Gandhi and his legacy: Violence/nonviolence in the world & in ourselves

An experimental course combining academic study with experiential workshops

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Genocidal violence against neighbors and friends; mass rape; torture; the brutalities of war. Are the people who do these things “normal”? Could we do such things? How could we prepare ourselves not to do these things? A student’s question in a Stanford class in 2010 gave rise to the inquiry that has produced this experimental course. How do we think-talk-learn about violence, nonviolence, ethics and compassion?

Gandhi, the pioneer of nonviolent political struggle in the first half of the 20th century, becomes a central figure as we study violence more broadly—what it is, what it does to individuals and societies, how it can be addressed and transformed. We will pay special attention to the connections between violence on an individual/personal level and violence in the larger world. The course has an unusual format, exploring the boundaries between academic study and experiential learning. Though these approaches are usually separated, we undertake to examine the difficulties and possibilities of relating them. For our purposes, “academic” emphasizes analytical and critical examination of sources, and “experiential” emphasizes our personal experience, including body, mind, emotions, and creative imagination.

On MW we have a regular academic class. On Fridays we have workshops that aim at developing self-knowledge and expanding our understanding of what we can do about violence in ourselves and in the world. Putting the two approaches together gives us a new opportunity to reflect on the ways we learn, and what counts as knowledge.

One book will be required: Nancy Scheper-Hughes & Philippe I. Bourgois, eds. Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003. Other materials will be in a course reader, online, in films, etc.
Schedule

Week 1

**Mon. Jan 9**: Introductions. What is violence? (first round)

**Wed. Jan. 11**: What is violence? (second round)  What sorts of violence will we accept and justify?

Stories and artistic imagination about forgiveness and apology are used to introduce the nature of violence and non-violence in individual and collective bodies.

*Tommy Lee Woon*, Director of Diversity and First-Generation Programs, Stanford University.
Trained as a Somatic Experiencing Practitioner, Tommy Lee Woon has a long-term interest in healing collective, historical trauma.

*Aya Kasai*, MA, MFTI, Expressive Arts Therapist, PhD candidate in East-West Psychology at California Institute of Integral Studies. A member of a team of Japanese citizens who are dedicated to healing and reconciling Japan's war crimes, Aya Kasai applies Expressive Arts to healing historical trauma.

Week 2

**Mon. Jan. 16**: MLK holiday – post reading responses
- Howard Zinn, “Just and Unjust War,” [http://co.quaker.org/Writings/JustAndUnjustWar.htm](http://co.quaker.org/Writings/JustAndUnjustWar.htm)
- *Orig. pub. in Declarations of Independence* (1991), also in *The Zinn Reader* and *Howard Zinn on War*.
  Both readings also available as PDFs on Coursework (materials).

**Wed. Jan. 18**: Could we do this?
- Philip Gourevitch, *VWP*, 136-42
- Leon Litwack, *VWP*, 123-27
  See Jan. 23 for recommended films related to Zimbardo work.

**Fri. Jan. 20**: *Violence and Nonviolence in the Body, Part 2*
Somatic inquiry about social engagement and detachment in the body provides insight about the biology of prejudice, nonviolence, and violence.
Led by *Tommy Lee Woon* and *Aya Kasai* (see previous week).

Week 3

**Mon. Jan. 23**: Violence and trauma.
- Watch *Wartorn: PTSD 1861-2010*.
- BBC story, 4 Dec. 2010. The Cambodia genocide 30 years later.
Listen to first 7 minutes at [http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00c50lr](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00c50lr)
or read at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/9251334.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/9251334.stm)

Recommended:
2 powerful documentaries on how US soldiers sometimes end up doing terrible things to innocent people:
*Standard Operating Procedure*, by Errol Morris, on Abu Ghraib
*Taxi to the Dark Side*, by Alex Gibney. Academy Award for best doc 2007. Whole film (106 min) available on
youtube, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWerXHS893U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWerXHS893U)

**Wed. Jan. 25:** Gandhi (1)

What was the relation of personal/inner transformation and political/outer transformation for Gandhi? What role did religion play in his beliefs and actions?
What did Gandhi mean by “experiments with truth”? Could you do an experiment with truth?
Can you make general statements about his theory of nonviolence and political action based on these two sets of readings?

