



NYU

**ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE**

UPADM-GP 249

Religion, Conflict Transformation, and the Future of Democracy

Spring 2025

Wednesdays, 2:00pm-3:15pm

238 Thompson Street

4th Floor

Room 475

Note: Different location than in Albert.

Professors Chelsea Garbell & Melissa Carter

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Office Hours:

Professor Carter: By appointment

Professor Garbell: Thursdays 12-1pm, and by appointment

Course Description and Objectives:

A 2022 [NPR/Ipsos poll](#) found that 64% of Americans believe U.S. democracy is "in crisis and at risk of failing." What is our role in preventing that failure, and how can we reimagine public service and conflict negotiation in order to transform and uphold the country and the world that we want to live in? This class will explore ideas around religious and civil conflict, intergroup relations, conflict negotiation, restorative justice, belonging, and boundary drawing. Students will learn about the ever-expanding public sphere, the limits of tolerance, and the possibilities of emergent leadership while gaining crucial real-world skills for public service.

Shared Agreements: We approach each class, student, and topic as an invitation to be present with candor, curiosity, compassion, and care. Please join us in this invitation.

Course Requirements

Required texts

Nhật Hạnh, Thich, et al. Being Peace. Berkeley, Parallax Press, 2005.

Ripley, Amanda. [High Conflict](#). New York, Simon & Schuster, 2021.

All other readings will be listed in Resources on Brightspace or sent via email. Our class discussions will be based on the assigned readings and will be much richer if you come prepared.

Weekly Readings & Responses

Each week students will post a two part response in the Discussion Section of Brightspace. Part one will offer a response to the readings and a question for further reflection. Part two will answer the question: How has my personal understanding of conflict shifted or remained the same? This second question asks you to reflect on how you've integrated the subject matter in the past week and can include stories as well as reflections. Due the Monday before class at 5pm.

Assignments

- **About Me**
 - Submit a paragraph letting us know a bit about yourself or anything you'd like us to know. You can submit it as a written response and/or a 2-3 minute video. Both are to be uploaded via Brightspace.
- **Midterm Paper**
 - To be discussed in class. 3-4 pages in length.
- **Final Project**
 - To be discussed in class. 3-4 pages in length.

Assignments and Grading

Discussion Posts	15%
Attendance/Class Participation	30%
Midterm Paper	25%
Final Project	30%

Attendance Policy

It is of utmost importance that students attend class consistently, which is reflected in the grading rubric. If you need to miss class for any reason, please let us know as soon as possible, and we will discuss reasonable accommodations. Regular unexcused absences will have an impact on your final grade.

AI Policy

The use of generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT or DALL-E 2) for this course is allowed for specific assignments only when determined to support the course learning goals. **Assignments in which AI tools are permitted will be clearly identified by the instructors and noted in the assignment directions.** You are not required to use generative AI tools, but if you choose to use them for any part of the assignment (from brainstorming to text editing), you must use proper attribution. **Failure to properly acknowledge generative AI tools will be considered plagiarism.**

Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at NYU

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please visit the [Moses Center for Students with Disabilities \(CSD\) website](#) and click on the Reasonable Accommodations and How to Register tab or call or email CSD at (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are strongly advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays

[NYU's Policy on Academic Accommodations for Religious Holidays and Observances](#)

states that students may, without penalty, excuse themselves from academic obligations and otherwise receive reasonable accommodation when required for religious and spiritual holidays and observances. Please notify me in advance of religious holidays and/or observances that might coincide with exams, assignments, or class times so that mutually acceptable alternatives can be scheduled.

Wellness Resources:

As a University student, you may experience a range of issues that can interfere with your ability to perform academically or impact your daily functioning, such as heightened stress, anxiety, difficulty concentrating, sleep disturbance, strained relationships, grief and loss, and personal struggles. If you have any concerns about your well-being or mental health, please utilize the Wellness Exchange. You can call the 24-hour hotline at **(212) 443-9999**, chat via the Wellness Exchange app anytime, [make an appointment](#), or arrange a [same-day Urgent Counseling session](#) to speak with a certified counselor about any day-to-day challenges or health concerns, including medical issues, stress, depression, sexual assault, anxiety, alcohol or drug dependence, and eating disorders. Furthermore, please approach me if you feel comfortable doing so. This will enable me to provide any resources or accommodations that I can.

