***Conflict Transformation:***

***Mindfulness Skills as Educational Praxis***

***Spring 2024***

***INTD 0132A***



*“There are many different aspects to a formal meditation practice. But the real meditation practice is how you interface with life from moment-to-moment, no matter what's happening.”*

Jon Kabat-Zinn

*“A transformational perspective is built upon two foundations:*

*a capacity to envision conflict positively, as a natural phenomenon that creates potential for constructive growth,*

*and a willingness to respond in ways that maximize this potential for positive change.*

*Conflict transformation views peace as a continuously evolving and developing quality of relationship.”*

John Paul Lederach (2003), *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation*

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**Professor: Melissa Hammerle, Ed.D., Visiting Assistant Professor,**

**Education Studies**

**Office:** Twilight Hall 313

**Email:** mhammerle@middlebury.edu

**Phone:** 802-443-2384

**Course Meeting Time and Location:**

Wednesdays, 1:30-4:15pm

Johnson Memorial Building 204

**Office Hours:**  Fridays, 9-11am, Twilight 313

**Please sign up in advance here or email if you need to schedule during an alternate day/time:** [**Calendly Schedule**](https://calendly.com/mhammerle/fys-mid-semester-meetings)

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***Course Description***

This course will introduce students to a variety of approaches to conflict transformation (CT) using skills-based practices from the fields of mindfulness and contemplative studies. Conflict, as a state or act of disruption, will be examined as a driver for social/political and individual transformation. We will examine this work through the lens of contemporary social justice and liberatory educational philosophies. Using these frameworks, we will consider CT in the context of mindfulness skills, including: identifying shifting conceptual frameworks, mindful states and traits, embodied action, contemplative reflection, and mindful self-inquiry. This course is part of a Middlebury-wide CT initiative and is foundational for students who wish to pursue practicum or research opportunities in other CT programs.

**Contemplation and Mindfulness as Pedagogical Tools**

We will engage these topics by exploring the role of the student and the teacher as active participants in an engaged pedagogy. In this way, we will focus on personal agency in the learning process by considering embodied and creative frameworks for learning, among them contemplative pedagogy, mindful deliberation, and mind-body paradigms (mindful listening and movement). Towards that end, the course will include contemplative practices, by which I mean “any activity that quiets the mind in order to cultivate the capacity for insight” (The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society). The intention of this exploration is to create a “participatory space for the sharing of knowledge” in which we can connect “the will to know with the will to become” (hooks, 1994).

**Guiding Questions and Learning Goals**

The Conflict Transformation Collaborative has identified three core learning goals for CT courses. We will address each of these in this class:

* A New Understanding of Conflict: conflict is not just destructive. Constructive conflict can deepen relationships and advance social change.
* Skills to Understand Self and Others: to constructively engage in conflict, we need to understand ourselves and others in the contexts in which we act.
* A Commitment to Act: transforming conflict involves a commitment to carefully designed engagement at some level - interpersonal, institutional, or structural.

And together we will consider the following questions, among others:

i) What do we mean by conflict transformation?

ii) What are embodied mindfulness skills?

iii) How do mindfulness skills play a role in the

pursuit of constructive social and personal change?

**Format of Course**

This course will be primarily discussion-oriented and will also include a mixture of presentations, videos, contemplative practices and student-led discussions. You will gain the most from this course from active participation. As such the class is structured to promote this and you are expected to come well-prepared. The nature of a seminar requires that each person contribute to the learning of others.

**Course Materials and Texts:**

Below please find a list of books we will be using for the course. The only text you need to purchase is *Coming to Our Senses*. I don’t mind what version you have (ebook, print copy). I will be providing the majority of our remaining course readings as PDF’s on our course Canvas site. The other books listed below are available as e-texts through MidCat.

1. Kabat-Zinn, J. (2005). *Coming to Our Senses : Healing Ourselves and The World Through Mindfulness.* Hyperion. (A copy of this will also be available on reserve in Davis Library.)

Available as e-texts via MidCat:

1. bell hooks (2001). *all about love.* Morrow.
2. Lederach, J. (2003). *Little Book of Conflict Transformation: Clear articulation of the guiding principles by a pioneer in the field*. Good Books.
3. Kroll, B. M. (2013). *The Open Hand: Arguing as an Art of Peace*. University Press of Colorado.