**Fri. Jan. 27:** Stanford Compassion Training Program (SCT) led by Leah Weiss Ekstrom
An experiential overview of SCT, with interactive exercises using meditations and dyad work. The focus of this session will be on self-compassion and its relevance to embracing shared common humanity.
Participants will engage questions such as: How does self-compassion relate to one's own happiness and health? Why is self-compassion relevant to compassionate and altruistic behavior toward others? If self-compassion is important, how can it be increased?

*Leah Weiss Ekstrom*, Director of Compassion Education
Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education ([ccare.stanford.edu](http://ccare.stanford.edu))
Institute for Neuro-Innovation and Translational Neuroscience, Stanford School of Medicine

SCT is a nine-week program designed to develop the qualities of compassion, empathy, and kindness for oneself and for others. SCT integrates traditional contemplative practices with contemporary psychology and scientific research on compassion. The program was developed at Stanford University by a team of contemplative scholars, clinical psychologists, and researchers. Weekly Themes of SCT course: 1. Orientation. 2. Settling and Focusing the Mind. 3. Loving-Kindness and Compassion for a Loved One. 4. Compassion for Self. 5. Loving-Kindness for Self. 6. Embracing Shared Common Humanity. 7. Compassion for Others. 8. Active Compassion. 9. Integrated Compassion.

**Week 4**

**Mon. Jan. 30:** Gandhi (2)
• Selections from Autobiography, cont. All or part of these chapters: Pt. I, ch. 18-21; Pt. II, ch. 1-2, 6, 8, 12-13, 19-20, 25.; Pt. III ch. 6-9,17-18; Pt. IV ch. 24-25; Pt. V, ch. 32-33, 39-40; Farewell. ®

**Wed Feb. 1:** Gandhi (3)
Spotlight on two cases: The Salt March (1930) and the Chauri Chaura incident (1922)
• Watch 3 youtube segments from Attenborough’s 1982 movie Gandhi related to Chauri Chaura.
   1. “Gandhi 07,” The Jalianwalabagh massacre, Apr. 13, 1919, which deeply changed Gandhi’s attitude toward British rule. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0LOD1x8rgOw&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0LOD1x8rgOw&feature=related) (9+ min.)
2. “Gandhi 08,” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eD3RxPTLUQw, skip to 2.35 (all music, no picture up to there), then watch 10 min. segment. Successful buildup of nationwide movement.

Optional: http://www.counterpunch.org/2004/03/20/chauri-chaura-amp-gandhi-s-vision-of-responsibility/

In class: 30-min. film on Salt March (A Force More Powerful series);

What methods, theory, strategy, and tactics of nonviolent action do you see in these two campaigns? Was Gandhi right or wrong to call off the movement in 1922 after Chauri Chaura?

Fri. Feb. 3  Story circles and theater games with Naomi Newman.

Naomi Newman is a playwright, actor, director, and teacher well known in the Bay Area theater world and beyond. In 1978 she co-founded A Traveling Jewish Theatre, which has won international acclaim for its artistic excellence in presenting plays inspired by the Jewish experience and meaningful to diverse audiences. She has been recognized for her commitment to theater as a vehicle for transforming and healing society and individuals, and as an inspiring role model for women. Naomi is a long-time practitioner of Buddhist meditation and often co-teaches at Spirit Rock Meditation Center. To hear her dramatic telling of two short tales, watch this 11-minute video of her accepting an award from Tikkun and the Network of Spiritual Progressives in 2011: http://www.tikkun.org/nextgen/video-naomi-newman

Week 5

Mon. Feb. 6: Genocide in South Asia: the Partition of India-Pakistan
• Urvashi Butalia, The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India, opening, pp 3-13. ®

What are the facts? The political situation? Conflicting interests? The main sequence of events? Why did Partition happen? What factors influenced the rise of communal violence? Analyze and consider differences in historians’ accounts.
Watch opening of Hey Ram in class. How does this affect your thinking?

