Nonviolence In Action
RCSSci 354  Section 1 Fall, 2006
Dr. Helen Fox  hfox@umich.edu
Tu Th 10-12   28 Tyler
Fulfils the Advanced Writing in the Disciplines (AWD) Requirement
Office hours: By appointment. I usually meet students at Amer’s on Church
or in one of my offices:
120 Tyler (East Quad) or
1128 Angell Hall (Sweetland Writing Center)

Required Reading:
1. Course pack (available at Shaman Drum)
2. Our C-Tools site. Certain readings will be assigned from the Resources page at
different points in the semester. Please feel free to suggest on-line articles that you find
informative and relevant to our discussions. I’ll expect that you keep yourself posted on
whatever significant military actions the US is involved in or supporting (as of July 2006
this means the US Occupation of Iraq and Israel’s attempt to crush Hezbollah through its
invasion of Lebanon – which the US supports through military aid and diplomatic
encouragement).
4. Wink, Walter (ed.) (2000). Peace is the Way: Writings on Nonviolence from the
New York: Other Press.
6. Your choice of one book from the list (below) titled “Books about War, Peace
Activism, and/or “Human Nature.”

Recommended Reading
This book, though somewhat hard to find (look for a used copy on Amazon or Powell’s),
fills in the details and provides background for the films we will watch on nonviolent
movements in India, Chile, Poland, the U.S., and South Africa. Many other international
nonviolent movements are profiled as well.

Nonviolent Action. AND Part 3: The Dynamics of Nonviolent Action. Boston, MA:
Porter Sargent Publishers. This old, but not outdated summary of nonviolent methods and
strategy is a classic in the field of Peace Studies, and though a bit dry, a fascinating read
for advanced students.

Some Recommended Websites: (These sites describe current nonviolent actions
worldwide, provide news updates, link to classic and current texts on nonviolent theory
and practice, and suggest volunteer opportunities in the US and abroad. These are just a sampling of the thousands of sites on peace and social justice activism)

Peacework  http://www.afsc.org/peacework/
Code Pink   http://www.codepink4peace.org
Nonviolence.org  http://www.nonviolence.org/
Peace Activism http://www.angelfire.com/mt/peaceresources/activism.html
Resource Center for Nonviolence  http://www.rcnv.org/
Fellowship of Reconciliation  http://www.forusa.org/
Tikkun  http://www.tikkun.org/
Catholic Worker Movement  http://www.catholicworker.org/
Muslim Peace Fellowship  http://www.mpfweb.org/salam.html
School of the Americas Watch  http://www.soaw.org/new/

Books about War, Peace Activism, and/or “Human Nature” (Required: Your choice of one book – save the others for summer reading). These books range from personal accounts to history, biography and novels:


Addams, Jane (1922; 2002) Peace and Bread in Time of War. Urbana, IN: University of Illinois Press. A chronicle of the peace movement, which arose at the beginning of WWI. Jane Addams, an early social activist, progressive reformer, and author of many books, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931. “Addams’s unyielding pacifism during the Great War drew criticism from politicians and patriots who deemed her the ‘most dangerous woman in America.’”

Al-Radi, Nuha (1998; 2003). Baghdad Diaries: A Woman’s Chronicle of War and Exile. New York: Vintage Books. An artist and intellectual speaks personally to people in the West about what it feels like to be the target of international aggression, even while suffering under a dictatorship. Her account of daily frustrations, family relationships, and ridiculous and sometimes tragic incidents, diminishes the distance between “us and them.” What to do with all that meat in your freezer when the electricity has been cut off? How will your favorite dog behave, now that walls and fences have been destroyed and everyone’s pets are running wild in the orchard? How can you use your art to express your disgust for war?
Bacevich, Andrew (2005) *The New American Militarism: How Americans are Seduced by War*. London: Oxford University Press. A Vietnam veteran who describes himself as culturally conservative, writes a fascinating book on how “the new American militarism – the misleading and dangerous conceptions of war, soldiers, and military institutions that have come to pervade the American consciousness and that have perverted present-day U.S. national security policy.” Beautifully written and meticulously researched, this book will challenge almost anyone’s take on politics and culture.