**Collaborative Classroom Agreements**

*Assignments*: Work will be turned in on time. If you need an extension, please discuss that with me in advance. If it is determined that an extension is warranted, we will set an alternative, mutually agreed upon due date. Anything submitted beyond that time frame will result in a loss of points on the assignment.

*Attendance*: Attend class and come prepared to contribute. It is critical that you attend regularly and come fully prepared. Consequently, more than one unexcused absence as well as showing up to class unprepared will negatively impact your grade. If for any reason you are concerned that you will miss a class, or if there are circumstances that interfere with your ability to attend class and participate fully, please contact me immediately. I can support you most effectively if you speak to me as soon as you have a concern.

*Accessibility*: It is my intention to work with each of you to fully support your learning experience. In that context, please let me know if you have either a documented disability or any other concerns or questions about accessibility. I am always available to meet with you in person or to discuss such things on email.

*Group Work*: When collaborating with others, whether in small group discussions, in lecture, or in formal projects, please work together to provide space for each student to be heard.

*Technology*: We will occasionally be using laptops in class for in-class writing assignments or to view course content together. Other than those occasions, my preference is that you do not use your laptop in class unless that is the best way for you to take class notes. And please, all cell phones should be silenced and put away during class.

***We are creating together* a collaborative, respectful learning space in which everyone is welcomed and heard.**

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**Class Policies**

*Communication Policy*: I use both Canvas and Middlebury e-mail to communicate with students. Please pay attention to announcements and get in the habit of regularly checking your Middlebury e-mail account. *Please also be sure to activate your notifications in Canvas so that you receive announcements and emails I send through Canvas.*

*Academic Integrity*: As an academic community devoted to the life of the mind, Middlebury requires that every student complete intellectual honesty in the preparation and submission of all academic work. Details of our Academic Honesty, Honor Code, and Related Disciplinary Policies are available in Middlebury’s handbook.

*Honor Code Pledge*: The Honor Code pledge reads as follows: "I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment." It is the responsibility of the student to write out in full, adhere to, and sign the Honor Code pledge on all examinations, research papers, and laboratory reports. Faculty members reserve the right to require the signed Honor Code pledge on other kinds of academic work.

*AI Generative Tools*: Using AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Bard) is not permitted in this class to assist in any part of your homework or other assignments. Any use of generative AI tools will be treated as a violation of Middlebury’s Honor Code.

**Relevant Campus Resources**

*Disability Resource Center*: Disability access/accommodation: Students who have Letters of Accommodation in this class are encouraged to contact me as early in the semester as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. For those without Letters of Accommodation, assistance is available to eligible students through the [Disability Resource Center](https://www.middlebury.edu/office/disability-resource-center) (formerly called Student Accessibility Services). All discussions will remain confidential. Please contact one of the ADA Coordinators at [ada@middlebury.edu](mailto:ada@middlebury.edu) for more information.

*Center for Teaching, Learning, and Research*: The CTLR provides academic support for students in many specific content areas and in writing across the curriculum through both professional tutors and peer tutors. The Center is also the place where students can find assistance in time- management and study skills. These services are free to all students. For more information on how to get the help you need, go to the [CTLR’s student resource page](http://www.middlebury.edu/academics/resources/ctlr/students).

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***COURSE SCHEDULE AND WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS***

*Week 1 Introduction to Course Principles and Practices*

*2/14*

Welcome and Introduction: What do we mean by conflict transformation and how do mindfulness skills play a role in constructive change?

· We will review our guiding questions and begin to explore the course content.

· Introduction to Mindful Contemplative Practices

· Assessing Conflict Styles: The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Styles Inventory.

o **Before class**: Reflect on your understanding of the terms mindfulness and conflict transformation. How do you connect these concepts to constructive change?

o **Write down some of your ideas and bring them to class**.

* Post Introductions on Canvas (before second class)

*Week 2 Embodied Learning: Why the Body Matters*

*2/21*

*Readings and assignments due today:*

* Susan Smalley and Diana Winston (2010). Chapter 1, “What is Mindfulness?,” Chapter 2, “Getting Started,” and Chapter 3, “Breath and Awareness,” in *Fully Present: The Science, Art, and Practice of Mindfulness*, pp. 1-54.
* Beth Berila (2024). “Bringing the Body Back In” from *Integrating Mindfulness into Anti-Oppression Pedagogy (First Edition),* pp. 33-62.
* Kroll, B. (2008). Arguing with Adversaries: Aikido, Rhetoric, and the Art of Peace. College Composition and Communication, 59(3), 451–472.
* **Due**: Reading Response #1 and Student Introductions

