The Psychology of Peace, Conflict, and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland

PSY386 & PSY380

Spring Term, 2016

Professor:

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Course Overview

This course is a 6-credit hour study abroad program on the psychology of peace, conflict, and reconciliation, with a specific focus on peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. It consists of 3 weeks of classes on the GVSU campus and three weeks of study and travel in Northern Ireland.

The course will cover both the psychology of conflict and the psychology of peace and reconciliation, two distinct yet obviously related content areas. Psychologists have long studied the dynamics, causes, and consequences of conflict, using a variety of perspectives (e.g., social, biological, and clinical) and on interpersonal, intergroup, and international levels. Although peace and reconciliation represent a more recent sub-discipline within psychology, the emerging field draws from the rich theory in clinical, social and community psychology and has been influenced by literature in sociology, international relations, political science and other fields outside of psychology. Thus, both the psychology of conflict and the psychology of peace and reconciliation are broad topics that could easily be studied over the course of a year or more. Although we will touch upon interpersonal and international conflict, this course will focus primarily on the psychological literature related to intergroup and ethnopolitical conflict and reconciliation and peace-building efforts, as they are most relevant to Northern Ireland. The course will also provide an overview of the society, culture, and history of Northern Ireland, as a context for better understanding the conflict and peace-building and reconciliation efforts.

The Allendale portion of the course will be conducted using a seminar approach, in which you will study a series of readings on your own and then explore them more deeply in facilitated class discussions. Thus, it is very important for you to read and reflect upon assigned readings before class. We will begin our discussion with some readings on Irish culture and history, with a particular focus on the 20th century sectarian conflict known as “the Troubles.” We will then cover topics related to aggression and conflict, such as the roots of aggression, the causes and consequences of intergroup conflict, and psychological mechanisms used to legitimize oppressive social arrangements (i.e., structural violence). While in Ireland, we will examine the psychology of peace and reconciliation, with an emphasis on the culture of peace, the ongoing process of reconciliation, and empirically-based peace initiatives. In addition to the classes led by Prof. Shupe, you will have classes led by a number of faculty members from Queens University and Ulster University. Finally, we will have the opportunity to hear several activists talk about their peace-related work in Northern Ireland, and we will join individuals from local organizations to perform community service work related to peace-building and reconciliation.
Course Objectives

By the end of the course you should have a good understanding of each of the following:

- Important events in the history of Northern Ireland, especially as related to the sectarian conflict of the late 1900s (i.e., the Troubles), peace efforts during the Troubles, the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, and subsequent reconciliation efforts
- The culture of Northern Ireland, including the political and educational systems, customs, languages, music and dance, visual arts, sports and leisure activities, and popular media
- Theory and research on the social/environmental and biological causes of aggression, and the influence of culture on aggression
- Theory and research on violence, including the distinction between direct and indirect violence and empirically based interventions
- Theory and research on social, cultural, and cognitive influences on the development of prejudice and discrimination
- Theory and research on psychological issues related to civil, international, and ethnopolitical conflict, including the escalation of conflict, the role of power, and the role of identity
- The psychology of legitimacy, especially as related to the legitimation of structural violence and intergroup conflict
- Theory and research related to moral disengagement and its role in intergroup conflict and violence
- Theory and research related to the psychological consequences of violence and sustained conflict, for parties both directly and indirectly involved in the conflict
- The distinction between peacemaking and peace-building; the role of culture and the role of moral imagination in peace-building processes
- Research related to psychological peace-building initiatives, including integrated schooling efforts in Northern Ireland and elsewhere
- Theory and research related to sustained peace and reconciliation, especially as related to civil conflict and other forms of intergroup conflict
- Psychologists’ contributions to peace-building and the development of cultures of peace

In addition, you should have developed or further developed the following skills and abilities:

