

NAROPA UNIVERSITY

Course number: REL 312/585

Department: Religious Studies

Course Title: Spiritual Models of Social Action

Credit Hours: 3 credits

Term & Year: Fall semester, 2005

Time & Location of Class: Tuesday & Thursday 9-10:20 (Sycamore 8150)

Instructor: Candace Walworth

Office Hours: Tuesday (3-4), Thursday (10:30-11:30), and by appointment

Location: The Little House

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Course Description:

A study of historical and contemporary figures who exemplify the spiritual ideals of nonviolent social action, tracing their unique ways of turning their personal challenges into nonviolent leadership. Drawing upon autobiography, biography, critical analysis, and film as source material, students develop a personal dialogue with each of these activists, examining how inner and outer journeys join in spiritually based social activism. Activists studied include major historical figures such as Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. as well as recent Nobel peace prize recipients such as Shirin Ebadi, Desmond Tutu, and quasi-leaderless movements such as The Mothers of La Plaza de Mayo.

Course Objectives – Students will:

- Examine key ideas in the work of nonviolent social activists. Be able to apply what you learn by studying Gandhi, King, Boulding, Macy, Tutu and others to your own life, reflecting on the issues of suffering in your communities and the larger world that attract your attention and move you to action; likewise, learn to notice when you ignore or turn away from suffering in your communities and the larger world.
- Develop an understanding of the obstacles faced by spiritually-based social activists, examining the ways in which they draw upon and challenge their respective spiritual and cultural traditions.
- Practice the skills necessary to create and sustain a learning community -- deep listening, close-reading (paying attention to the details of a text), respect for differences, risk-taking, willingness to ask for help as needed and to offer your insights, confusion, humor, and questions to the rest of us. Periodically, we will assess our efforts in this direction, clarifying our intentions, identifying our obstacles, and building on our strengths.
- Develop your research and collaboration skills by participating in an interview-based project that requires individual and collective contemplation, research, and action.

Class Projects & Grading Criteria:

- 1. Personal Inquiry:** This semester we will read a wide range of autobiographical texts in which men and women grapple with the social conflicts of their times, drawing upon the resources from their spiritual traditions for guidance, support, and inspiration. Examples from our course readings include Gandhi's "experiments with truth," Elise Boulding's "Born Remembering" and Desmond Tutu's *No future without forgiveness*. The "personal inquiry" papers provide you with an opportunity to reflect upon and analyze the relevance of the class readings, films, and discussions to your own life. 20% of final grade.
- 2. Correspondence:** Our course readings include letters to and from spiritually-based social activists such as Rosemary Ruether and Thomas Merton's letters, Gandhi's letters to Nehru, Lord Irwin, and Franklin D. Roosevelt, Erik Erikson's letter to Gandhi, King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail," and Joanna Macy's "open letters." This assignment has two steps: In step one, you will write a letter to Gandhi or about Gandhi, and in step two you will correspond with one or more of your classmates in the "King" section of the course. 20% of final grade.
- 3. Artistic Inquiry:** Explore any idea or cluster of ideas raised in our class discussions or readings through an artistic medium – spoken word, short story, theater, music, active imagination, etc. If you're interested in trying your hand at writing a story for children or young adults, see the On-Line sourcebook for examples of children's literature about Gandhi and King. 10% of final grade.

4. Cooperative Inquiry: Interviews with Spiritually-based Social Activists

Early in the semester you will identify an area of interest, for instance, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, the Tikkun community, Christian Peacemaker teams, one of the many spiritually-based restorative justice initiatives, etc. We will organize teams based on affinity-of-inquiry. You and your team members will interview spiritually-based social activists, create oral and written presentations based on these interviews, and contribute to a class publication.

Together we will make decisions about the specific details of this project. I see this project as an opportunity to learn from spiritually engaged social activists and to give something back to the individuals and communities we will learn from. You will receive guidelines and step-by-step due dates in class. 30% of final grade.

