

**Plymouth State University
of The University System of New Hampshire**

PYDI 1050 Building A Civil Society

Fall 2008

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*Political visions assert that the present social reality is not the best we can hope for, that it can be decisively changed, and that the end result will be both morally better and more humanely fulfilling than what we have now/ From *Joining hands: Politics and religion together for social change* by Roger S. Gottlieb, 2002*

*Many poorer regions of the world today feel strongly that the more advanced nations do not adequately share their technology, agricultural systems, and medical resources...Without such assistance, inequalities may grow to such dimensions that civilization will be threatened...Without the practice of charity, an individual's life grows stale and unfeeling, and a nation's existence becomes self-centered and insecure/ From *Oneness* by Jeffrey Moses, 2002*

Readings: No text. Handouts are on WebCT or sent through email

Web Resources on Civil Society: <http://www.uia.org/civilsoc/links.php>

Requirements: Six biweekly quizzes on the reading; a group presentation and a final research paper. The course grade will be determined as follows:

Six biweekly exams on the readings [9-17,10-8,10-29,11-15, 11-25, 12-16]	30%
Attendance/participation & Weekly Reading Reflections	20%
Group presentation	20%
Prosocial Activity due 12-16)	10%
Final Paper (due 12-16)	20%
Final Exam [Exam 6, Final Paper & Prosocial Activity 12-16]	

Catalog Description: This course will focus on the role of the individual in creating a civil society leading toward the advancement of peace, human rights and democracy. A main premise of the course is that the individual and society have a reciprocal influence: society nurtures and shapes the individuals that comprise it; but individuals also have the power to change society in significant ways. The dynamic of social change from the point of view of both the society and

the individual will be explored, and ways will be suggested for individuals to contribute to this social dynamic. Special topics include nonviolent societal transformation, institutional barriers to growth and change, and revolutionary techniques for the resolution of conflict [Note: This course also has a human rights and advocacy component based on the assumption that a civil society cannot exist when human rights have not been achieved.]

Goals/Objectives: The course aims to provide students with (1) an understanding of some of the main obstacles to a civil society in the 21st century; (2) an awareness of some of the great examples of civil struggles that have created social change and advanced the quest for a civil society; (3) an appreciation for the role of the individual in effecting social change, and (4) inspiration and ideas for self-involvement in the ongoing quest for a better world. This course teaches for and not just about civil society. Thus, an experiential component is required. The course also is intended to promote a culture of peace in higher education based on the following eight principles of UNESCO in promoting a culture of peace.

1. Fostering a culture of peace through education (Questions 6,7 & 8)
2. Promoting sustainable economic and social development (Question 6)
3. Promoting respect for all human rights (Questions 4 & 10)
4. Ensuring equality between women and men (Question 2 & 7)
5. Fostering democratic participation (Questions 11 & 12)
6. Advancing tolerance, understanding and solidarity (Questions 1 & 9)
7. Supporting participatory communication and the free flow of communication and knowledge (Question 2)
8. Promoting international peace and security (Questions 3, 4 & 12)

Essential Questions:

1. How does religion promote and retard civil society?
2. How do the media affect civil society?
3. Why do countries resort to war in general and the use of WMDs in particular?
4. How does the U.S. prison system impact civil society?
5. What are the main causes of violence?
6. How is ecoliteracy/ecojustice related to civil society?
7. How is liberatory education and the “theater of the oppressed” related to civil society?
8. How is peace education related to civil society?
9. What is cosmopolitanism, and does it have any advantages/disadvantages compared with patriotism?
10. What are human (and animal) rights, and what is their importance for civil society?
11. What is multicultural sensitivity and how does it relate to civil society?
12. How can nonviolent action, including civil disobedience, be useful in building a civil society?

General Education Description of Direction Self and Society Courses:

The Directions component is intended to introduce students to different ways of considering and understanding human experience which they can apply as they seek meaning in their lives. Directions courses challenge them to see how different perspectives shape the ways in which people interpret ideas and experiences to construct meaning. They emphasize connections between the world of ideas and the “real world.”

Self and Society courses recognize that a rich and productive life encompasses an understanding of one’s self and one’s relationship to the world. An educated person must grapple with a question that has interested human beings for centuries: the relationship between self and society. To understand one’s self, one must understand and acknowledge the impact of society on the development of identity and the formation of beliefs. The needs of the individual sometimes conflict with the needs of society. Cultures differ in the relative value they give to the individual and to the group. Using issues that impact on students’ lives, Self and Society courses explore questions of these sorts.

Format of the Course: Generally, on Tuesdays students will present their group projects followed by a large group discussion; on Thursdays they will answer the reading response questions below for the reading assignment of the week and these will be discussed in small groups and with the whole class. Also, exams will be given on Thursdays. The reading response sheets will be handed in on Thursdays and will be credited under class participation. Students may be asked to leave class if not prepared.