**In-Class Practice:** Prof. Jonathan Miller Lane, Aikido Master

*Week 3 Social Conflict and Liberatory Educational Philosophies*

*2/28*

*Readings and assignments due today:*

* Lederach, J. (2003). *Little Book of Conflict Transformation : Clear Articulation of the Guiding Principles by a Pioneer in the Field*. Good Books. Chapters 1-7
* Paolo Freire (2000). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Chapter 2 and the beginning of Chapter 3, p. 52 to the bottom of p. 73
* Jon Kabat-Zinn (2005). *Coming to Our Senses*, Part I: Meditation (pp. 1-68 and 108-113
* Beth Berila (2023). “Supporting Embodied Transformation” from Integrating Mindfulness into Anti-Oppression Pedagogy (Second Edition).
* **Due**: Reading Reflection 2

**In-Class Practice**: Meditation and Yoga

*Week 4 Social Cognition, Dialogic Conversation and Conflict*

*3/6*

*Readings and assignments due today:*

* “Communities, Conflict, and the Design of Dialogic Conversations” by J. Kevin Barge and Dorothy C. Andreas (2023)’
* “Social Cognition and Conflict” by Michael E. Roloff and Courtney N. Wright. From Oetzel, J. G., & Ting-Toomey, S. (Eds.). (2013). (Conflict researchers have focused on four sets of beliefs: other-related, self-related, relationship-related, and conflict-related.)
* “Building Cultures of Peace: The Role of Intergroup Dialogue” by Benjamin J. Broome (2013).
* Jon Kabat-Zinn (2005). Coming to Our Senses, Part 2, The Power of Attention
* Lederach, J. (2003). *Little Book of Conflict Transformation : Clear Articulation of the Guiding Principles by a Pioneer in the Field*. Good Books. Chapters 8-10
* **Due**: Reflection 3

**Class Guests**: Beyond the Page

*Week 3 Know Justice, Know Peace; on Bearing Witness*

*3/13*

*Readings due today:*

* “Teaching Social Justice Amidst Violence. Dimensions of Systemic Violence and Just Peace (in) Education.” Excerpt From The Palgrave Handbook on Critical Theories of Education, Chapter 12, 2022. Ali A. Abdi and Greg William Misiaszek, Editors.
* Janet Gerson (2019). “Peace Education Pedagogy and Applied Peacebuilding Practices: Toward a Just Society” (Chapter 14, Exploring Betty A. Reardon’s Perspective on Peace Education)
* “Peace Education, Confronting Reality.” Magnus Haavelsrud (2019). Chapter 4 in Exploring Betty A. Reardon’s Perspective on Peace Education
* “Peace Praxis in Educational Settings” from Innovations in Peace and Education Praxis (2023)

*Assignments Due:*

* Reflection 4
* Practice Log and Four Reflections

**Class Guest**: Khuram Hussain, Vice President for Equity and Inclusion (Reflecting on Freire’s liberatory praxis and social justice, restorative practice, peace praxis in the context of education.)

*Week 6* ***SPRING BREAK NO CLASS***

*Week 7 Appreciative Inquiry and Engaged Listening*

*3/27*

*Readings and Assignments for today:*

* Macpherson, Alice. (2015). *Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry*.
* Jon Kabat-Zinn (2005). *Coming to Our Senses, Part 6: Arriving at Your Own Door*
* *Hidden Brain Podcast with Shankar Vedantam : Win Heart, Then Minds*

[*https://hiddenbrain.org/podcast/us-2-0-win-hearts-then-minds/*](https://hiddenbrain.org/podcast/us-2-0-win-hearts-then-minds/)

**In-Class Practice**: Appreciative Inquiry and Engaged Listening

**Due:** Mid-Term Essay

*Week 8 The Inner Work of Racial and Restorative Justice*

*4/3*

*Readings and assignments due today:*

* sujatha baliga (2012). "Law's Middle Way: Mindfulness and Restorative Justice"
* Rhonda Magee (2021). *The Inner Work of Racial Justice* (Read Chapters 1 and 2)
* Larry Ward (2020). Excerpt from *America’s Racial Karma: An Invitation to Heal*
* Jon Kabat-Zinn (2005). *Coming to Our Senses*, Part 7: Healing the Body Politic
* Sensei Brian Joshin Byrnes, Bread Loaf Mountain Zen Community (2022), *Loving Kindness Meditation in a Time of War and Aggression*
* **Due**: Reflection 5

