

**TC 871: SPIRITUAL FORMATION FOR PEACE-BUILDERS**  
**Boston University School of Theology**  
**Spring, 2011**  
**Susan W. Hassinger, Bishop-in-residence and Lecturer**

Contact information:

Office: Room 111C, School of Theology Building

Office hours: by appointment

e-mail address: [shassing@bu.edu](mailto:shassing@bu.edu)

Course description: Conflict transformation in a religious context is rooted in scriptural and theological understandings, and is grounded in spiritual practices. Conflict transformation also emerges from particular contexts in historical time and geography (interpersonal contexts and group/organizational contexts; local, regional, or global geography). This course is designed to assist those who desire to be peace-builders to reflect on persons whose lives and work have reflected peace-building, to explore the practices and understandings in which the conflict transformation of those peace-builders is rooted, and to look at the contexts out of which their peace-building has come.

Course objectives: Students will examine the lives of several key peace-builders, as well as aspects of spiritual foundations and spiritual formation that provide grounding for those engaged in peace-building, restorative justice, conflict transformation ministries, and the work of reconciliation. While the primary focus will be on Christian formation, some attention will also be given to other spiritual traditions.

Through reading and reflection on biographies and autobiographies of national and international peace-builders, students will look at how the cultural and spiritual contexts of the peace-builder influenced their practice. Students will also explore their own contexts and how those contexts impact their perspectives on both spiritual formation and conflict transformation.

The class will incorporate examination and experience of spiritual practices both in class settings and between sessions of the class. Some practices which will be used include: circles, mutual invitation, appreciative inquiry, the arts, various forms of prayer, and journal-keeping. Students will engage in self-examination regarding their own formation and foundations, and will be encouraged to explore the formation of a community of peace-builders that grows out of a mutual covenant.

**I. Course procedure**

The class will meet four times during the semester, each time for 10 hours over two days. (See schedule below.) The class will be conducted as a seminar. Sessions will include presentation, group discussion on presentation and readings, small group interaction, and guest presenters. Each 3- or 4-hour session will begin with some form of centering or prayer, and each day will conclude with the practice of

“examen.” In the first meeting, the class will work on a “Relational Covenant” to guide our life together.

## II. Requirements and grading

Participation in the class sessions is essential. Students will be expected to do the assigned reading between class sessions, to participate in class discussion of those readings, and to engage in the small groups, where applicable. The following are also expected:

### **Written and oral work:**

- A 2-3 page **reflection paper**, indicating **why the student chose to take this course, the goals** which s/he hopes to achieve through this course, and **the questions which s/he brings to the course**. (Due Jan. 26, by e-mail)
- Weekly **keeping of a journal**, with brief reflections on a spiritual practice or an assigned question. Students will not need to turn in the journal, but will write a paper describing the practice of keeping a journal. (2-3 page paper to be submitted no later than Apr. 19, by e-mail)
- A 3-5 **reflection paper** based on one or more of the **scriptural texts** suggested (or include one of your own choosing, after checking with the professor). The paper should demonstrate both exegetical work on the text(s) as well as prayerful reflection on the text(s). (Due Feb. 2, by e-mail)
- A 4-5 page **review of the Porter et al. book Conflict and Communion**; This paper will include a description of the book that might be helpful for a person wanting to know whether or not to read it. At the end, indicate a spiritual practice that you intend to research more fully. It may be one described in the book or another practice you choose. (Feb. 9, by e-mail)
- A 4-5 page **review and critique of Lederach’s The Moral Imagination**. The paper will indicate what you think Lederach means by “moral imagination,” and will include a review of the key disciplines and practices of the moral imagination. The paper will also identify what excites or interests you about Lederach’s thesis, as well as questions his thesis raises for you. (Due Feb. 16, by e-mail.)
- A 4-5 page **reflection paper** describing **the context from which you come, and how that context influences your perspectives on the practice of peace-building**. The paper will include factors from family, geographical and/or cultural settings, contemporary peace-building issues that are important to you, etc. The student will divide his/her life into approximately 5-10- year blocks, and notice the major influences in each period; the student will also identify the core beliefs and values, both positive and negative, that became

part of the student's life in each time period. Where applicable, the student will identify the conflict transformation/peace-building issues significant in that block. (Due Feb. 23, by e-mail)