Reading Response Questions for Class Discussions Due every Thursday typed or clearly written in complete sentences. One page total. If Thursday is a holiday, the reading responses will be due Tuesday

1. What does the author state or imply that is inhibiting civil society?
2. In what ways do you agree or disagree with the author’s position and why?
3. How could we use the author’s ideas to advance civil society?

*** Reading responses not handed in at the end of class will not be accepted.**

Notices:

- Class attendance/participation is expected; students with good attendance (no more than 2 unexcused absences) and high level of participation (especially on class discussion of readings) will receive “A” in the attendance/participation/reading sheets component. Because this class involves frequent discussion, attendance is necessary for participation. Students who miss class deprive those in attendance of their insights and ideas about the topic under discussion. **Students with 5 absences will forfeit the weighting system and will achieve a grade no higher than C for the course. Those with 6 or more (excused or unexcused) absences will need to retake the course .** Three late arrivals to class will be counted as one absence. If you come late and unnoticed, you must check in after class,

or you will be marked absent and the absence cannot be changed later. Participation is determined by verbal comments and questions as well as signs of active listening and consistent preparation of reading responses. **Exceptions to this policy will be made on a case-by-case basis.**

<u>Number of Absences</u>	<u>Level of Participation</u>	<u>Grade</u>
0-2	HIGH	A/A-
0-2	AVERAGE	B/B+
0-2	LOW	C+
3-4	HIGH	B-
3-4	AVERAGE	C
3-4	LOW	C-/D+

- Group presentations are required. Each student will be a part of a (one) group presentation on one of the essential questions. The group presentations should be about 30-45 minutes and should explore the question from different perspectives. Ideally, the presentation will include opposing arguments in order to provide controversy and balance, for example, how is religion a positive and negative force in the world? What factors make it more one than the other? Information for presentations will come from the readings and class discussion, but should not be limited to these sources. A rubric will be provided for these presentations.
- Six Essay Exams on the readings.
- A Documented Prosocial Activity that include any one of the following:
 - * write an advocacy letter to a congressman, newspaper, or magazine (you must provide a stamped envelope that we will seal and mail)
 - * participate in a nonviolent march or vigil (with verification)
 - * join an advocacy group (e.g. Greepeace, Amnesty International, ASPCC, ASPCA, etc)
 - * participate in an on-campus community service (Community Service Center, Women's and Gender Resource Center, Stop the Violence program, etc.)
 - * make an awareness video for **an identified audience** (with approval)
 - * produce a work of art or musical composition or literary piece **that includes your rationale for doing it, how it promotes civil society, and a note from an art, music or English professor attesting to its quality**
 - * other (with approval)
- A Final Paper (5-6 double spaced pages in 12 point font) is required. The paper addresses the question, **What is a civil society?** You may focus on one or more aspects of what constitutes a civil society, and include a specific, personal nonviolent action that you could undertake to help enhance your definition of civil society. You should also integrate the readings in a direct way. You could also use **three** of the essential questions and write a

summary of each indicating how they relate to a civil society, e.g., a civil society includes peace education in the curriculum of schools because....Final papers will be brought to class on the final exam date for discussion. Points will be taken off for errors such as improper citations, missing page numbers, single spacing, or tiny or large font. Title pages are not required. It is very important that the PSU rules concerning academic integrity, as outlined on pages 42-45 of the PSU Academic Catalogue 2006-2007, are followed.

Schedule:

- Sept. 4: Greetings; syllabus; small group assignment: What is a civil society?
- Sept. 9-11: Challenges of the 21st Century: War, the Environment, Human Rights
Reading: P. Singer, "One World" (WebCT)
Group presentation planning (Thursday).
- Sept. 16-18: Religion and Social Development
Question #1: How does religion promote and retard civil society?
(Tuesday)
Reading: Russell, "Has Religion Made Useful Contributions to Civilization?" (WebCT) and LaConte, "Why Religious Values Support American Values" (WebCT)
Exam 1 Thursday
- Sept. 23-25: What Impact Does the Media Have on Us and Our Society?
Question #2: How does the media affect social progress? (Tuesday)
Reading: Chomsky, "What Makes Mainstream Media Mainstream" (WebCT)
- Sept. 30-
Oct-2: War and the Threat to Human Society
Question #3: Why do countries resort to war in general and the use of WMDs in particular? (Tuesday)
Reading: "Causes of War" (WebCT))
- Oct. 7-9: The U.S. Prison System
Question #4: How effective is the U.S. prison system? (Tuesday)
Reading: Incarceration Nation (WebCT)
Video: *Bo Lozoff* (Tuesday and Thursday)
Exam 2 Thursday
- Oct.14- 16: Violence and Society
Question #5: What causes violence? (Tuesday)
Reading: Sandy, L.R./ "Violence in America: Its Contributors" (handout)
Video Clip: *Bowling for Columbine* (Thursday)