**In-Class Practice: Opening the Working Ground of Race**

Talk and conversation with Larry Ward, author of *America’s Racial Karma: An Invitation to Heal (2020). And: On Bearing Witness and Community Engaged Action*

*Week 9 Mindfulness and Social Justice: Ways of Seeing and The Stories we Tell*

*4/10*

*Readings and assignments due today:*

* bell hooks (2001), *All About Love*
* Jane Hirshfield (Selected Poems and “The Zen of Jane Hirshfield,” Lion’s Roar, November 2023)
* Clint Smith: Poetry is the Act of Paying Attention: <https://youtu.be/r6xsiEdMPw0?si=Lz7k1vgZBnPnkqB7>
* Clint Smith: The Danger of Silence: <https://www.ted.com/talks/clint_smith_the_danger_of_silence?utm_campaign=tedspread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare>
* Chimamanda Adichie (TedTalk, 2009). [“The Danger of a Single Story”](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story)
* Jon Kabat-Zinn (2005). Coming to Our Senses, Part 3: The Sensory World
* **Due**: Reflective Writing 6

**In-Class Practice**: Creativity and Constructive Change with Lida Winfield, Visiting Assistant Professor of Dance

Week 10 Active Hope: The Work that Reconnects

4/17

Readings and assignments for today:

* Joanna Macy (1998). Coming Back to Life: Practices to Reconnect our Lives, Our World
* Jon Kabat-Zinn (2005). Coming to Our Senses, Part 8: Let the Beauty We Love be What We Do
* **Due**: Reflective Response 7

**In-Class Practice**: Nature and Mindful Attention–Labyrinth Walk at the Knoll

*Week 11 Returning to Balance: CT and Critical Self-Awareness*

*4/24*

*Readings and assignments for today:*

* Thich Nhat Hanh (2003). Creating True Peace
* “The Transformative Power of Engaged Thinking for Peace Education.” R. Gould (2012
* Jon Kabat-Zinn (2005). Coming to Our Senses, Part 5: Healing Possibilities

*Assignments Due:*

* Practice Logs and Four Reflections

**In-Class Practice**: Meditation

***Week 12 Presentations and Practice***

*5/1*

*Listen before class:*

* Matthieu Ricard, The Habits of Happiness/TED Talk, 2004

*Read before class:*

* "Mindfulness in Action.” Chapter 11 of Fully Present
* "'Excellence,' Meanings, and Multiplicity" by Maxine Greene (1984)

***Week 13 Final Presentations***

*5/8*

***Presentations, final practice session. Celebration!***

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***GRADING POLICIES and DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS***

**Assignments**   **Percent of final grade**

Attendance, class preparation, participation in class discussions: 25%

Weekly Discussion or Audio Posts and Reading Responses 20% Mindfulness Practices Log and 8 Reflection Posts 10%

Mid-Term Essay 15%

Final Group Project 20%

Oral Presentation 10%

1. Participation and In-Class Contemplative/Mindfulness Practices—This course is designed as a discussion-based seminar in which we will incorporate a series of mindfulness, embodied practices. As such, the heart of the course is our interaction together and your participation in our class practices. This course depends on the collegial and intellectual community that is built, by us, over the course of the semester. If you are not in class, and not keeping up with the readings, no such community can be built. Points will be deducted from your final grade if you have any unexcused absences. We will use a variety of small and full group formats to foster better engagement. Always bring readings/books to class with you.
2. Reading Responses/Discussion Posts/Reflections and Audio Posts: Frequent reading responses will allow you to focus on specific aspects of the work under discussion in exploratory ways and to prepare for discussion. These include: unraveling a question that compels you; approaching the text from an angle of your choice; following a prompt that I provide; creative writing responses that I’ve detailed; brief reflections. These will be graded on a scale of 0-3, 0 representing a failure to submit a response, 1-2 indicating that you completed the work adequately (answering the prompt but not fully developing or explaining your point), 3 signifying that you demonstrated a deep reading of the text in question, and you responded to the prompt with a thoughtful and well-developed answer.
3. Contemplative Practice and Reflective Journal

As part of this class you will each be engaging in your own personal contemplative practice. I will discuss this in our first class, but I am asking you to spend at least 15 minutes a minimum of four days each week in a mindfulness practice of your choosing. The objective of this exercise is to spend a few moments each day cultivating “the capacity for insight.” This is a *practice*! See what kinds of experiences or understandings arise in the process. For additional resources please do use the many resources listed on the Mindfulness @ Midd website, compiled by Mindfulness Fellow Zoya Kobets: <https://www.middlebury.edu/office/scott-center/mindfulness-midd/developing-your-own-practice>