- 5. Attendance, participation in class sessions, and oral presentations:** To thrive, this class requires your steady presence and active participation. If you miss class, it's your responsibility to find out what you missed and what you need to prepare for the next class. More than four absences will lower your final grade for the semester.

Lively class discussions require close reading of the assigned texts. Bring your copy of the text(s) we are reading to each class, along with your notes and questions. On your oral presentation days, you will turn in the notes you prepare for your presentation. These written documents are informal yet should demonstrate thoughtful engagement with the material. 20% of final grade.

Classroom Etiquette: Arrive on time. Eat breakfast before the bow. Minimize entering and

exiting during class.

Accommodations for Qualified Students: If you have any special needs that may require accommodations or if you will miss a class because of a religious holiday, please let me know by the third week of class.

Naropa University will provide accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. To request an accommodation, or to discuss any learning needs you may have, contact the Learning Needs Specialist, Kendra Kohlhaas. Her office is located in the Administration Building on the Arapahoe campus. You may contact her at 303-245-4749 or e-mail: kohlhaas@naropa.edu.

Required Books:

Dalton, D. (1993). *Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent power in action*. New York: Columbia University Press. (Abbreviated “Dalton” in the syllabus)

Easwaran, E. (1997). *Gandhi, the man: The story of his transformation* (3rd ed.). Tomales, Calif.: Nilgiri Press. (Abbreviated “Easwaran” in the syllabus)

King, M. L., & Carson, C. (1998). *The autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York: Intellectual Properties management, Inc. in association with Warner Books. (Abbreviated “King” in the syllabus)

Tutu, D. (1999). *No future without forgiveness*. New York: Doubleday. (Abbreviated “Tutu” in the syllabus)

Sourcebook: Price TBA in class. (Abbreviated “SB” in the syllabus)

Recommended Browsing for the Interview Project:

Aung San Suu Kyi & Clements, A. (1997). *The voice of hope*. New York: Seven Stories Press.

Ingram, C. (2003). *In the footsteps of Gandhi: Conversations with spiritual social activists* (Rev. ed.). Berkeley, Calif.: Parallax Press.

Puleo, M. (1994). *The struggle is one: Voices and visions of liberation*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Zehr, H. (1996). *Doing life: Reflections of men and women serving life sentences*. Intercourse, Pa.: Good Books.

Zehr, H. (2001). *Transcending: Reflections of crime victims*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books.

These books are on reserve in the Ginsberg Library. I recommend that you browse Ingram and Puleo early in the semester, then take a look at *The voice of hope* (Conversations between Alan Clements and Aung San Suu Kyi) and Howard Zehr’s books when you’re ready to think about the form of your interview project.

On-line Sourcebook:

The on-line sourcebook contains articles and chapters from books for student presentation days and “optional” readings. To access the on-line sourcebook, go to:
<http://reserves.naropa.edu/eres/coursepage.aspx?cid=58> I will let you know the password as soon as I know it.

INTRODUCTION

August 23: An introduction to one another, the class, and to one instance of spiritually-based social action – Le Chambon-sur-Lignon. We will watch an excerpt from Pierre Sauvage’s documentary “Weapons of the Spirit” about a French village under Nazi rule in World War II. The film examines “crimes that didn’t take place,” depicting individual acts of conscience and the solidarity of a religious community.

For an interview with the film-maker, go to:
http://www.chambon.org/weapons_moyers_interview_en.htm

August 25: Why does social justice need love?
bell hooks: “Love and Social Justice” (from the 1999 American Academy of Religion)

Who is in our class? What brings us here? What is our experience with spiritually-based social action? What are our communities of identity and interest? Begin to identify passions, emerging questions, diverging and converging “lines of investigation” between and among us.

