



Boston University School of Theology Tom Porter Religion & Conflict Transformation Program

Religion & Conflict Transformation Certificate – An Overview for Students at Boston University

RCT Overview

The Religion & Conflict Transformation Certificate prepares graduates to engage communities in transforming conflicts toward justice and peace. Administered by the Tom Porter Program for Religion & Conflict Transformation at Boston University School of Theology, it is available to any Masters-level student or above at Boston University and at member institutions of the [Boston Theological Interreligious Consortium](#).

Students who complete the RCT Certificate will be able to:

- Communicate a clear definition and framework of conflict transformation.
- Describe theological or theoretical foundations for the work of conflict transformation from within their own religious or ethical tradition.
- Lead or practice embodied conflict transformation practices in their communities.
- Reflect critically on their own experience and social contexts in light of conflict transformation theories, theologies, ethics, and practices.

RCT Certificate Requirements (BU)

To receive the Certificate in Religion & Conflict Transformation, students complete the following requirements:

- Four (4) courses minimum (or their equivalent, 12 BU Credits):
 - “Spirit & Art of Conflict Transformation” (3 credits)

- Either “The Principles and Practices of Restorative Justice” OR “Faith-Based Community Organizing for Justice and Peace” (3 credits)
- Two additional course electives (6 credits), which may be participation in a contextual education placement or participation in a travel seminar.
- Capstone presentation at the annual Spring Capstone Colloquium during your final year of study.

What makes the RCT Certificate unique?

Multicultural and Interfaith: In all its programs, the RCT Program attempts to embody in its practice the possibility of a pluralistic peace via practices of learning, ritual, justice, and community. Rooted in Protestant Christian traditions, the Program has graduated practitioners of all global religious traditions as well as those who do not practice a religious tradition. Graduates have come from Africa, Asia, Central and South America, across the United States, and nearly every neighborhood in Boston. There are few programs in the world with the combination of racial, national, and religious diversity that exists here.

Urban Context: The RCT Program is the only such program in North America located in the heart of a major city with a global footprint. This enables opportunities to learn and practice both in and beyond the classroom in ways that can uniquely prepare graduates to lead communities through the conflicts of our globalizing world.

Emphases in Restorative Justice and Community Organizing: The RCT Program at BU has particular strengths in restorative justice and in community organizing. There is no other place that weaves these conflict transformation traditions together in the ways they are in the RCT Program. In addition, there are opportunities to practice these skills at BU and in the greater Boston area. In particular, the RCT Program hosts its own contextual education/internship experience focused on learning how to be a peacemaking circle keeper.

Specialization in Ecology and Conflict: Environmental conflicts over land, water, climate change, and more will increasingly define life in the 21st century. Through a partnership with the Faith and Ecological Justice Program (FEJ), students can earn credits toward the RCT certificate by participating in FEJ, growing their knowledge and skills at this specific intersection. (In recent years this partnership has produced a travel seminar titled “Liberation Theology and

Socio-Ecological Conflict in Brazil (2025)” and the forthcoming inaugural Machozi Symposium (2026).)

Partnership with Boston Theological Interreligious Consortium (BTI): The RCT Certificate is earned through the BTI. This partnership enables students to enroll in elective courses at any of the BTI schools including Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, Hartford International University for Religion and Peace, Harvard Divinity School, Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, and more!

How to Enroll

1. Inform your academic advisor about your interest in obtaining the RCT/BTI Certificate and obtain their approval.
2. Email the RCT Director, Dr. James McCarty, about your interest: mccartyj@bu.edu. This enables you to receive emails about our events and invitations to RCT gatherings.
3. Enroll in BTI/RCT-approved [Courses](#).

Detailed Description of Requirements

1) Coursework

The RCT required core course, STH TS 805 The Spirit and Art of Conflict Transformation (3 credits; offered every Fall Semester at BU School of Theology)

Three additional course electives that focus on religion and conflict transformation studies or religious peacebuilding in the following areas: *conflict studies, spiritual formation of peacebuilders, trauma healing, human security, restorative justice, and interfaith dialogue*.

One of these courses may be an internship or Travel Seminar (9 credits)

- The courses you choose to take must meet the following two criteria and be approved by the RCT Director and BTI Director:

- The course has as one of its central purposes the study of one of the 6 themes listed above;
- Significant attention to analyzing religion in relation to conflict and/or conflict transformation.

See the approved [course list](#) and concentration suggestions below. If you would like to submit an alternative course for approval, please contact the RCT office at rct@bu.edu.

Internship / Contextual Education: An RCT Internship is optional, and can be substituted for one of the RCT course electives. An internship engages the student in hands-on learning experiences with an organization that is practicing conflict transformation / reconciliation / peacemaking. It can be taken as a 4 credit course throughout the academic year, or during the summer. Students interested submit an application to the RCT office the spring before the year of their anticipated placement. Students can utilize their RCT internship for their Contextual Education requirement if planned with both the RCT Director and the Contextual Education Director.