Caputo, Philip (1996). *A Rumor of War*. New York: Henry Holt & Co. A young, idealistic, marine turned journalist remembers his growing horror and disillusionment with the Vietnam War. Many who served in that war appreciate this book: “I was there... it’s true!” is a common reaction. From an “Amazon” review: “Its all right there -- booby traps, mines, trip wires, leeches, foot blisters, jungle rot, constant shelling, dysentery, pigs eating corpses and cold C Rations. As a Vietnam vet, I was surprised the author never mentions RATS! but we both know they were there too. (THEY were everywhere).” Caputo wants readers to see, feel, and experience the ways that ordinary men were gradually demoralized and brutalized by their environment, the pettiness of military bureaucracy, and the emotional and moral distance of political leaders who sent young men to die for a questionable cause.

Chatterjee, Pratap (2004). *Iraq, Inc.: A Profitable Occupation*. New York: Seven Stories Press. An award-winning journalist goes to Iraq to look into the reconstruction effort. Schools, medical clinics, security services, infrastructure, all were supposed to be at least restored, at best improved to “superior Western standards.” The result: millions of dollars unaccounted for, slapdash construction, vastly unequal treatment of workers depending on their country of origin, alienation of the Iraqi people, and high profits for guess who? Is it just this war that is bringing out the greed in people, or is it something about war itself?


Easwaran, Eknath (1999). *Nonviolent Soldier of Islam: Badshah Khan, A Man to Match His Mountains*. Tomales, CA: Nilgiri Press. The story of a contemporary and friend of Mahatma Gandhi who challenged 100,000 Pathans, traditional warriors in India’s Northwest Frontier province, to stand unarmed against injustice. An account of an important but little-known story of how “human nature” can change under the right conditions.

Forest, Jim (1986). *Love is the Measure: A Biography of Dorothy Day*. Mahwah, JY: Paulist Press. Very readable account of the founder of the Catholic Worker movement “and one of the most extraordinary and prophetic voices in the American Catholic Church.” An ardent pacifist and outspoken feminist who never “curbed her tongue,” as
women were admonished in those days, Dorothy Day (1897-1980) challenged consciences within the church and society with her total opposition to war and her commitment to voluntary poverty. Day was jailed innumerable times for her activism, started a radical newspaper, spent a month in Cuba writing about the revolution, picketed with Cesar Chavez, and was barely missed by a bullet during the Civil Rights Movement.


Grossman, Dave (1995). On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company. Lieutenant Colonel Grossman shows how military and police recruits, most of whom are loathe to kill, are transformed by systematic training. An excellent analysis of the psychology of wartime behavior and its after-effects. For another view, see Hedges (below).

Gourevitch, Philip (1998). We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families: Stories From Rwanda. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. A New Yorker reporter’s account of the massacre, by ordinary civilians, of 800,000 of their neighbors and co-workers at the behest of their government. Yet the world community did too little, too late, to stop the genocide. This book, along with Samantha Powers’ classic “A Problem from Hell,” presents the case for armed humanitarian intervention.

Hanley, Charles, Choe, Sang-Hun, and Martha Mendoza (2001). The Bridge at No Gun Ri: A Hidden Nightmare From the Korean War. New York: Henry Holt and Company. An unforgettable account of the massacre of Korean civilians by U.S. troops uncovered by three Pulitzer Prize winning journalists. Tells the story from both sides: the Korean families who were caught between North Korean and U.S. troops while trying to flee their ancestral villages, and the young U.S. soldiers of the “good time” army in Japan who came to view all Koreans as the enemy.

Harbury, Jennifer (2005) Truth, Torture, and the American Way: The History and Consequences of U.S. Involvement in Torture. Boston: Beacon Press. Howard Zinn writes: “The word ‘torture’ has always brought to mind the Gestapo, or the gulag. Jennifer Harbury shocks us as she confronts us with our own nation’s record of torture and brutality, from Latin America to Vietnam to Iraq. She tells the story of her husband’s disappearance, torture, and murder in Guatemala, but also presents the testimonies of other torture victims, with the C.I.A. a shadowy, ominous presence. Their stories make us feel shame at the betrayal of our most cherished values, but Harbury is undaunted,
believing we must expose the truth and demand that our government not respond to the terrorism of 9/11 with the terrorism of the secret torture chamber.”