Reading assignment for today’s class: bell hooks: Interview with Thich Nhat Hanh (handout); Rosemary Ruether and Thomas Merton letters (handout)

MOHANDAS K. GANDHI

[Watch Richard Attenborough’s film “Gandhi” by Sept. 6]

August 30: Gandhi -- Introduction

Film excerpt: “Gandhi’s India”

Reading assignment for today’s class: Easwaran (pp. 5-103); Nanda, “Gandhi and Religion” (SB # 1)

Sept. 1: Gandhi: Autobiographical & Biographical Perspectives

Reading assignment for today’s class: Easwaran (pp. 105-145); Selected chapters from Gandhi’s *Autobiography* (SB # 2); Gandhi’s letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, July, 1942 (SB # 3); Gandhi’s letter to Nehru, October, 1945 (SB # 4).

Due date: Personal Inquiry I.

Sept. 6: “Satyagraha Meets Swaraj” and “Gandhi as Leader”

Film excerpt: “Defying the Crown” (A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict film series)

Reading assignment for today’s class: Dalton, pp. xi-62; Easwaran, pp. 147-171.

Sept. 8: “The Salt Satyagraha”

Film excerpt: Attenborough’s “Gandhi”

Reading assignment for today’s class: Dalton, pp. 91-138; Joan Bondurant’s “Introduction” and “Satyagraha: Its Basic Precepts” from *Conquest of violence: The Gandhian philosophy of conflict* (SB # 5); “Some Rules of Satyagraha” by Gandhi (SB #6)

If you’re interested in additional readings on the Salt March, read Lewis Fischer, “Drama at the Seashore” (On-Line Sourcebook # 1) and “The Salt March,” a collection of five brief accounts of the Salt March in *The Gandhi Reader* (On-Line Sourcebook # 2)

Sept. 13: “The Calcutta Fast”

Film excerpt: Attenborough’s “Gandhi”

Reading assignment for today’s class: Dalton, pp. 139-167 and pp. 188-200.

If you’re interested in a second account of the Calcutta fast, read Fischer, “The Last Fast” and “The Last Act” (On-Line Sourcebook # 3).

Sept. 15: Gandhi: Student Presentations (3 groups of two each)

You will choose from the following essays for your presentation on Gandhi. During class on Sept. 6, we will decide who wants to present what. You will find the readings for student presentation days in the On-Line Sourcebook. Down-load and read those essays selected by your peers for presentation.

- “Epilogue” to Judith Brown’s biography of Gandhi, *Prisoner of Hope*. On-Line Sourcebook # 4
- “A Personal Word” by Erik Erikson from *Gandhi’s truth: The origins of militant nonviolence*. On-Line Sourcebook # 5
- “Critiques of Gandhi from His Contemporaries: Rabindranath Tagore and M. N. Roy” (Dalton, Chapter 3)
- “Mahatma Gandhi” (from Ira Chernus’s *American Nonviolence: The History of an Idea*). On-Line Sourcebook # 6

Due date: Gandhi letters. If you are one of the presenters today, your due date for this assignment is Sept. 20.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

Sept. 20: Martin Luther King, Jr. – Background
“The Drum Major Instinct” and “The Three Dimensions of a Complete Life,” sermons of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Film excerpt: “Eyes on the Prize, Part One, 1954-1960”

Reading assignment for today’s class: King, pp. vii - 49; “The Drum Major Instinct” (SB # 7) and “The Three Dimensions of a Complete Life” (SB #8)

Sept. 22: Montgomery Bus Boycott
Spiritual Influences on King
Kitchen table conversion

Film excerpt: “MLK: An Historical Perspective”

Reading assignment for today’s class: King, pp. 50-134; “The Montgomery Bus Boycott” by Adam Fairclough (SB #9)

Sept. 27: The Birmingham Campaign
Letter from Birmingham Jail

Film excerpt: “Eyes on the Prize: No Easy Walk, Episode 4”

Reading assignment for today’s class: King, pp. 170-217; 229-238; 255-264; 270-289. Our class discussion will center on King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (King, pp. 187-217) and “The White Ministers’ Law and Order Statement” (SB #10)

For further reading: “The Prison Epistle” by Jonathon Bass in *Blessed are the peacemakers: Martin Luther King Jr., eight white religious leaders, and the “Letter from Birmingham Jail”* (On-Line Sourcebook # 8).