Travel Seminar: A travel seminar can be substituted for one of the RCT course electives if the Travel Seminar has been approved by the RCT program. They are offered during January, March (Spring Break), May, or August. Students must submit an application and attend several classes to prepare for the trip itself as well as classes after to debrief the experience. Learn more about general BU STH Travel Seminars [here](#).

2) Attend & Present at the Spring Capstone Colloquium

The Spring Capstone Colloquium is an opportunity for the RCT community to hear each graduating participant in the program share learnings from their study in the RCT Program as well as how these learnings will guide them in their work in the future. These have been remarkable events and are consistently inspiring and educational. Every graduating student will prepare a 15-minute capstone presentation in which they integrate what they have learned in their RCT courses and apply them to a specific research or professional context.

Potential “Concentrations”

Though the RCT Certificate does not have formal concentrations, students who wish to focus in a specific area may pursue courses of study informed in the following areas. We have provided a list of courses from across BTI schools which fit into each “concentration” area and are eligible toward the RCT Certificate:

- **Congregational Ministry and Conflict Transformation**
 - Ministry in a Diverse Church (BC)
 - The Church and Interreligious Dialogue (BC)
 - Educating for Justice and Peace (BC)
 - Socio-Spiritual Care (BC)
 - Paradigms of Racism, the Ignorance They Hide, and the Harm They Sustain (BU)
- **Trauma-informed Conflict Transformation**
 - *Recommended:* Principles and Practices of Restorative Justice (BU)
 - Trauma Healing and Prevention (BC)
 - Trauma and Theology (BU)
 - Socio-Spiritual Care (BC)
 - Healing Trauma from the Inside Out (Hartford)
 - Trauma-Informed Bystander Intervention (One-credit) (BTI)
- **Restorative Justice and Conflict Transformation**
 - *Strongly Recommended:* Principles and Practices of Restorative Justice (BU)
 - Peacemaking Circles (BU)
 - Transitional Justice and Reconciliation (BU)
 - *Recommended:* Peacemaking Circle Keeper Internship (BU)
 - Mediation (One-credit) (BU)
- **International Conflict Transformation**
 - Liberation Theology (BU)
 - Ethics of Global Development (BC)
 - Religion and the Governance of Global Issues (HDS)
 - Religion, Conflict, and Peace in Israel/Palestine (HDS)
 - Transitional Justice and Reconciliation (BU)
- **Activism and Social Change**
 - *Strongly Recommended:* Faith-Based Community Organizing for Justice and Peace (BU)
 - Liberation Theology (BU)
 - Peacemaking Circles (BU)

- Faith and Justice: Liberation Theologies in the US (BC)
- Nonviolence in Faith-Based Social Movements (Hartford)
- Nonviolent Social Change (One-credit) (BU)
- Faith and Ecological Justice Certificate Series (BU students only)
- **Interfaith Conflict Leadership**
 - World Religions in Boston (BU)
 - Ministry and Leadership in Interfaith Contexts (BU)
 - The Church and Interreligious Dialogue (BC)
 - Antisemitism, Racism, and Christian Nationalism (BC)
 - Undoing Anti-Judaism in the Church (BC)
 - Interreligious Dialogue: Theory and Practice (Hartford)
 - Negotiating Across Worldviews (HDS)
 - Religion and the Problem of Tolerance (BU)
 - Muslim-Christian Conflict or Cooperation: The Politics of Interpreting Our Shared Past (Hartford)
 - Faith in the Neighborhood: Understanding and Engaging the World's Religions in America (Hartford)
- **Racial Justice and Conflict Transformation.**
 - *Recommended:* Principles and Practices of Restorative Justice (BU)
 - Faith and Justice: Liberation Theologies in the US (BC)
 - Theology, Race, and Critical Race Theory (BC)
 - Antisemitism, Racism, and Christian Nationalism (BC)
 - Christianity and the Problem of Racism (GCTS)
 - Socio-Spiritual Care (BC)
 - Paradigms of Racism, the Ignorance They Hide, and the Harm They Sustain (BU)

Program Leadership

James W. McCarty is an interdisciplinary scholar whose research sits at the intersections of Peace Studies and Christian Ethics. He is interested in the ethics of social and political practices of social transformation such as restorative justice, grassroots peacebuilding, nonviolent social change, and racial justice and human rights activism. He has also written about the theological ethics of Martin Luther King Jr. and Desmond Tutu and has published multiple essays on Asian American Christian Ethics. His writings have appeared in journals of theology, ethics, and law. Dr. McCarty is a general editor of the book series [The Business of Modern Life](#) which critically

examines the ways the moral logics of neoliberal capitalism have come to influence our shared life.

Prior to coming to BU, he held administrative and teaching positions at Emory University, Seattle University, and the University of Washington. At BU he teaches courses in conflict transformation, restorative justice, peacebuilding, and community organizing. He became Program Director for the RCT in 2022. In addition to his scholarship, Dr. McCarty has been a minister and has worked in congregational and campus ministries in Washington, Georgia, and California. He has also been a restorative justice, transformative justice, and conflict transformation practitioner in the United States and East Africa.

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