Selections from Urvashi Butalia, cont. ®

Ask again: What are the facts? What was the political situation? Conflicting interests? The main sequence of events? Why did Partition happen? What factors influenced the rise of communal violence? What are the differences between academic history and oral history in the examples we’ve seen? What questions do they ask? What kinds of knowledge do they provide / exclude?

Recommended: Watch Earth, a 1998 film by Deepa Mehta (101 min). Possible evening dinner + film gathering?

Fri. Feb. 10: The “Lucifer Effect” and “Heroic Imagination,” part 1, led by Clint Wilkins and Lynne Henderson.

This and the next workshop are based on the work of Stanford’s renowned professor of psychology, Philip Zimbardo. How do we learn to behave with compassion and courage, or with cruelty and indifference, in
situations of violence, danger, suffering? Exercises will explore the role of the bystander effect, peer pressure, obedience to authority, and everyday heroism--factors that affect whether a person will assent to or participate in cruel and violent behaviors in a given situation, or alternatively, step forth with awareness and courage to change the situation. For more information on Zimbardo’s work, see below.

Clint Wilkins, Education Director for the Heroic Imagination Project, has worked in the independent school world for over thirty years, as a teacher, coach, college counselor, dean of students, and principal. He has had leadership roles in Sidwell Friends in Washington, D.C., Moorestown Friends School in Moorestown, N.J., and College Prep High School in Oakland, CA. In 1998 he founded Sage Hill School, the first nondenominational, independent high school in Orange County, CA, which today and enjoys a national reputation. He was recently co-founder and interim principal at Civicorps Elementary School in Oakland, which promotes “citizenship through the creation of educational programs that draw upon the power of service as a way of learning.” He has been a Visiting Scholar at Stanford’s School of Education, where he researched the charter school movement. His work in social entrepreneurship led to a fellowship at the Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship at Oxford.

Lynne Henderson, Director of Applied Social Research for the Heroic Imagination Project, is Co-director, with Prof. Philip Zimbardo, of the Shyness Institute, and was the director of the Stanford Shyness Clinic, 1982-2007. Her research includes translating the results of personality theory and social psychology into effective group and individual treatment strategies for extreme shyness and social anxiety disorder. She has developed Social Fitness Training, a health maintenance treatment model, and is the author of The Compassionate Mind Guide to Building Social Confidence. At the Heroic Imagination Project Dr. Henderson is translating the Social Fitness Model into structured exercises that facilitate skillful courageous conversations in the face of situational pressures to do otherwise. Role-plays at moderate levels of stress/anxiety open the way to skillful and courageous action rather than avoidance in actual situations. Other exercises include mindfulness, gratitude, empathy, a growth mindset, compassion and forgiveness that facilitate compassion for the self and others while engaging in the ongoing process of courageous conversations and actions.

Philip Zimbardo’s work (See www.lucifereffect.com and www.heroicimagination.org):

In The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil, Zimbardo summarizes many years of research on factors that can create a "perfect storm" that leads good people to engage in evil actions. He calls this transformation of human character the "Lucifer Effect," named after God's favorite angel, Lucifer, who fell from grace and ultimately became Satan. Rather than providing a religious analysis, he offers a psychological account of how ordinary people sometimes turn evil and commit unspeakable acts. The Lucifer Effect tells the full story behind the classic 1971 Stanford Prison Experiment. In that study, normal college students were randomly assigned to play the role of guard or inmate for two weeks in a simulated prison, yet the guards quickly became so brutal that the experiment had to be shut down after only six days. How and why did this transformation take place? What does it tell us about recent events such as the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuses in Iraq? What does it suggest about the "nature of human nature" and about effective ways to prevent such abuses in the future?

The Heroic Imagination project explores the other side of the coin. “[The project aims] to encourage and empower individuals to take heroic action during crucial moments in their lives. We prepare them to act with integrity, compassion, and moral courage, heightened by an understanding of the power of situational forces.”

