

PJSA: Vocation of the Peacemaker

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When Academics and Non-Profits Collaborate: Innovative Peacebuilding Beyond the Classroom

Susan E. Cushman, Ph.D., Adjunct Professor, AU, Gen Ed
Phill Gittins, Ph.D., Education Director, World BEYOND War
Ash Carter, undergraduate, Psychology, AU



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Abstract & PJSA '22 Thematic Connections

- **Abstract:** *Working with the Innovation Center (IC), and an outside non-profit organization, World Beyond War (WBW), students in FYS: Intro to Peace Studies created final projects that were shared with the class and our organizational partner at the IC. Students learned about peacemakers and peacebuilding; then engaged in peacebuilding themselves. This collaborative teaching model is a win-win-win for AU, for industry partners, and most importantly, for students to learn how to bridge learning theory and practice of the course content.*
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- **Connections:** Our conference theme is the vocation of the peacemaker, including the mission of peace education and creating alternative education systems. This collaborative model between university and industry does just that. Faculty are stretching their repertoire to include interfacing with peace organizations; students are learning how to approach industry partners and create project goals, methods, results; non-profits, like WBW in this case, are increasing their visibility, reach, and impact through peacebuilding with faculty and students. It's a win-win-win for all involved, including additional partners in the peacebuilding process..
 - **Format:** I will provide an overview of the course and the “live scope” project with the IC; share steps we included for student projects to evolve; give a snapshot of the 4 group projects; introduce my colleague and student who will share their contribution and experience with the project; and then close with final reflections, recommendations, and Q & A.

Overview of my FYS Course & Live Class Project

- **Course Pedagogy:** An interdisciplinary course, including humanities and social science curriculum, my Intro to Peace Studies course introduces students to nonviolent conflict resolution and peacebuilding through case studies (leaders and movements), peace organizations, and careers in peacebuilding.
- **What is the Innovation Center “live class”?** This model promotes faculty and class collaboration with an organizational partner, where students respond to the organization’s needs through a final project of deliverables. Last fall, we worked with the international non-profit, [World Beyond War \(WBW\)](#). In prior traditional course scenarios, students researched and presented on a peace organization of their choice; but partnering with the Innovation Center and WBW took the course—and student participation—to a new level.
- **Through a series of virtual visits** with WBW education director, Dr. Phill Gittins, students devised final projects in local contexts that aligned with WBW’s mission of peace education and non-violent conflict resolution; they produced educational materials for WBW’s website. Students first submitted an abstract of their idea; next an implementation plan; next a progress report; and finally, the results of their project in the form of deliverables for WBW, consisting of recorded presentations, webinars, or curriculum lessons.

A model for applied peace education and peace studies

Underpinning this work are the following ideas and practices:

- **The linking of theory and practice.** This model aligns with notions of experiential peace education and ‘good’ peace studies, enabling students to engage in processes of ‘thinking their way into new forms of action, and acting their way into new forms of thinking” (Bing, 1989, 49).
- **The linking of education and action.** In a field where there is a need to close the gap between the study of peace and the practice of peacebuilding (see, [Gittins, 2019](#)).
- **Project design/management.** Bridging the gap between what universities typically provide and what students and peacebuilding organizations said they need (Carstarphen et al, 2010
- **Youth agency.** Frequently, peace work is done ‘on’ or ‘about’ youth (students) not ‘by’ or ‘with’ them (see, [Gittins et., 2021](#)). This model provides a way of changing this.

A model for applied peace education and peace studies

- **A multi-disciplinary approach.** Students from diverse backgrounds and disciplines can learn a great deal from each other. The model enables this learning to take place.
- **A focus on pro-peace and anti-war efforts.** The model is based on the recognition that peace cannot co-exist with war, and therefore peace education/studies should open up spaces for looking at both negative peace and positive peace (see, [World BEYOND War](#)).
- **Multiple results (outputs).** The model produces ‘products of use’ for multiple audiences. For example, youth-led projects addressing urgent needs; a report outlining the processes and outcomes of the work that might be helpful for others interested in doing similar work; and forthcoming publications that aim to be helpful for academics and practitioners.
- **The use of digital technology.** To facilitate online interactions and sharing; and to co-create processes and outcomes with, for, and by young people.