- A 5-7 page ***review and critique of Miroslav Volf's Exclusion and Embrace***. In addition to a summary of your understanding of ***Volf's context and his theological framework for peace-building***, describe where Volf connects for you in your context, where you have different perspectives from Volf, and why. Relate this to your own denominational or faith tradition. (Due Mar. 1, by e-mail)
- A 5-7 page ***review and critique of the Cortright book, Gandhi and Beyond***. Include at the end of the review the name of the person whose life you will research in more depth, and the reason you have chosen that person. (The person need not be one of those about whom Cortright has written. A list of persons is included in the bibliography. If you chose someone not in the book or on the list, please check with the professor.) (Due Mar.8, by e-mail.)
- A 5-7 page paper on ***the life of the peace-builder you have chosen***. Write the paper as though it is a letter to a friend. Include such things as: a) a brief outline of the person's life, including the context from which s/he came and the context(s) in which s/he practiced peace-building; b) a description of the key spiritual practices and foundations for that person (including reference to the key disciplines and practices from ***The Moral Imagination***), and why you feel these practices are important; c) what you feel this person has to contribute to the issues/concerns of peace-building in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; d) a list of sources you have used in preparing the paper and presentation; (Due Mar. 22, by e-mail. Be prepared to present this person to the class in a 10-minute presentation, with time for questions/dialogue. The presentations will take place during the Apr. 12 or 13 class sessions.)
- A 5-7 page in-depth reflection paper on ***the spiritual practice you chose***. The paper will include information researched from a variety of sources. Include a suggestion of a context in which you might recommend this practice and why, and a description of how you might introduce the practice. Support your paper with a listing of the resources used. (Due Apr.12, by e-mail. You will be asked to make a brief presentation about your spiritual practice – approximately 10 minutes – during the Apr. 13 class session.)
- The ***final paper*** will include three parts: a) a description of how the student's goals have or have not been fulfilled; b) your responses now to the questions you brought to the course; c) a proposed covenant or "rule of life" you might choose to follow in current or future work with peace-building. (6-8 pages; due Apr. 23, by e-mail.)

**For doctoral students**, this additional work is expected: (choose one of the two following options:

- Choose one of the following books. Write a summary of the book, and present it to the class, along with some comments on a comparison of the author's theological perspectives with those of Volf.  
Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers*  
Terrence Rynne, *Gandhi and Jesus*  
L. Gregory Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness*  
John W. DeGruchy, *Reconciliation: Restoring Justice*
- Interview persons who are currently engaged in peace-building or restorative justice ministries. The summary of those interviews should include: a) the ways in which spiritual formation led the interviewees into this focus; b) the specific practices which help to ground them in their work; c) any ways in which they incorporate spiritual practices into their work – especially group practices; d) their struggles to maintain/be engaged in spiritual practices as peace-builders.

Others wishing to receive additional credit may also choose one of the above, or discuss other possibilities with Professor Hassinger.

**Note:** The following provisions are approved by the STH faculty for all courses:

- a. **For persons with disabilities:** "Students with Disabilities—Any students in this course who have a disability that might prevent them from fully demonstrating their abilities should meet with the instructor as soon as possible to initiate disability verification and discuss accommodations that may be necessary to ensure your full participation in the successful completion of course requirements."
- b. **For those who are taking an 800-level course for doctoral level credit:** See above for specific expectations
- c. **Regarding the new STH Academic Code of Conduct:** The STH Academic Code of Conduct may be found on the STH website at: [www.bu.edu/sth/academic/academic-conduct](http://www.bu.edu/sth/academic/academic-conduct). All students are required to familiarize themselves with this code, its definitions of misconduct, and its sanctions. Students should especially familiarize themselves with the section on plagiarism.

