of specialization; one course from a second area.

Each specialization has 20 or more course from which to choose.

Level 3: Three courses focused on one of seven geographic regions of the world.

Approved courses focus on culture, history, geography, or economics of a region.

Level 4: Thesis

Course work for a concentration minor consists of 6 courses, including one Level 1 Core Course, two Level 2 specialization courses, and the Level 4 Thesis.

Earlham College: Peace and Global Studies

Earlham College is a liberal-arts college with Quaker roots. It is located in Richmond, Indiana. The student enrollment is 1,170. Earlham College's **Peace and Global Studies** program (PAGS) was founded over 25 years ago. It has been an incredibly popular program within the college – over 80% of graduates have taken at least one PAGS course – as well as been a model for the development of peace studies programs at 20 other collegiate institutions. Earlham's program "provides a setting for the exploration of issues related to the construction of a just and peaceful world. Students analyze issues of war, sexism, racism, and poverty; non-violent initiatives for social change; ecological challenges; and conflict resolution. The program primarily aims to develop students' competencies in fields contributing towards peace and social transformation." Students choose to focus their major in one of eight areas: Conflict Transformation, Religion and Pacifism, Social Theory and Social Movements, International War and Peace, African American Civil Rights, Women and Social Change, Environmental Studies, or a self-designed focus. Alums continue on diverse paths after graduation including graduate school, advocacy, legal work, teaching, cooking, government work, researching and more.

There are 12 **faculty** dedicated to Earlham's PAGS program. Their specialties span many departments including Peace and Global Studies, History, Philosophy, Economics, Politics and International Studies, Spanish and Hispanic Studies, Study-abroad, and Sociology-Anthropology. Julie Bruns, Peace Studies Associate, is the named contact person.

The course work for a PAGS major:

- Eight Core Courses:
 1. Intro to Economics: Global Macroeconomics OR a suitable economics class
 2. Introduction to International Relations OR a suitable politics seminar
 3. Philosophical Inquiry: Peace and Justice OR Postcolonial Theory (philosophy course) OR an Earlham Seminar on Peace and Justice
 4. History and Theory of Nonviolent Movements
 5. Conflict Resolution
 6. Philosophy of Social Science OR Contemporary Social Thought (Sociology-Anthropology course)
 7. International Law OR Theories of International Relations
 8. Methods of Peacemaking
- Three courses from a focus area: Each focus area has at least five courses to choose from. Some focus areas have substantially more courses.
- Senior research project
- Senior seminar
- Internship

It is also possible to complete an **interdepartmental major** with PAGS and another department. Common interdepartmental majors are with Politics, Economics, Religion, Art and Spanish.

Wilmington College: Peace Studies Minor

Wilmington College is a small liberal arts college. It is a Quaker college located in the small town of Wilmington, Ohio.

The **Peace Study Program** is offered as a “Minor” requiring seven 3-credit courses taught primarily by the Department of Religion and Philosophy (R&P), but also involving the Psychology Department (PSY), the Interdisciplinary Study Program (IDS), and Independent Study (XXX). The Peace Study Program, its faculty, and its courses are described thoroughly on the website, www.wilmington.edu.

The **course requirements** of the Program are as follows:

- 1) Mediation (R&P)
- 2) War and Peace (IDS) OR Introduction to Peace and Conflict (R&P)
- 3) Logic and Critical Thinking (R&P) OR Values and Ethics (R&P)
- 4) Introduction to Quakers (R&P) OR Comparative Religions (R&P) OR Basic Christian Beliefs (R&P)
- 5) Case Studies in Nonviolence (IDS) OR Nonviolence and Social Change (R&P)
- 6) Organizational Behavior (PSY) OR Conflict Resolution
- 7) Independent Study: Peace Studies or Internship

Faculty:

Ron Rembert – Associate Professor and Chair of Religion and Philosophy Department
Bernard Matt – Associate Professor of Religion and Philosophy Department

Swarthmore College: Peace and Conflict Studies *

Lee Smithey is one of two Chairs of interdisciplinary minors, the other being Black Studies. Three-fifths of his time is spent in the PACS department, performing such duties as teaching the Introduction, an upper level Peace Studies in Action that serves as a capstone course, and coordinating. The rest of his schedule is teaching sociology. The College is spending less than \$50,000 on his time.