Hedges, Chris (2002). *War Is A Force That Gives Us Meaning*. New York: PublicAffairs. A foreign correspondent who has covered the news in El Salvador, Guatemala, Colombia, Nicaragua, Sudan, Yemen, Algeria, the West Bank and Gaza, the Punjab, Iraq, and many other areas of combat, describes himself as addicted to war. He says, “The chance to exist for an intense and overpowering moment, even if it meant certain oblivion, seemed worth it in the midst of war – and very stupid once the war ended.” His conclusion: “The enduring attraction of war is this: Even with its destruction and carnage it can give us what we long for in life. It can give us purpose, meaning, a reason for living... It gives us resolve, a cause. It allows us to be noble...” An important addition to the psychology of war.

Mahony, Liam, and Eguren, Luis Enrique (1997) *Unarmed Bodyguards: International Accompaniment for the Protection of Human Rights*. The origin of movement to “accompany” (i.e. use the power of American citizenship and, at times, white skin) human rights activists whose lives and communities are under threat of death and atrocity. Noam Chomsky says of this book: “The inspiring stories related here are particularly meaningful to citizens of the United States, not only because the movement largely originated here, but also because, in no small measure, the atrocities can be traced right back to Washington.

Nagler, Michael (2001; 2004). *The Search for a Nonviolent Future*. Makawao, Maui, HI: Inner Ocean Publishing. Passionate, controversial, naïve, practical, annoying, inspiring, visionary or hopelessly idealistic – you decide. This reader-friendly book by the founder of UC Berkeley’s Peace Studies program lays out what it will take to create a world without war, prisons, racism, dire poverty, or destruction of the earth. Former Vice President Al Gore called it courageous and knowledgeable. I found it all of the above.

Yoshimura, Akito (1978) (2001) *One Man’s Justice*. New York: Harcourt, Inc. A Japanese officer hides out from U.S. Occupation forces on the lookout for suspected war criminals at the end of World War II. Though demoralized and humiliated, Takuya questions whether his own crimes, small in comparison with the atomic bombing of civilians that ended the war, can really be considered morally wrong. From a prize winning Japanese author.
Introduction
Over the past hundred years, nonviolent action by ordinary people has accomplished massive social change, toppling dictators, overthrowing colonial governments, ending participation in unjust wars, rewriting oppressive laws, reconciling victims and perpetrators, and healing families and communities. Nonviolent action requires leadership, intelligence, creativity, moral and physical courage, self discipline, and brilliant strategy. Why then, do so many people believe that a nonviolent response to injustice or attack is unworkable, or “too idealistic”? Every major religion: Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and Judaism, counsels its followers to sanctify human life and treat all human beings as family. Why, then, do we continue to train young people to kill, maim, and terrorize others? Why do we support a military budget that is three times that of our major adversaries combined? Why do we call our country’s aggression “just” and “noble,” and our enemies’ aggression “unjust,” “mindless,” and “evil”? Why do we caricature and dehumanize people who are somehow “different” from us as a prelude to our aggression against them? Why are we so reluctant to investigate the root causes of violence: poverty, oppression, ignorance, and fear?

My own philosophy of nonviolence – and how it applies to you:
My pacifism is rooted in Quaker peace testimony, my alarm at my country’s response to the events of 9-11, and my development work in India, West Africa, and impoverished U.S. communities. You can find a full explanation of my thinking, my talks to various audiences, and my other courses on my website at www.umich.edu/~hfox. While this course advocates peace activism, you will not be graded down for arguing in favor of war or violence in specific instances or even in general, as long as you show that you acknowledge and understand opposing points of view. Likewise, you will not be given higher grades for advocating nonviolence without deep reflection about its difficulties and complexities. This course is an opportunity for you to question yourself, your prior learning, your action (or lack of action), and the influence of authorities – parents, government, teachers, media, religious instruction – in your life. Show me your thinking, both in your writing and in your contributions to class discussion; let me reflect with you through my questions and comments and through individual conversations that you initiate – breakfast, lunch, and coffee times are usually great; Amer’s on Church is my local hang-out. Please make appointments by e-mail or before/after class.

