

PHL 353: Peace and Justice Studies Syllabus

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Introduction: Welcome to Philosophy 353, Peace and Justice Studies! PHL 353 is an introduction to some of the philosophical issues in the area of "Peace and Justice Studies," which investigates what forms and effects violence takes in modern society and asks how such forms may be challenged and eliminated.

Some of the questions that will be considered include whether there is a biological or human nature basis for violence in human beings, whether harmful, large-scale social phenomena such as poverty, racism, or homophobia constitute forms of violence, and what the ethical implications are of politically powerful forms of nonviolent action? We begin by looking at anthropological, historical and philosophical theories that argue over whether large-scale forms of violence are natural or a social creation. We will look at theories about the psychological effects of violence on actors and victims, taking examples from the history of colonialism and the holocaust. Then we will discuss whether harmful, large-scale social phenomena such as poverty, racism, or homophobia constitute forms of violence, and whether theorizing them as such helps us challenge them. We will also consider some of the ethical implications of powerful forms of strategic nonviolence (like the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia, The Solidarity Movement in Poland, and the Arab Spring in Egypt). One of the major questions in the course is how to define and identify violence. In regard to this we will look at both "direct" and "expanded" notions of violence, as well as "negative" and "positive" notions of peace. A second major question for the course, which is intertwined with the first is how justice should be related to notions of violence and whether justice is a necessary component of peace.

The course is fully online and involves reading and writing assignments, along with a strong component of online collaboration. Student groups will meet online or in person to record conversations about course issues, which will then be posted as podcasts for the rest of the members. There will also be discussion on a course blog, as well as online assignments done simultaneously with the readings.

Course Objectives:

There are number of objectives for the course. I've broken them down into content and skills groups.

Content:

1.) You should finish with an understanding of "violence" as a normative concept, whose definition and relationship to justice is complex and underdeveloped in both scholarly literature and popular understanding. You should understand the arguments for why violence and peace should not be defined in a direct and narrow way, and as part of this

become familiar with the terms *structural violence*, *symbolic violence*, *negative and positive peace*, and various understandings of *justice*.

2.) You should gain a greater “phenomenal” appreciation of the effects of violence on actors, bystanders and victims using a psychological framework.

3.) You should become familiar with the sides and arguments of the anthropological/historical/psychological debate about the violence within human nature or as part of the behavior of the human species.

4.) You should understand the positions of both *practical* and *pragmatic* theorists of nonviolent actions, and become aware of the arguments-for, as well as normative issues surrounding, the use of nonviolence as a technique.

Skills Developed/Improved:

1.) Reading: be able to read, take notes on and understand a scholarly text.

2.) Technical Language Use: develop a vocabulary of philosophical concepts relevant to Peace and Justice Studies that they can use proficiently in writing and discussion. This will include direct, structural and symbolic violence, positive peace, justice (concerning domination, distribution and recognition), nonviolence...

3.) Writing proficiency: be able to respond to questions about the texts, discuss and attack/defend philosophical positions about violence, and make use of philosophical thought in writing about topics relevant to peace and justice studies.

4.) Online Communication: be an active and productive collaborator in aural/textual online learning community.

Required Texts:

Please purchase a physical copy of: Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Phillipe Bourgois, Eds. *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology* (S) (Available at SBS in East Lansing) isbn #: 0631223495 [Amazon Link](#)

Additional texts will be posted or linked to in Angel (A) in the readings folder.

You will need access to a computer with a microphone, (i.e. one that can make skype calls) and a skype account (free) to do the conference call activity.

Course Requirements:

Readings:

The course relies heavily on reading. You must read all the required reading and are encouraged to check out the recommended readings and additional Resources.

Media Creation (20%):

participate in the creation and posting of 2 recorded “**conference call**” discussions. Details and schedule are given in the conference call folder on [angel](#).

Writing:

Reading assignments (5%): these will be short essay questions assigned as part of an active reading.

Forum Discussion Posts (25%): Your presence, participation and contribution to the course blog. Rubric and guide lines are posted in the blog folder on [angel](#).