- Oct. 21-23: The Environment and the Need for Change
Question #6: What is ecoliteracy/ecojustice? (Tuesday)
Reading: "Al Gore in Earth in the Balance" (WebCT)
Video: *Walking in Both Worlds* (Thursday)
- Oct. 28-30: Education and Social Change
Question #7: How is liberatory education and the "theater of the oppressed" related to civil society? (Tuesday) Link:
<http://www.holisticeducator.com/libratorypedagogy.htm>
Reading: Hagith Zor Giv, "Asking the Right Questions"
(WebCT, pp. 8-10)
Exam 3 Thursday
- Nov. 4-6: Education and Peace
Question #8: How is peace education related to civil society? (Tuesday)
Reading: Perkins, R., & Sandy, L.R. / "The Nature of Peace and Its Implications for Education"
<http://oz.plymouth.edu/%7Elsandy/peacedef.html>
- Nov. 11 Veterans Day. No Class**
- Nov.13: Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism
Reading: Meyers, S., & Sandy, L.R./ "Beyond Patriotism in the New Millennium: Creating a New Vision for Education"
(<http://oz.plymouth.edu/%7Elsandy/beyondpatriot.html>)
Question #9: Patriotism and/or Cosmopolitanism? (Thursday)
Video: *The Case Against Patriotism* (Thursday)
- Nov. 18-20: Human and Animal Rights
Question #10: What are Human and Animal Rights? Do they need protection? Are they related? (Tuesday)
Readings: The Value of A Human Life/ Singer (WebCT)
The U.N. Declaration of Human Rights
(<http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>),
A Short History of the Human Rights Movement
(<http://www.hrweb.org/history.html>), and Philosophy of Animal Rights
(<http://www.cultureandanimals.org/animalrights.htm>)
- Nov. 25 Reviews readings and **Exam 4**
- Nov. 27 Thanksgiving Break. No Classes**
- Dec 2-4: Cultural Diversity

Question #11: What is multicultural sensitivity and how does it relate to civil society? (Tuesday)

Reading: Knowing, Valuing and Shaping One's Culture/Brown (WebCT)

Exam 5 Thursday

Dec. 9-11: Non-violent Action and Civil Disobedience

Question #12: How can nonviolent action, including civil disobedience, be useful in building a civil society? (Tuesday)

Readings: Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience", M.L. King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." (WebCT), L.R. Sandy, "Nonviolence and Society"

(email) and N. Gier/ "Nonviolence as a Civic Virtue" (handout)

Video: *People Power* (Thursday)

Dec. 16

Course Evaluation and FINAL EXAM: 11:00 AM to 1:30 PM

a. Exam 6

b. Final Paper

c. Prosocial Action

The following proposal made by UNESCO, the United Nations General Assembly in 1998 (resolution A/52/13) defined the Culture of Peace as consisting of values, attitudes and behaviours that reject violence and endeavour to prevent conflicts by addressing their root causes with a view to solving problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups and nations. The 1999 United Nations Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (resolution A/53/243) called for everyone – governments, civil society, the media, parents, teachers, politicians, scientists, artists, NGOs and the entire United Nations system – to assume responsibility in this respect. It staked out eight action areas for actors at national, regional and international levels:

Culture of peace: eight action areas peace in our hands

1. **Fostering a culture of peace through education** by promoting education for all, focusing especially on girls; revising curricula to promote the qualitative values, attitudes and behavior inherent in a culture of peace; training for conflict prevention and resolution, dialogue, consensus-building and active non-violence . . .
2. **Promoting sustainable economic and social development** by targeting the eradication of poverty; focusing on the special needs of children and women; working towards environmental sustainability; fostering national and international co-operation to reduce economic and social inequalities . . .
3. **Promoting respect for all human rights** by distributing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at all levels and fully implementing international instruments on human rights . . .
4. **Ensuring equality between women and men** by integrating a gender perspective and promoting equality in economic, social and political decision-making; eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women; supporting and aiding women in crisis situations resulting from war and all other forms of violence . . .
5. **Fostering democratic participation** by educating responsible citizens; reinforcing actions to promote democratic principles and practices; establishing and strengthening national institutions and processes that promote and sustain democracy . . .
6. **Advancing understanding, tolerance and solidarity** by promoting a dialogue among civilizations; actions in favour of vulnerable groups, migrants, refugees and displaced persons, indigenous people and traditional groups; respect for difference and cultural diversity . . .

7. **Supporting participatory communication and the free flow of information and knowledge** by means of such actions as support for independent media in the promotion of a culture of peace; effective use of media and mass communications; measures to address the issue of violence in the media; knowledge and information sharing through new technologies . . .
8. **Promoting international peace and security** through action such as the promotion of general and complete disarmament; greater involvement of women in prevention and resolution of conflicts and in promoting a culture of peace in post-conflict situations; initiatives in conflict situations; encouraging confidence-building measures and efforts for negotiating peaceful settlements .