**Grading:**

Class participation (15%)

Reflections papers - 4 - including journal reflection (20%)

Review of books - 4 (20%)

Papers on biography and spiritual practice & presentations – 2 (15% each = 30%)

Final paper (15%)

### III. Criteria for evaluation of written materials

The following criteria will be used in evaluating written materials:

#### A. *Form and writing style*

All written materials will be written clearly (no spelling or grammatical errors), typed (1.5 or double-spaced). They should demonstrate coherence, organization, and conciseness of thought. Notes about sources may be reflected in the body of the paper with author's last name, year of book, and page number, or may be traditional footnotes. Where other resources are used, a bibliography or resource list will be expected.

#### B. *Level of reflection and critical understanding*

All papers will indicate both critical understanding of the designated focus, as well as the student's own grappling with the subject. Each paper will demonstrate the student's own voice, as well as include the interpretation of others' voices.

#### C. *Theological reflection*

The papers will reflect the student's knowledge of the theological and biblical principles on which the student is drawing, as well as the student's reflections about those principles.

### IV. Reading and Course Resources

#### *Required Reading:*

David Cortright, *Gandhi and Beyond: Nonviolence for an Age of Terrorism*

Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" (will be supplied in class)

John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination*

Thomas Porter et al. *Conflict and Communion: Reconciliation and Restorative Justice at Christ's Table* (Discipleship Resources, 2006 ISBN 0-88177-478-2)

Miraslov Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: a Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Abingdon Press, 1996 ISBN 0-687-00282-6)

One **biography or autobiography of a peace-builder**; a variety of resources – suggestions below and one book related to **spiritual practice(s)** for peace-builders; or a variety of resources on a particular practice (some suggestions listed below)

**Recommended Reading:**

**Theological and Biblical Foundations**

Walter Brueggeman, *Revelation and Violence: A Study in Contextualization*; Marquette University Press, 1986

L. Gregory Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness: a Theological Analysis*; Eerdmans Publishing, 1995

John Paul Lederach, *The Journey Toward Reconciliation*; Herald Press, 1999

Terrence J. Rynne, *Gandhi & Jesus: The Saving Power of Nonviolence*; Orbis Books, 2008.

Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination*; Augsburg Fortress Press, 1992

Walter Wink, *When the Powers Fall: Reconciliation in the Healing of Nations*; Fortress Press, 1998

John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; William B. Eerdmans, 1994.

**Biographies/Autobiographies:** The following persons are listed as examples. There are a variety of resources available for most of them. If you choose to research another peace-builder, please notify me before proceeding.

Cesar Chavez (farm workers; US)]

Dorothy Day (urban justice; economic justice)

St. Francis of Assisi (ecological and environmental concerns)

Mohandas Gandhi (non-violent direction action in South African and India)

Dag Hammarskjold (Secretary-General of the UN)

Pope John XXIII (general focus on peace)

Martin Luther Kings, Jr. (African-American civil rights; non-violent direction action)

Waagari Maathai (African woman; winner of Nobel Peace prize)

Nelson Mandela (South Africa – end of apartheid; became president of S. Africa)

Archbishop Oscar Romero (human rights & economic justice in Central America)

Dr. Peter Story (South Africa – end of apartheid as a white pastor/theologian)

Archbishop Desmond Tutu (South Africa; Truth & Reconciliation Commission; global)

**Spiritual Practices:** The following practices are listed as examples; there are a variety of resources available. Some possibilities are noted in each category.