Course Goals
- to understand some of the philosophies that motivate nonviolent action, including many religious traditions
- to learn how nonviolent social movements have worked in countries around the world
- to learn and practice some of the methods and strategies of nonviolent action
- to learn to respond to arguments that justify war and aggression
- to practice nonviolent action in the community, teach peace, and/or contribute to a nonviolent social movement
Writing

- **Reading Journal:** I will assign about eight, 2-3 page (typed) reading journals (including a final reflection, below) to help you think through specific questions or issues raised in the texts and class discussion and to let me know you’ve read and listened carefully. Please refer to specific texts with titles and page numbers and/or quotes so I know which articles you’ve been thinking about. **The style I’m looking for is personal, thoughtful, and intellectually interesting.** You can achieve this by discussing your ideas with classmates (or with yourself) before writing, making your ideas crystal clear, using a personal voice (“I think,” “I wonder,” “This makes me think about...” etc.) and editing your finished text carefully. Stream-of-consciousness writing, notes, or private musings can be helpful for your own thinking but they do not communicate enough to the reader or work out ideas thoroughly enough to be useful for this kind of assignment. **Please be sure to make appointments with me to talk about how to improve your writing if you have any doubts or concerns about it.**

- **Interview** of a peer about their attitudes toward war and peace. You will tape record this 45 minute interview using a list of questions I give you (with a certain amount of license to add questions of your own if they occur to you as you’re talking), then write up (2-3 pp.) the most interesting things you heard. The results will help me in my study of college students’ attitudes that I have been working on this past year. I prefer that you choose a student whose political views annoy you or are in some ways different from yours. This will not only help me broaden my study, but will give you practice in listening deeply without arguing or feeling frustrated. All interviews are anonymous.

- **Letter** to a character or author of the book you chose: “What I’ve learned from you about activism, war, and/or peace, and my questions that remain.” (4-5 pages in two or more drafts). Although this letter is not meant to be sent, you’ll start by addressing the author personally (Dear Art Gish…). The purpose of the letter format is to encourage you to connect with the author’s ideas, beliefs, experiences, and convictions; to use ordinary, conversational language, to express your honest reactions and ask your most pressing questions.

- **Dialogue** with an adversary about the power of nonviolence (5-7 pp in two or more drafts). In this paper, you’ll create two characters who disagree about any of the questions of violence or nonviolence that we’ve tackled in class or that have come up for you in our readings or discussions. You may want to begin the paper with a few sentences that give the context of the conversation (e.g. “Karin and her roommate Stacy are watching TV when a news alert informs them that a demonstration against the World Bank has just turned violent...” etc.) The purpose of writing this in dialogue form is for you to understand opposing views well enough to make them sound credible and reasonable; to respond to those arguments in a convincing way; and to practice having more informed conversations that you might have tried to have in the past with no luck.
• **Report** of your community project (see below). Explanation and analysis of what your group and you as an individual did, what the challenges were, how you dealt with them, and how the project could be improved. (4 or more pages). FULL DETAILS will be important here. Imagine your audience to be a supervisor in a neighborhood peace and justice organization who has been too busy with other projects to put her mind to yours. She is intensely interested in what you tried to accomplish and in what ways it was successful or unsuccessful. She does not expect miracles; your salary depends on effort and energy at this stage of project development, not results.

• **Final reflection** (3-4 pages) How have your ideas about peace activism been shaped, changed, strengthened, complicated, and/or challenged – and what questions remain with you, now that the course is almost over?

**Assessment of writing assignments**
Your writing assignments will not be graded in the usual way; I feel that grades often stifle the critical thinking, creativity and risk-taking that are necessary to the writing process. I will comment extensively on your work, and will be happy to meet with you in conference to talk about your writing and discuss your progress in the course. To ensure careful reading and thinking about the course texts and discussions, I will mark your reading journals with ++ (you’ve impressed me); + (okay, but some deeper thinking, more accurate editing, and/or more significant details would improve it); or RW – a mandatory re-write after careful consideration of my comments and an individual writing conference if we both think it would be helpful. Lot’s of good writers get RWs, so don’t be discouraged if you do. You may endlessly revise (and I will endlessly comment on) any or all of the assignments.

