

TH272 – Fall Term, 2012 – Wednesdays, 3:00-5:30 – Carney 104A
Conflict Transformation and the Christian Calling to Reconciliation

Raymond G. Helmick, S.J., with Jerome Maryon

Office Hours: You will find me more often at St. Mary's Hall than in my office, room 312V in the new Campanella Way building . I will regularly be there mornings from 9:00 to 12:00 any class day. You are always welcome other times as well, whenever you find me.

You can check with me by phone, **552-8215**, which rings both in the office and in my room at St. Mary's Hall. When you don't find me there, you will often find me at **617-325-1300** (St. Theresa's Rectory in West Roxbury), and we can set a time for an appointment. Always, please, leave me a number to get back to you.

Course Description:

The work of reconciliation is a fundamental Christian task. This course will study it in the light of actual experience of mediation in several violent conflicts, particularly Northern Ireland, various Middle Eastern conflicts and the Balkan countries. The methodology will be that of Conflict Transformation, which sees change in the way the parties see and understand one another as a way to restore relations among them. Emphasis will be placed on the practices of restorative justice and non-violence.

I am particularly anxious that this course should reflect the actual world of violence in which Americans, as a dominant but fading world power, live. For that reason, we will work our way through Andrew Bacevich's rather demanding edited book, *The Long War: A New History of National Security Policy Since World War II*, taking chapters of it, critically, as the beginning of classes week by week.

In my own perception , the climate of violence has lurched repeatedly over these years, from the tremendous existential dread under which people lived through the years of the Cold War, knowing always that life on earth could literally end in the nuclear exchange between super-powers that was always impending, to a decade of relative calm after the removal of that imminent threat, to a renewed rage of pursuit of enemies following on the attacks of 9/11. The growing control by what has been called the "military-industrial complex" over American life and policy has gone on uninterrupted through those shifts in mentality. At the same time the proliferation of heavy industry has created the new threat, denied by the corporate powers, of global warming and the culture of civility has largely disappeared from our dealings with one another, encumbering our ability to meet these challenges. Those constitute consequently the major agenda for our times to which we need to respond in faith and commitment to one another's good rather than by instinctive anger.

Requirements:

Rather than a mid-term exam I will require a **critical review of a pertinent book**, due by October 24th; also a **term paper** (2,000 words approx.) and a **final exam** (in class). The paper will count for 40% of the grade, the book review and the final exam each 30%.

I will also post a question on the Blackboard Vista after each class, and will look for each student to post a one-page response to it, to which I can then post a reply. I've been finding that this promotes a very active discussion within the class, and works better if not encumbered by any fears that you could be hurt by what you write.

Required Books:

Andrew J. Bacevich, ed., *The Long War: A New History of National Security Policy Since World War II* as noted above (Columbia University Press, 2007).

Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz, *America's Battle for God: A European Christian Looks at Civil Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

Beyond that, a number of my own articles will keep turning up on the Blackboard Vista each week. A list of suggested books for the mid-term critical book review will be provided early in the course.

Class Calendar:

Wednesday, Sept. 5 Introductory Discussion: *Read beforehand* Andrew Bacevich's Introduction to his book, *The Long War*.

The variety of crises facing our world society: 1) militarism, with its threat to civilization; 2) economic collapse, diminishing job prospects and quality of life; 3) ecological dangers through climate change and global warming; 4) paralysis of political discourse; 5) discrediting of religion whether through disillusion in a secular age or through fundamentalism.

Wednesday, Sept. 12 *Read beforehand* Arnold A. Offner, "Liberation or Dominance: The Ideology of U.S. National Security Policy (Bacevich pp. 1-52).

You should also get into Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz's book, *America's Battle for God*, by this time, with emphasis on the development from the early settlers' self-concept as "City on a Hill" to the Manifest Destiny of the 19th century to the messianic understanding of America as the requisite model for all the world.

Wednesday, Sept. 19 *Read* James Kurth, "Variations on the American Way of War: (Bacevich, pp.53-98). A more technical chapter. Has the U.S. lost control of its military ambitions?

Discussion of Müller-Fahrenholz thesis. Can you see it in American political life?

Wednesday, Sept. 26 Read George H. Quester, “The Politics of Conventional War in an Unconventional Age” (Bacevich, pp. 99-136). Once again a military man’s technical discussion. Has the nuclear age made war of any kind simply too dangerous?

The economic debacle of recent years. Causes? What does it mean for your own life prospects? Are there ways to deal with it?

Wednesday, Oct. 3 Read Tami Davis Biddle, “Shield and Sword: U.S. Strategic Forces Since 1945” (Bacevich, pp. 137-206).

Global Warming: its meaning for your own and future generations.

Wednesday, Oct. 10 Read Andrew J. Bacevich, “Elusive Bargain: The Pattern of U.S. Civil-Military Relations Since World War II” (Bacevich, pp. 207-264). He may surprise you with the depth of his cynicism.

Further discussion of global warming, climate change. How grave a threat? Is there a way to avoid passing a tipping point?

Wednesday, Oct. 17 Read Anna Kasten Nelson, “The Evolution of the National Security State: Endless and Uniquitous” (Bacevich, pp. 265-301).

Poisoning of American political discourse by polarization. “Social issues,” privileging of the economic elite, issues on rights of labor, on health-care entitlements.

Wednesday, Oct. 24 **Critical Book Reviews due this day.**

Read John Pradis, “Intelligence for Empire” (Bacevich 302-334). This may give you more detail than you need to know about the changing and multiplying agencies of the intelligence bureaucracy. The salient point is to understand its flaws, how all this intelligence-gathering has managed to miss the main developments of our time. The problems seem to be pressures to be up-to-date pertinent, which makes assessments short- rather than long-range, political pressures to tell administrations what they want to hear, and non-communication among the agencies because of their cult of secrecy.

“*Quantilla sapientia mundus regatur*” (Axel Oxenstierna, 1648).

Breakdown of civility in American discourse, political and otherwise.

Wednesday, Oct. 31 Read Alex Roland, “The Military-Industrial Complex: Lobby and Trope” (Bacevich , pp. 335-370). An important chapter. We will let the class be a discussion of it.

Fundamentalism in religion, its parallel in political life.

Wednesday Nov. 7 Read “Paying for Global Power: Costs and Benefits of Postwar U.S. Military Spending” (Bacevich, pp. 371-404).

Who actually governs in our society? What has Church or religion had to say of it?

Wednesday, Nov. 14 *Read* James Burk, “The Changing Moral Contract for Military Service” (Bacevich, pp. 404-455).

Valuation of human life: in our religion, in our warfare, in our care (or lack of it) for the disadvantaged.

Wednesday, Nov. 21 **Thanksgiving Holiday. No Class**

Wednesday, Nov. 28 *Read* Charles Chatfield, “American Insecurity: Dissent from the ‘Long War’” (Bacevich, pp. 456-516).

Challenge to faith in our increasingly secular times. Disillusion with churches, their shrinking prestige or power to influence public or private life.

Wednesday, Dec. 5 *Read* William L. O’Neill, “The ‘Good’ War: National Security and American Culture: (Bacevich 512-550).

General review and discussion.

Study Days, December 11-12

Final Exam – Friday, December 14, 9:00-11:00