Course Outline:

Date	Class Topic	Readings (Due by corresponding class)
1/22	Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Review of Syllabus● Mallory Newall, et al. "Seven in Ten Americans Say the Country Is in Crisis, at Risk of Failing ..." Ipsos● Robert Putnam Knows Why You're Lonely, The Interview, Podcast

Date	Class Topic	Readings (Due by corresponding class)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mindfulness for this Moment
1/29	Restorative Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fania E. Davis, The Little Book of Race and Restorative Justice: Black Lives, Healing, and US Social Transformation (Chapters 1-2) (2019) • Stacey Miller and Christina Olstad, The Offspring of Restorative Justice: Understanding the Power of Restorative Practices in Residential Communities (2012). • What is Restorative Justice? • What Restorative Justice is Not • Restorative Practices Explained <p>Guest speaker: Dr. Rafael Rodriguez, Vice President and Dean of Students, University Life Read bio here</p> <p>Assignment Due: About Me due 1/28</p>
2/5	High Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From Mastery to Accountability: Cultural Humility as an Alternative to Cultural Competence • Amanda Ripley, High Conflict (Intro - Chapter 3)
2/12	Being Peace (garden)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amanda Ripley, High Conflict Chapter 4-7 • Thich Nhat Hanh, Being Peace (1987)
2/19	American Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putnam and Campbell, American Grace, pp 70-133 (2012) • Josh Packard, “Gen Z is Turning Away From Religion in Order to Live Out Their Values” • Caroline Kitchener, “What It Means To Be Spiritual But Not Religious” <p>(Optional: Jia Tolentino, “Losing Religion and Finding Ecstasy in Houston”)</p>

Date	Class Topic	Readings (Due by corresponding class)
2/26	American Democracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Blake Hounshell, "Is American Democracy Built to Last?" (2022) ● NYT "Run-Up Team", "The Republic" (2022)
3/5	The Public Sphere & The Limits of Tolerance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Janet Jakobson and Ann Pellegrini, Love the Sin: Sexual Regulation and the Limits of Religious Tolerance,, Ch. 2 (2004) ● Stephen N. Feldman, "A Christian America & the Separation of Church and State" ● Jürgen Habermas, The Public Sphere
3/12	Religion & Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● William T Cavanaugh, The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict, (Introduction & Chapter 1) (2009)
3/19	Boundaries & Fear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sara Ahmed, "The Organization of Hate" (2001) <p>Midterm Paper Due</p>
3/26	Spring Break	No Class
4/2	Rupture and Repair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Simran Jeet Singh, The Light We Give, Part II (2022) ● Desmond Tutu, No Future Without Forgiveness (1999) ● Melissa Carter, Finding Truth in Loneliness: A Case for Beloved Community
4/9	Negotiation & Leadership for Peace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Youssef Mahmood, Whose Peace Are We Building?: Leadership for Peace in Africa, pp. 17-34 (2021) ● Guest Speaker: Dr. Thomas Hill, Clinical Professor and Director, Peace Research and Education Program, Center for Global Affairs, NYU
4/16	Interreligious Peacebuilding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mohammed Abu-Nimer, Conflict Resolution, Culture, and Religion: Toward a Training Model of Interreligious Peacebuilding (2001)

Date	Class Topic	Readings (Due by corresponding class)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dubensky, Peacemakers in Action, (selected cases) (2016)
4/23	Community Organizing as Peacebuilding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● adrienne maree brown, Emergent Strategy, Ch. 6-7 (2017) ● Smith, B., & Johson Reagon, B, Coalition Politics: Turning the Century from Home girls: A black feminist anthology, pp. 356–368 (2000) ● The success of nonviolent civil resistance: Erica Chenoweth at TEDxBoulder
4/30	Closing	Final Project Due