❖ **Personal authenticity** (relationship with God)

Thich Nhat Hanh, *Peace Is Every Step: the Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life* (& others)

Ron Kraybill, an unpublished manuscript

Henri Nouwen, *The Road to Peace*

Oscar Romero, *The Violence of Love*

❖ **Prayer**

Henri Nouwen, *The Only Necessary Thing* (and others)

Dennis, Sheila, & Matthew Linn, *Sleeping with Bread: Holding What Gives You Life*

❖ ***Contemplation and reflection on scripture***

Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola

Materials related to the practice of lectio divina

Martin Luther King, Jr., ***Strength to Love*** (collection of sermons)

❖ ***Forgiveness & Reconciliation***

John W. DeGruchy, ***Reconciliation: Restoring Justice***

L. Gregory Jones, ***Embodying Forgiveness: a Theological Analysis***

Desmond Tutu: ***Hope and Suffering; No Future without Forgiveness; Crying in the Wilderness***

❖ ***Eucharist***

Tom Porter et al. ***Conflict and Communion***

❖ ***Hospitality and Community***

John Koenig, ***New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission***

Daniel Homan and Lonni Collins Pratt, ***Radical Hospitality***

Steven V. Doughty, ***Discovering Community: a Meditation on Community in Christ***

❖ ***Listening/holy conversation/discernment***

Several resources by Eric H.F. Law, esp. ***Sacred Acts, Holy Change***

George D. McClain, ***Claiming All Things for God: Prayer, Discernment, and Ritual for Social Change***

❖ ***Non-violent direct action***

Especially resources from M. Gandhi and ML King, Jr.

Walter Wink, ***Jesus and Nonviolence: a Third Way***

***The Power of Nonviolence: Writings by Advocates of Peace*** (introduction by Howard Zinn)

❖ ***Literature, art and music***

## V. Outline of Class Sessions

[illegible]

(Thurs. evening session: 6-8:50 p.m.; Friday a.m. session – 9 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.; Friday afternoon session; 1 p.m. to 4:50 p.m.)

Jan. 19 (eve.) **Overview of the Course**

- Lighting of candle – opening prayer
- Introductions to each other and to the course
- Overview of the syllabus: review of expectations
- Discussion: why are you taking this class? What are your goals for this class?
- Presentation: Assumptions I bring
- Discussion of students' assumptions
- Development of “Relational Covenant” for the class

**Reading overnight:** “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” – brief introduction to the letter and reasons for reading at this time

Jan. 20 (a.m.)      **Laying the Foundations:**  
**Definition of terms; Peace-building as a “Means of Grace”**

Centering

Completion of the “relational Covenant”

Presentation:

Defining the following terms in context of Christian social ethics, theology, and spirituality: spiritual formation, peace-building; restorative justice; conflict resolution and conflict management; conflict transformation

Discussion: what are your understandings of these terms/concepts?

Presentation and Discussion:

Peace-building as a “means of grace” (John Wesley’s works re: means of grace; Christian perfection; and contemporary commentary on them)

Presentation and Discussion:

Peace-building begins with the transformation of the peace-builder (Ron Kraybill’s work: “Principles of Personal Transformation”)

Jan. 20 (p.m.)      **Laying the Foundations II: Peace-Building and Justice**

- Centering
- Discussion of JLK Jr.'s letter: what did you hear about the connections of spiritual foundations, justice, and peace-building as you read it?
- Presentation of spiritual practices and journaling
- Scriptures for reflection on peace-building and justice
- Introduction of "Examen" as a practice; engagement in brief examen



***Assignments due by next class session:***

- Goals/questions reflection paper due: Jan. 26
- Scriptural reflection paper due Feb. 2
- Review of Porter book due Feb. 9
- Weekly journaling: Week 1 – notice what you see as you walk
  - Week 2 – notice people with whom you come in contact
  - Week 3 – notice settings where you sense tension or conflict

**Feb. 9 (eve.)                      Peace-builder as Person I**

- Centering, lighting the candle, and prayer
- Introduce group exercise of “circle process,” with “talking stick.”
  - Review/develop “Covenant of Respect” before beginning
  - Use “circle process” with focus on journaling for 3 weeks
- Discussion of the Porter book, using “circle” process
- Presentation & Discussion: “Appreciative Inquiry” as a practice for peace-builders
  - Where might you see “Appreciative Inquiry” as applicable?
- Presentation of “Personal Conflict Style Inventory” (***ask them to complete overnight***)
- Engage in “Examen” for the day/evening