**Portfolio Assessment**
You are responsible for organizing all of your written work, including ALL DRAFTS of ALL your writing assignments in a cardboard binder and handing it in on the last day of class. It is UP TO YOU to KEEP A RECORD of the assignments and make sure they are all included in your final portfolio.

**Community Action**
In small groups, you will decide on nonviolent action projects you want to pursue in the community. This might involve a specific project with a UM student organization or a neighborhood peace group, peace education of children or teens in a school or religious institution, a peace art project, a publication you write or solicit writing for; a discussion series you set up, advertise, and facilitate; a film festival, a skit or play, or some other creative way of learning and practicing peace activism. **Please note:** Near the end of the course you may be asked to reflect on your contributions to your project, your attendance, your cooperation with other group members, the ways you have assumed responsibility, and so on. You will also have the opportunity to comment on the attitudes and contributions of other group members. Both your self assessment and the comments of others in your group about your participation will be taken into consideration in the assignment of your final grade in the course.
Grading
Your grade and/or RC evaluation will be based on the quality and depth of your writing and thinking, your attendance and involvement in class, the quantity and quality of your contributions to class discussion, and your contributions to your community project (see above). If getting an A is important to you, your writing and attention to feedback must be outstanding; your frequent additions to class discussion must be inclusive of your peers and helpful in moving the conversation forward; your attendance must be stellar (see below), and your role in your class project must be clearly pro-active and cooperative.

Plagiarism
This unusual “sin” is taken very seriously at U-M. In the grand scheme of things (murderous dictators, WWIII) it is minor, but in fact, it can cause your dismissal from the University. Please don’t be tempted to cut and paste paragraphs from the Internet. Plagiarism is surprisingly easy to detect without any special software. I’d rather see bad writing than suspicious passages.

Attendance Policy
It is your responsibility to find and sign the attendance sheet at the beginning of every class. This is my only record of your attendance. Because all classes are discussion-intensive and practical, attendance and active participation is a must. Arrival no later than ten minutes past the hour is expected. More than two absences (with the exception of religious holidays) and/or continual late arrival may result in a significant lowering of your grade. Please try to inform me by e-mail if you know you will be absent. I never require written excuses. If prolonged illness or family emergency significantly inhibits your participation, be sure to let me know what’s happening.

CALENDAR (Subject to modification, depending on students’ interests and needs. Any changes to the schedule will be posted on the blackboard at the beginning of each class session)

Week 1 (Sept. 5, 7) Introductions, working together, definitions, questions.
Week Two (Sept. 14) Reasons for war and terrorism. NO CLASS. 12 – I will be in Warsaw. Tape recorded interview and write-up DUE Sept. 14
Week Three (Sept. 19, 21) Reasons, continued. Just and unjust war. Choose your book about war, peace activism, and/or human nature (see list) and start reading.
Week Four (Sept. 26, 28) Genocide and its prevention. What is peace activism? Start community projects.
Week Six (Oct. 10, 12) Religious traditions, continued.

Fall Study Break
Week Seven (Oct. 19) Discussion of your chosen books on war, peace activism and/or human nature. First draft: “Letter to author or character” DUE Oct. 20
Week Eight (Oct. 24, 26) Case Studies: India, Chile (videos: India: Defying the Crown; Chile: Defeat of a Dictator)
Week Nine (Oct. 31, 2) Case Studies: United States (videos: African Americans: No Easy Walk; Chicanos: Struggle in the Fields)
Week Ten (Nov. 7, 9). Case Studies: Poland, South Africa (videos: Poland: We’ve Caught God by the Arm; South Africa: Freedom in our Lifetime)
Week Twelve (Nov. 21) Nonviolent methods and peacemaking experiences, cont. Possible video: Long Night’s Journey into Day (South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission).

**Thanksgiving Holiday**
Week Fourteen (Dec. 5, 7) Visions of the future, continued. Oral reports of community projects. Write-up of community project DUE Dec. 6
Week Fifteen (Dec. 12) Portfolios DUE. Your final reflection paper should appear as the first piece in your portfolio.