Sept. 29: Poverty and Vietnam – Expanding the Vision
Memphis and the eruption of violence
Reluctant leader, inconvenient hero

Film excerpt: “Eyes on the Prize: The Promised Land, Episode 10”

Reading assignment for today’s class: King, pp. 297-366.

Oct. 4: King’s Legacy: Student Presentations

You will choose from the following essays for your presentation on King. During class on Sept. 22, we will decide who wants to present what. You will find the readings for student presentation days in the On-Line Sourcebook. Down-load and read those essays selected by your peers for presentation.

- “Love as the Practice of Freedom” by bell hooks. On-Line Sourcebook # 9

In this essay from her book *Outlaw culture: Resisting representations*, hooks examines the implications of King’s “courage to speak as much as he did about the transformative power of love in a culture where such talk is often seen as merely sentimental.”

- “The Inconvenient Hero: The Last Years of Martin Luther King, Jr.” and “Tell the Children” by Vincent Harding (from *Martin Luther King: The Inconvenient Hero*). On-Line Sourcebook # 10

- “Many Roads to Morning: Rethinking Nonviolence” by Starhawk (in *Webs of power: Notes from the global uprising*). On-Line Sourcebook # 11

Starhawk examines “lessons learned” from Gandhi and King and suggests that we need an earth-based *satyagraha*, offering ten principles on which to build “empowering direct action.”

- “Mohandas, Malcolm, and Martin” by Dennis Dalton (Dalton, pp. 168-187)

WOMEN AS PEACEMAKERS

Oct. 6: The Mothers of La Plaza de Mayo

Film excerpt: “Las Madres: The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo” produced and directed by Susana Munoz and Lourdes Portillo

Reading assignment for today’s class: “The Mothers of La Plaza de Mayo: A Peace Movement” by Viviana Abreu Hernandez (SB # 11).

Optional: “Gendering Peacebuilding” by Susan McKay and Dyan Mazurana (On-Line Sourcebook # 12); the website (in Spanish) for “Las Madres” is: <http://www.madres.org/>

Due date: King Correspondence

Oct. 11-13: Practice Week

Oct. 18: Elise Boulding & Friends

LeRoy Moore and Pat Washburn, who have worked closely with Elise Boulding, will join us for the discussion today.

Reading assignment for today’s class: “Born Remembering” by Elise Boulding (SB # 12); “Quaker Educator” from Mary Lee Morrison’s biography *Elise Boulding: A life in the cause of peace* (SB # 13)

Oct. 20: Elise Boulding, continued

Film: “Elise Boulding: Beacon for a Peaceful World”

Reading assignment for today's class: "The Other America: The Forgivers and the Peacemakers" by Elise Boulding (SB # 14); "Peace Praxis: The Craft and Skills of Doing Peace" by Elise Boulding (SB # 15)

Elise Boulding experiential exercise: The 200-year present

Oct. 25: Student presentation day – Artistic Inquiry. Depending on the number of people in the class, we may break into two groups.

Due date: Artistic Inquiry

Oct. 27: Joanna Macy

Reading assignment for today's class: "The Tibetans," "Sri Lanka," and "The Elm Dance" from Joanna Macy's *Widening Circles: A memoir* (SB # 16)

Experiential exercise based on Joanna Macy's *The Work that Re-Connects*

Nov. 1: Joanna Macy, continued

Video excerpt: The Greening of the Self

Reading assignment for today's class: Selected chapters from *World as lover, world as self* by Joanna Macy (SB # 17).