**Feb. 10 (a.m.)                      Peace-builder as Person II**

- Centering, lighting candle, prayer
- Introduce “Mutual Invitation” process with talking stick
  - Use MI with focus on “personal context” papers
- Presentation of Peace-builder as Person, based on Kraybill et al.
  - Introduce “Life Wheel” – Kraybill manuscript; relate to Appreciative Inquiry
- Discussion of “Personal Conflict Style Inventory”

**Feb. 10 (p.m.)                      Scripture and Theology for Peace-building**

- Centering, lighting the candle, prayer
- [View parts of either Gandhi or Romero film]
- Presentation on scriptures that have been foci for peace-builders
  - Engage in lectio divina with one of the texts (Matthew 18:15-20)
  - Small group/total group sharing of their scriptural reflections
- Introduction to Lederach and Volf books
- Introduction to Cortright book
- Closing examen

***Assignments due by next class session:***

- Review & critique of Lederach book, due Feb.16
- Contextual reflection paper, due Feb. 23
- Review & critique of Volf, due Mar.1
- Review & critique of Cortright, due Mar. 8

Journal:

Weeks 1 & 2 – reflect on “Life Wheel” using Appreciative Inquiry  
Week 3 & 4 – reflect on where you see evidence of “calm” & “storm” in your personal conflict experience & practice

**Mar. 8 (eve.)                                      Theology for Peace-building**

Centering, lighting the candle, spiritual practice  
Discussion of journaling with CSI  
Discussions on Lederach & Volf  
Presentation on Rynne and Wink’s theology  
Overnight assignment: Do “Prayer Styles Assessment”  
Closing examen

**Mar. 9 (a.m.)                                      Spiritual Practices of Peace-builders I**

Centering, lighting candle, prayer or spiritual practice  
Discussion of Cortright book (using mutual invitation)  
Introduction of spiritual practices  
    Non-violent direct action (esp. Ghandi & Wink)  
    Communion/Eucharist  
    Prayer types

**Mar. 9 (p.m.)                                      Spiritual Practices of Peace-builders II**

Centering, lighting candle, prayer or spiritual practice  
Discussion of Prayer self-assessment – using mutual invitation  
Further introductory presentation of spiritual practices  
    Forgiveness  
    Hospitality  
    Listening/discernment  
    The arts  
Presentation:  
Closing with “Examen”

Assignments due by next class session:

Paper due on the life of the peace-builder you chose – due Mar. 22  
Paper on the spiritual practice you chose – due Apr. 12  
Presentations on peace-builders (Apr. 12 or 13) and spiritual practices (Apr. 13)

Journal:

Weeks 1 & 2: reflect on where you observe conflict transformation around you, where you see peace-building happening, whether with yourself or others, locally or in the news.  
Weeks 3 & 4: reflect on the spiritual practices which are developing your moral imagination

Apr. 12 (eve.)                      **Peace-builders as Persons III**  
Centering, lighting candle, prayer  
Checking in: circle process re: journaling  
Student presentations on peace-builders  
Discussions of presentations (using "Mutual Invitation")  
Presentation & Discussion:  
    Giving and receiving feedback as a spiritual practice  
Closing examen

Apr. 13 (a.m.)                      **Spiritual Practices of Peace-builders III**  
Centering, lighting of candle, prayer or other spiritual practice  
Student presentations on spiritual practices of peace-builders  
Discussion of presentations  
Presentation: "In It for the Long Haul"  
    Discussion of presentation

Apr. 13 (p.m.)                      **Developing a Rule of Life; Wrapping Up**  
Centering, lighting of candle, prayer or other spiritual practice  
Presentation: "Rule of Life" for Peace-builders  
Class review and evaluation  
Examen and closing prayer (Love Feast?)

***Assignments to conclude semester:*** Journal reflection paper due no later than Apr. 19  
    Final paper due no later than Apr. 23