Two short essay assignments (25%): (6-10 pages each). Two times during the course I will provide a selection of questions about the modules, from which you get to choose four questions and provide a 350 to 750 word response to each.

Personal Project/Final Paper (25%): (2500-3000 words) This will be a research paper or presentation (recorded and posted for the class) that further investigates, philosophically, a topic from the course of your choosing. You will be required to submit a proposal of 250 words (5%) of your idea for it (topic, abstract, questions to be addressed, etc) as well as a rough draft (5%).

Grade breakdown:

Conference calls plans and final recordings: 20%
Blog discussion/active writing assignments: 30%
Short Writing Assignments: 25%
Final Paper/project: 25%

Dates writing assignments are due:

Wednesday May 30th: Short Essay Assignment 1
Wednesday June 6th: Final Paper/project proposal
Sunday June 17th: Rough Draft of final paper/project
Sunday June 24th: Short Essay Assignment 2
Thursday June 28th: Final Paper/Project

Assignments are due to the [angel](#) dropbox by midnight of the day they are due. Do not wait until the last minute to attempt to submit something. Start at least an hour before to allow time for technical difficulties.

Each assignment will be graded using a percentage scale, the overall scores will be calculated using a weighted average and your final grade will be based on the following scale:

Grade Scale:

| | |
|--------|-----|
| 93-100 | 4.0 |
| 87-92 | 3.5 |
| 80-87 | 3.0 |
| 75-79 | 2.5 |
| 70-74 | 2.0 |
| 60-69 | 1.0 |
| <60 | 0 |

A note on the grading:

4.0/ 90-100% is reserved for *excellent* work that completely fulfills the requirements of the assignment. These assignments are of high quality: Their reasoning is convincing, they are very well organized and the writing is polished. They should also display an element of creativity or innovation so that they contribute to the overall discourse on the topic.

3.0 work is *good* work that fulfills the requirements of the assignment with no significant issues or problems. The reasoning, organization and writing must be reasonably good.

2.0 work is *acceptable* work that contains issues or problems, such as inaccuracies, poor reasoning, a lack of organization or many typos.

1.0 work is *unacceptable* as college level work due to the severity of the problems.

0 is reserved for work that is irrelevant to the assignment, unintelligible or not turned in.

One thing I'd like to emphasize at the outset is that since this is an online course and some folks may have scheduled it alongside other obligations (like a busy summer job or additional classes) you need to be sure you have enough time each week to adequately participate in the course. Although we will not meet regularly, the amount of content in this 46 day course is equivalent to the amount in a regular fall or spring semester course of 15 weeks. Live (not online) three credit courses meet four times a week during the accelerated summer session (5.5 hours of class alone each week). In terms of reading, listening, participation in the blog and conference calls, writing assignments and final paper/project **you will need to devote around 20 hours to this class each week**. Also note that because we only have 6 weeks, each module of the course only lasts about 1.5 weeks. This means that **your participation in the course must be frequent and consistent**. You will not have enough time to complete a module and writing assignments by working on it one day a week, and the participation and discussion activities will not work unless you are writing on the blog multiple times a week. Because of the accelerated pace, the work cannot be put off for more than a few days at a time. You will also find it difficult to work on the course using only small chunks of time or at times when you are multitasking. Try to set blocks of time aside when you will only be working on the course. Your participation and enjoyment of the course will be maximized by working on it multiple times per week for a couple hours at a time.

Reading and topic schedule:

Texts in Bold are available on Angel or the web and are followed with either (A) for angel or a link. Texts followed by (S) are in the *Violence in War and Peace Anthology*

Monday May 14th -Thursday May 24:

Module 1: Is War a permanent feature of human societies or human nature?