Nov. 3: Joanna Macy finish; begin Shirin Ebadi

Reading assignment for today's class: "Encouraging Words for Activists," "Guarding the Earth: A Conversation with Joanna Macy," and "Spiritual Exercises for Social Activists" by Joanna Macy (SB # 18); your choice of Joanna Macy's letters posted on her web-site at <http://www.joanna.macy.net/index.html#Letter>

Video: "Islam, Democracy & Human Rights" – Shirin Ebadi talk at the John F. Kennedy School of Government

Nov. 8: Shirin Ebadi

Haqqa Ochs, teacher and scholar of women and Islam, will join us for the discussion today.

Reading assignment for today's class: "Bound but Gagged" by Shirin Ebadi (SB # 19); "Shirin Ebadi Interview" by Amitabh Pal (SB # 20); "In the name of God of Creation and Wisdom"-- Shirin Ebadi's Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech (SB # 21)

Due date: Personal Inquiry II

DESMOND TUTU & THE TRC

Nov. 10: Desmond Tutu and the TRC

The Mandate of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission

Film excerpt: “Long Night’s Journey into Day – Amy Biehl”

Reading assignment for today’s class: Tutu, pp. 3-87; “Interview with Desmond Tutu” by Catherine Ingram (SB # 22).

Nov. 15: Desmond Tutu and the TRC, continued

Film excerpt: “Long Night’s Journey into Day – the Craddock 4 and Robert McBride”

Reading assignment for today’s class: Tutu, pp. 91-192.

For the Desmond Tutu Peace Foundation in Cape Town, visit <http://www.tutufoundation-usa.org/center.html>. Though their web-site is no longer active, you will find transcripts of the TRC Committees at <http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/trccom.htm>. To explore an active South African NGO whose mission is to make “a meaningful contribution to peaceful and fundamental transformation in South Africa,” go to the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation website (www.csvr.org/za/).

Nov. 17: Desmond Tutu and the TRC

Film excerpt: “Long Night’s Journey into Day – the Guguletu 7”

Reading assignment for today’s class: Tutu, pp. 195-287.

Nov. 22: After the TRC: Perspectives on Reconciliation – Student Presentations

You will choose from the following essays for this presentation. During class on Nov. 15, we will decide who wants to present what. You will find the readings for student presentation days in the On-Line Sourcebook. Down-load and read those essays selected by your peers for presentation.

- “Reconciliation and Justice in South Africa: Lessons from the TRC’s Community Interventions” by Hugo van der Merwe (in *Reconciliation, Justice, and Coexistence: Theory and Practice* by Mohammed Abu-Nimer). On-Line Sourcebook # 13
- “South Africa: Amnesty in Return for Truth” by Andrew Rigby (in *Justice and Reconciliation: After the Violence*). On-Line Sourcebook # 14
- *Dead man walking: An eyewitness account of the death penalty in the United States* by Helen Prejean (chapters 1 and 11). On-Line Sourcebook # 15
- The Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project (www.gtcp.org/description.asp) and (www.greensborotrc.org/about_the_commission.php)

The mission of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission is to examine “the context, causes, sequence and consequences of the events of November 3, 1979” for the purpose of healing transformation for the community. The Greensboro TRC is based

upon similar efforts around the world, most notably in South Africa . . . Greensboro represents the first application of this model in the United States.” This semester is an excellent time to study Greensboro; their third public hearing will be Sept. 30, 2005, and the commission expects to release its report in early 2006.

Nov. 24: Thanksgiving holiday

CLASS PRESENTATIONS

Nov. 29: Class Review

Readings for today’s class: TBA

Dec. 1: Student presentations – Interviews with Spiritually-based Social Activists

Dec. 6: Student presentations – Interviews with Spiritually-based Social Activists

Dec. 8: Student reading – excerpts from Personal Inquiry III. Course Evaluations. Ceremonial closure.

Dec. 9: Due date for Final Projects and Personal Inquiry III. No later than 5:00 p.m. in the Little House. To comply with the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act, faculty members in the Religious Studies department can no longer return final papers to student mailboxes. Provide me with a SASE (self-addressed stamped envelope), and I will mail your final project and paper to you.