- The ability to think critically in interpreting and applying theory and research related to conflict, peace, and reconciliation
- The ability to critically reflect on the values implicit in approaches to conflict, violence, and peace
- The ability to work in groups to discuss and critically interpret readings from psychological literature related to peace and conflict
- Interpersonal communication skills and collaborative problem solving abilities, especially as related to the prevention of conflict and peace-building
- The ability to integrate published research and theory on peace, conflict, and reconciliation and apply them to “real life” situations
- Skills related to the application of psychological theory and theory-based programs to the prevention of destructive conflict and the construction of peace in a variety of contexts

**Methods of Evaluation**

Grades for the course will be given based on participation, 6 thought papers, 6 reflection papers, a final synthesis paper, and the facilitation of a class discussion.

**Participation.** Since the course has a strong experiential component, active participation is essential and will be weighted heavily (100 points; 50% of your final grade). You will be evaluated based on your participation in the classes, your contributions to evening group discussions, your active listening and attentiveness to speakers in Ireland, and your participation in the community service project. Finally, your grade will be based in part on your culturally appropriate and respectful behavior toward the people of Ireland, Prof. Shupe, and other students in the group.

**Thought papers and reflection papers.** As part of the course you will be required to write six thought papers and six reflection papers, in which you address a series of questions or statements. Although the content and style of the papers will be somewhat similar, thought papers will generally focus more on the course readings and require you to link concepts in the readings to our in-country experiences and/or class discussions. Reflection papers will be less involved, asking you to draw upon your own experiences and insights to respond to statements, questions, or themes related to the course content. Each thought paper will be worth 10 points, and each reflection paper will be worth 5 points. Thus, thought papers will be worth 30% of your final grade, and reflection papers will worth 15% of your final grade.

**Class facilitation.** You will work with others in a small group to a lead class discussion on an assigned reading related to conflict, peace psychology or reconciliation. Your group should be prepared to describe the content of its reading and lead a 20-25 minute discussion with the class, based on a set of questions you generate. This class facilitation will be worth 10 points and will contribute 5% to your final grade.
### Tentative Schedule of Classes

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<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Topics &amp; Tentative Readings</th>
<th>Assignments due</th>
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| M, 5/9 Allendale | **Orientation** – what to bring; stress & coping  
**Aggression**  
* Dewall et al. (2011; in class reading)  
* Seville statement on violence  |                                |
| W, 5/11 Allendale | **Orientation** – culture; respect/diplomacy  
**Structural violence**  
* Opotow (2001)  
* Pilisuk & Rountree (2015)  
**Introduction to the Troubles**  
* Cairns & Darby (1998)  
* Reading from CAIN website (in class reading)  | Reflection paper 1            |
| Th, 5/12 Allendale | **Moral disengagement & dehumanization**  
* Moghaddam (2005)  
* Bandura (1999)  
* Welsch et al. (2014)  |                                |
| M, 5/16 Allendale | **Intergroup conflict; Prejudice & discrimination**  
* Fiske (2004)  
| W, 5/18 Allendale | **Intractible conflict; ethnopolitical conflict**  
* Bal-Tal et al. (2015)  
* Staub (2001)  
**Escalation & de-escalation of conflict**  
* Jonas & Fritsche (2014)  | Reflection paper 3            |
| Th, 5/19 Allendale | **Effects of conflict/war on military/combatants**  
* Campbell (2006)  
* Gifford (2006)  
**Effects of conflict/war on children & general public**  
* Gabarino et al. (2010)  | Thought paper 2               |
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<td>Staub (2013) – first part</td>
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<td>Th, 6/9</td>
<td>Belfast</td>
<td>Women and peacebuilding</td>
<td>Kilmurray &amp; McWilliams (2011)</td>
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<td>Stephenson (2009)</td>
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<td>Constructing cultures of peace</td>
<td>Wessells (2004)</td>
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<td>Hamber (2012)</td>
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*Note: Allendale classes will be held in 1115 ASH*
Readings


Group facilitation readings

Effects of war on military


Effects of war on children


Prejudice and discrimination


Peacebuilding interventions


Peacebuilding