Active Reading: Thomas Hobbes: *Leviathan*, Chapter 13 (found in Module 1)

Selections from: Jean Jacques Rousseau, [*Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*](#)

Michael Howard, "The Causes of War" (A)

Sigmund Freud, "Why War?" (A)

Konrad Lorenz, "*On Aggression*" (A)

Margaret Mead, "Warfare is Only an Invention--Not a Biological Necessity" (A)

Brian Ferguson, "Tribal Warfare" (S) pp. 69-73

Robert J. Gordon, From *The Bushman Myth: The Making of a Namibian Underclass* (S) pp. 74-76

Douglas Fry, *Beyond War*, Chapters 2 & 13 (A)

Discover Magazine Article: ["Has Science Found a Way to End All Wars"](#)

[Interview](#) with Douglas Fry about *Beyond War*, *The Human Potential For Peace*

Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, Chapter 2, pp. 31-58 (A)

Friday May 25th to Sunday June 3rd:

Module 2: Expanding notions of Violence: Structural Violence and Symbolic Violence

Galtung, Cultural Violence (A)

Johan Galtung, *Violence, Peace and Peace Research* (A)

Farmer, On Suffering and Structural Violence: A View from Below (S) pp. 281-289

Eric Klinenberg, Denaturalizing Disaster: A Social Autopsy of the 1995 Chicago Heat Wave" (S) pp. 308-317

Nancy Scheper-Hughes: "Two Feet Under and a Cardboard Coffin: The Social Production of Indifference to Child Death" (S) pp. 275-280

Thomas Pogge, *Recognized and Violated by International Law: The Human Rights of the Global Poor* (A)

Bourdieu and Wacquant, "Symbolic Violence" (S) pp.273-274

Bourdieu, Gender and Symbolic Violence (S) pp. 339-342

Phillipe Bourgois, "US Inner-city Apartheid: The Contours of Structural and Interpersonal Violence" (S) pp. 301-307

Loic Waquant, *The New Peculiar Institution: On the Prison as Surrogate Ghetto* (S) pp 318-323

Monday June 4th to Thursday June 14th:

Module 3: Psychological Causes and Effects of Mass Violence on participants and bystanders

Michael Taussig, Culture of Terror—Space of Death: Roger Casement's Putamayo Report and the Explanation of Torture (S) pp. 39-53 (see also description in *On Violence*, p 493-5 and 503-521

Leon Litwick, From "Hellhounds" (S) pp. 123-128

Elaine Scarry—From *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (S) pp. 365-367

Jean Amery: Selection From *At the Mind's Limits: Torture* (A)

Judith Herman, From *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence — From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (S) pp. 368-371

Jean-Paul Sartre, Preface to Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* (S) pp. 229-235

Frantz Fanon —Colonial War and Mental Disorders (S) pp. 443-452

Michael Taussig-Talking Terror (S) pp. 171-174

Mark Danner, From *The Massacre at El Mozote: A Parable of the Cold War* (S) pp. 334-338 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Mozote_massacre)

Wole Soyinka, From *The Burden of Memory: The Muse of Forgiveness* (S) pp. 475-477

Mahmood Mamdani, From *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (S) pp. 468-474

Hannah Arendt, From *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (S) pp. 91-100

Stanley Milgram, Behavioral Study of Obedience (S) pp. 145–149

Christopher R. Browning, “Initiation to Mass Murder: The Jozefow Massacre” (S) pp. 101-108

Giorgio Agambem, The witness (S) pp. 437–442

Primo Levi, The Gray Zone” (S) pp. 83–90

Excerpts from Pinker: psychological aversion and dispositions to violence in human beings (demons in our nature)

Excerpts from film Shoah

Friday June 15th -Monday June 24th

Module 4: Nonviolence as an alternative and its ethical issues

Mohandas K. Gandhi, Excerpts from *The Essential Writings of Mahatma Gandhi* (A) (from *Violence and its alternatives* p293)

Mohandas K. Gandhi, “*Hind Swaraj, Or Indian Home Rule*” (A)

Martin Luther King Jr., Excerpt from “*Love, Law and Civil Disobediance*” (A)

Gene Sharp: *From Dictatorship to Democracy* Chaps 1-8, pp 1-53 (A)

Kurt Schock, “*Nonviolent Action and Its Misconceptions*” (A)

Thomas Weber, “*Nonviolence is Who? Gene Sharp and Gandhi*” (A)

Hannah Arendt, From “*On Violence*” (S) pp. 236-243

Simon Weil, From “*Reflections on War*” (A)

Simone Weil, “*The Illiad, or the poem of force*” (A)