Week 6


**Wed. Feb. 15:** Truth, reconciliation, healing: the case of South Africa
- Film: *Long Night’s Journey into Day;* Prologue to Helen Whitney’s film, *Forgiveness*

**Fri. Feb 17:** The “Lucifer Effect” and “Heroic Imagination,” *part 2 – see above.*

**Week 7**

SPECIAL EVENTS THIS WEEK: Screening of RESTREPO, on one year in the life of a US platoon at a remote outpost in Afghanistan, winner of Grand Jury Prize for documentary film at Sundance 2010; discussions with Sebastian Junger, co-director of the film and author of WAR and other acclaimed books and articles.

Sebastian Junger in conversation with Tobias Wolff: February 21, 7. p.m., Cemex Auditorium, GSB
Film screening, Feb. 22, 7 p.m., same place, followed by Q&A with Junger.

**Mon. Feb. 20:** Presidents holiday. In the military:
How soldiers are trained to kill; four active duty soldiers who declared themselves conscientious objectors or refused to deploy during the Iraq/Afghanistan wars; Film: *Soldiers of Conscience*

**Wed. Feb. 22:** Uses of language
- Nonviolent Communication movement. There are many online resources on NVC—writings, videos, tools, etc. Our assignment is to start at this link and follow the 5 links at the bottom of the page: [http://www.cnvc.org/learn/nvc-foundations](http://www.cnvc.org/learn/nvc-foundations). You can also check the excellent Bay Area website: [www.bayncv.org](http://www.bayncv.org). Follow links that intrigue you on both sites.

**Fri. Feb. 24:** Jiwon Chung leads a workshop based on Augusto Boal’s Theater of the Oppressed. (See [http://www.ptoweb.org/](http://www.ptoweb.org/)) Jiwon is the artistic director of Kairos Theater Ensemble and adjunct professor at the Starr King School at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, where he teaches Theater and Social Justice. He focuses on theater as a tool for social and political change, using Theater of the Oppressed to challenge, resist and transform systemic oppression and structural violence, and to redress large scale historical atrocity and global injustice. He also works locally on the creation of wrap-around behavioral health care systems for underserved immigrant communities and refugee micro populations in the bay area. His approach to individual, interpersonal and institutional change is informed by his background as a veteran, martial artist and three decades of vipassana meditation.

**Week 8**

**Mon. Feb. 27:** Principled and strategic nonviolence. Guest speaker: Clayborne Carson, Professor of History and Director of MLK Institute at Stanford.
• Sels. from MLK: *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King*, ed. Clayborne Carson, pp. 22-27; *I Have a Dream*, 30-33; *Strength to Love*, 49-57. ®
FYI: there’s a new documentary on Gene Sharp: *How to Start a Revolution* (ordered but not yet in Green)

**Wed. Feb. 29:** Guest speaker: Prof. Erica Chenoweth, visiting fellow at Stanford Center for Security and Cooperation; co-author with Maria J. Stephan of *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*.
- Peter Ackerman and Berel Rodal, "The Strategic Dimensions of Civil Resistance," *Survival*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (2008), 111-126 (will provide PDF).

**Fri. Mar. 2:** Nonviolent Communication (NVC), part 1, led by *Lynda Smith.*
A graduate of Bay NVC's Leadership Program, Lynda Smith has been teaching NVC throughout the Bay Area in classes and workshops since 2004. She also works with individuals and couples and has offered one-on-one empathic support to inmates at San Quentin. She is a former newspaper editor (San Francisco Chronicle, USA Today, Miami Herald) and a former Waldorf School teacher. Along with one of her mentors, Miki Kashtan (see Mar. 5 assignment), Lynda has a strong interest in the connections between individual and social/political non/violence. On Nonviolent Communication, see [www.cnvc.org](http://www.cnvc.org) and [www.baynvc.org](http://www.baynvc.org).