Requirements for the minor: A minor in peace and conflict studies consists of six “credits” (6 courses), of which only two may be taken in the student's major. Introduction to Peace Studies (PEAC 015) is required and should be taken before the senior year if at all possible.

Student programs can include an internship or fieldwork component (e.g., in a peace or conflict management organization such as the United Nations or Suburban Dispute Settlement). An internship is highly recommended. Fieldwork and internships normally do not receive credit. However, students can earn up to one credit for special projects that are developed with an instructor and approved in advance by the Peace and Conflict Studies Committee.

Interest in the program began in late 80's, but was initiated formally in 1991 with a Lippincott Foundation grant of \$250,000, matched by the College. This money was used for summer fellowships and curriculum development.

An Advisory Committee is made up of nine interested faculty from the fields whose courses make up the program. All the concentrations offered by the College have now been converted to minors. Faculty members are informed by letter when a student with the PACS minor is in their classes. A survey based on the College mission statement is being circulated to faculty. The emphasis has been on conflict resolution and underlying causes, but Lee wants the program to develop more fully in peacebuilding and transformation.

There is a Center for Civic and Social Responsibility on campus whose mission is a bridge between the campus and the community, especially the depressed nearby community of Chester. This Center has meeting space for a variety of student groups, such as the Genocide Intervention Network. Some equipment and supplies are provided. PACS gives their discretionary \$2,000 in small increments to such groups.

Another connection is the Pendel Hill Quaker Retreat Center nearby, which offers courses and speakers. But for two years they provided between eight and 14 events/speakers at the College, including two Nobel Peace Prize winners, Jack Pallmyer and Lester Kirtz. There will be a visiting professor in the spring whose specialty is Liberation Theology.

* Based on telephone interview with Chair, Lee Smithey, November 11, 2005, by Judy Riggle

Appendix III: Acknowledgments

During the process of developing the contents of this proposal, we have consulted with a variety of people from the college, its alumni, and the Oberlin community. To acknowledge the experience and inspiration they brought to our endeavor, we would like to thank the following for their aid and advice.

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Mark Belsey, Oberlin Class of '56, served at the World Health Organization for 25 years, member of the advisory committee of the Child Rights Division of Human Rights Watch, member of the program committee of Doctors of the World

Kate Berrigan, Community and Critical Resistance Studies Independent Major, Oberlin Class of '03

Kathy Bickmore, Oberlin Class of '79, Associate Professor of Curriculum at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

Sarah Bishop, Peace and Conflict Studies Independent Major, Oberlin Class of '07

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Pam Brooks, African American Studies Department

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Martha Collins, Creative Writing Department

Michael Fischer, History Department

Cynthia Frantz, Psychology Department

Betty Gabrielli, Administrative Technician IV of College Relations

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Daniel Gomez-Ibanez, Oberlin Class of '64, Founder and Executive Director of the Peace Council

Katya Grimm, Assistant Dean of Studies

David Hart, Oberlin Class of '86, CEO of the Association for Conflict Resolution

Edward Hartfield, Oberlin Class of '72, executive director of the National Center for Dispute Settlement

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David Hill, pastor at First Church, Colgate University graduate

James Howard, Director of Development Leadership Giving

Kate Howard, Oberlin Class of '98

Nicholas Jones, Associate Dean, Chair of the Educational Plans and Policies Committee, English Department

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Baron Leon Pineda, Anthropology Department

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Ellen Sayles, Associate Dean of Studies

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