Preparation for the Student Group Projects

Method: After a month of peace studies education (September), students virtually met Dr. Gittins on 9/22/22, and learned of the WBW's 3-pronged approach to peacebuilding: demilitarized security, nonviolent conflict resolution, and peace education. In early October, we met in the IC, where students chose from these areas by using Jamboard (a collaborative digital whiteboard), resulting in four groups of 4-5 students forming organically around their preferred topic. From there, the following four group project areas emerged:

1. **Elementary School Peacemakers (Ash Carter, 10)**
2. **High School Peace Studies Curriculum**
3. **Inter-religious Peacebuilding**
4. **Student Organizing as Nonviolent Resistance**

Elementary School Peacemakers

Student Group / Case Study 3:– Elementary School Peacemakers. This group researched the N.Y. state elementary school (4th grade) Social Studies curriculum and pulled five famous peacemakers from different contexts (Native American culture, abolitionist history, women’s rights advocates, and Immigration advocates), making peacemaking connections between these leaders. They spoke of the nonviolent resistance of Deganawida, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Jane Addams, and Alice Paul. With colorful age-appropriate charts and images, the peacemaker theme was prominent in their proposed enhanced fourth-grade social studies curriculum. They introduced the Great Peacemakers website featuring paintings, prose, and video on 34 “historic luminaries” by artist Steve Simon. The group also proposed a game of “hot potato” (only with a ball) called “Mumball” where students can practice their knowledge of peacemakers through quick rounds of Q & A while passing the ball.

Briefly, the 3 Other Group Projects

1. High School Peace Studies Curriculum

This team focused their project on the development of peace education resources and materials for the alma mater of one group member, Carle Place High School (CPHS) in Westbury, New York. Leveraging the learning from course curriculum and educational materials from WBW, the team presented a potential peace studies unit to a CPHS history class. The recorded presentation includes a curriculum unit with 6 lessons and covers peace Journalism, nonviolence, democratic governance, women's suffrage activism, and community engagement. The high school teacher and class were receptive to the proposed peace curriculum; the next step would be to propose the unit to a curriculum review board at CPHS and other local Long Island high schools.

2. Inter-religious Peacebuilding

This team developed a project aimed at facilitating dialogue between different religions while promoting education around the role of religion in peacebuilding. They did so in two ways: first, by participating in a campus event “Our Sacred Relationship With the Environment” organized by the Adelphi University Interfaith Center on 11/18/21, which brought 25 campus members together from Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faith backgrounds to discuss religion, spirituality, and the environment. The team gave a presentation titled “Bringing Indigenous Wisdom to the Interfaith Center,” focusing on the peacebuilding initiatives of indigenous peoples. Second, they created a website with interviews between team members and AU religious club presidents to explore misconceptions about religion(s) and to emphasize commonalities and peacebuilding strategies in each group.

3. **Student Organizing as Nonviolent Resistance**

This group interviewed the Education Director of PANYS (Peace Action New York State), the oldest grassroots non-profit peace organization in the U.S. known for its no-nukes advocacy and other peace initiatives. With 18 student chapters and over 3,000 members in NY alone, the organization appealed to the group, who initially wanted to start a student chapter at Adelphi. Upon reaching out to PANYS, they decided to first educate themselves and the class by hosting a webinar with the PANYS and one of the student chapter presidents from Macaulay Honors College (CUNY). Each Adelphi student brought a question to the webinar and engaged in conversation with the director and student chapter president to learn about priority issues for students active with PANYS.

Assessment, Outcomes, and Final Reflections

Assessment: Abstract, Implementation Plan, Progress Report, Final Deliverable
= 30% final grade

Outcomes: Model for AU and other industry partners; foundation for further collaboration between AU & WBW; foundation for WBW and other university partners; facilitated local community outreach and collaborative peacebuilding. May lead to a new standalone course for exclusive focus on a semester-long project, allowing more time for an even better outcome. The work can be shared and produced in many formats, including conferences, websites, and journal publications.

Reflections: Share reflections from report at the end, time permitting.

Recommendations/Plans for Future Live Classes:

Improved mentoring: Provide further support to students throughout the process – from design through delivery of their project presentations, which may include weekly or bimonthly check-ins with the industry partner.

Social media & technology: Leverage further tech support from university I.T., industry I.T. or both.

Pedagogical updates: More comprehensive integration of *A Global Security System: An Alternative to War*, and possibly provide a model for establishing a WBW student chapter in collaboration with a PANYS chapter on campus.

Project teams: Should there be the option of individual or partner projects for students who prefer to work solo or with a partner?

Project timing: The time of the projects should be lengthened, potentially for the entire semester, for best outcome.

Structure versus agency: Getting the balance right between providing a framework and allowing students space and time for innovation.

Improved monitoring and evaluation: All participants will complete pre- and post-surveys; earlier deadline for deliverables to client.

Standalone module: For best outcome, a stand-alone course module could potentially best facilitate the process of designing a project, which includes prep time, research, outreach, follow-up, interviews, action, recording, and reporting of final project.

Q & A / Closing

- Questions after this session? Or would you like a copy of our report when complete? If so, feel free to contact us at:

SCushman@adelphi.edu

phill@worldbeyondwar.org

Ashcarter.mail@adelphi.edu

Texts for Course:

Invitation to Peace Studies, H. Wood. (2016)

A Global Security System: An Alternative to War, 5th ed. WBW