**Week 9**

**Mon. Mar. 5:** Nonviolence / “diversity of tactics” in the Occupy movement
- Paul Chappell, “How To Destroy The Occupy Movement And How To Prevent It From Failing,” [http://www.wagingpeace.org/articles/db_article.php?print&article_id=301](http://www.wagingpeace.org/articles/db_article.php?print&article_id=301)

**Wed. Mar. 7:**

**Fri. Mar. 9:** Nonviolent Communication, part 2.

**Week 10**

**M-W Mar. 12 & 14:** Student presentations
Requirements

Note: The option to take the course for 4 or 5 units does not affect your requirements. It's only offered for the convenience of students who have different issues regarding how many units they can take.

1. Attendance and participation: very important. Please stay in touch and let us know if/why you need to be absent.
2. Leading discussion, preparing analysis of issues for a particular class. Two students each Mon. & Wed. will do this together; each student should have an opportunity to lead discussion twice during the quarter. One possible structure for this would include taking two different positions on something in the reading and arguing it out, but you can also take a different approach. When you are discussion leader, your job includes bringing forth other class members’ knowledge of and comments about the readings.
3. Keep a journal on class readings and other assignments/activities and on weekly workshops. This should amount to 2-3 doublespaced pages per week. Here’s how it will work.
   a. Post on Coursework Forum your notes on the assignment for Mon. & Wed.—due the previous night before you go to bed (i.e., Sun. or Tues.). It can be anything from a paragraph to a page for each day, but it should show that you have done the assignment, grasped important points in it, and/or raised questions about it.
   b. Add a reflection on the Friday workshop—anything from a paragraph to a page. Put this together with your notes on the MW assignments (which you can change from what you posted on Forum). You can keep your notes on the different days separate, or bring them together in whatever way makes sense to you at the end of the week. The total weekly writing of 2-3 pages should be submitted electronically to the “drop box” on Coursework by Sat. at 6 pm. This will go on from week 1 through week 9. During week 10, add an overall reflection—see “d” below.
   c. Instructor will give comments on written work every two weeks. We’ll stagger this so that in any given week the instructor will be reading and giving feedback to half the class.
   d. At the end of the course, compile all the weekly writing and add a concluding overall reflection on the relationship between the academic and experiential parts of the course.

OPTIONAL TERM PROJECT

Longer-term projects can be very valuable, and some people like to do them as part of a course. If you would like to have such a project, we can alter the requirements in the following way. Keep journals as above for the first 3 weeks. During the rest of the quarter, you’re still expected to do the reading for each class, but instead of writing up weekly responses, you’ll work on a project or paper. You’re free to define the topic but must clear it with the instructor. Possibilities are wide open. You might, for instance, pick an aspect or example or historical instance of violence/nonviolence to focus on—from personal to political, physical to structural, theoretical to tactical, with a choice of disciplinary approaches. It could be a big question (like principled vs. strategic nonviolence) or a very specific topic (like a painting) or a historical figure or event. It could be a study of plan for nonviolent resolution in a situation of real fighting somewhere in the world. Etc. After picking an area of interest, do one of the following:
   a. Do research and write a paper of about 12 pp.
   b. Set up a service project to do for 6-7 weeks, and write it up in a way that relates to our course. If you want to do this one, you should decide within the first two weeks of the course; instructor and her connections can help find a service opportunity.
   c. Create a work of art / performance, to be accompanied by a writeup that describes your process, relates the project to our course, and includes reference to other works of art that are in some sense “about” violence/nonviolence.

BASIS FOR GRADING

If you don’t do a term project:
   Attendance and participation: 20%.
   Leading discussions: 5% each = 10%. You get an automatic A on this if you show up and do it.
   Weekly write-ups: total 84%
   M & W: 2 per week for 9 weeks, 6 points/wk, = 54% - will be graded.
   Fri: 10 responses (including final week concluding note), 3 points/wk = 30%. Automatic A if you do it on time.

If you do a term project:
   Attendance and participation: 20%.
   Leading discussions: 5% each = 10%. You get an automatic A on this if you show up and do it.
   3 weekly write-ups: 18% MW graded, 9% Fri. automatic A
   Final project or paper: 43%