Practice Journal and Log: After a minimum of 15 minutes of silent practice, write down your observations in whatever way that conveys some quality of this experience: this can be a descriptive narrative, a word cloud, a poem, a drawing. This is your private document, but excerpts will be due throughout the term. Make note of where and when (the date) you are practicing and describe your practice (i.e., sitting meditation, yoga, mindful walking or eating, etc.). At two points throughout the semester, you will share with me your practice log (days/dates of your practice) as well as four post-practice reflections.

Due Dates: Weekly logs and four reflections:

* March 13th
* April 24th

1. Mid-Term Essay—

Essay due Wednesday, March 27

Reflect on the three guiding questions for our course:

i) What do we mean by conflict transformation?

ii) What are embodied mindfulness skills?

iii) How do mindfulness skills play a role in the

pursuit of constructive social and personal change?

First, answer each of these questions as you now understand them. Then identify ideas from selected readings and from our discussions which have led you to a question you want to examine to do with the relationship between mindful inquiry and contemplative practices and social and/or personal/intrapersonal conflict transformation and constructive change. Provide a reflective paper that manages to balance critical analysis and personal reflection through the examination of that question. (In total you should reference and respond to a minimum of 4 texts we have read.) Write in the 1st person POV, aiming to examine all of the various conflicting and connective layers held within your reflection. Although these instructions are open-ended, the expectation is that you present an analytical approach to sources and to the ideas under examination, while utilizing a personal voice in contemplating the complexities. You are welcome to integrate multiple approaches: a) make an assertion, take a position, provide concrete evidence; b) explore a genuine question for which you seek an answer, pursue it from various perspectives and in as much depth as possible, and communicate where this search has taken you… to an answer, to a new question, to further ambiguity?; and c) convey the story of your thinking about this idea/question, share the authenticity of your experience with an idea/question in the order of its unfolding, narrativize how specific readings have enabled your evolving perspective.

Supplemental questions to ask yourself as you get started:

* What arguments do the authors convey in writing their work, and why are they important?
* How do they inform your response to the course question(s)?
* What do you hope to discover more in writing about this?
* What have you learned from this engagement (what are the takeaways / which new questions have been generated)?

This will be a scholarly personal narrative, meaning you are writing using the first-person point of view, but you are referencing and citing scholarly research and texts to justify your argument or respond to your guiding question. In this way, a goal of this essay is to embed critical analysis into a personal narrative.

Essay Style Guidelines*:* double-spaced, 12-pt font, include page numbers, and adhere to appropriate formatting for in-text citations and a final References page using APA style and writing guidelines.*An excellent resource for citations can be found at the Purdue University Writing Lab OWL website:* [*https://owl.purdue.edu/*](https://owl.purdue.edu/)

5. Oral Presentations

**The goal: to address a key idea or ideas you are drawn to from the reading that day, connect it to our broader class work, and integrate your own experiences with mindful/contemplative practices into your analysis.**

Give one individual oral presentation, no longer than 5 minutes and then facilitate a short class discussion. This is an opportunity for you to respond to the issues and ideas emerging from class readings and discussions and put them in the context of your own personal experiences. The presentations must address the reading that is due that day. This presentation will be a formal talk but you are asked to integrate into your talk a reflective practice. ***You will lead a short class discussion as part of your presentation.***

**Your grade on the individual presentations is determined by whether you:**

* Submit your presentation—with any visuals used (such as a PPT, etc.)--on Canvas before the talk.
* Analyze specific arguments or ideas from the text rather than making broad, general statements that could have been made without reading anything.
* Offer a question, critique, or new idea, rather than simply summarizing what the author has said.
* Develop and incorporate into your talk a related and intentional reflective practice.
* Present in an effective and engaging way with a strong and clear voice.
* Organize your ideas into a coherent argument or analysis.
* Facilitate a class discussion (5-10 minutes) that effectively engages students in the ideas central to your talk and the reading(s).

6. Final Group Projects that address the connection between mindful, contemplative engagement and conflict transformation. More information forthcoming in class.

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*Canvas:* Our Canvas site will host the syllabus, course materials, assignments, related links, course updates, etc. Your reflections and reading responses will be posted there and this is where you can sign up to meet with me during my office hours.

*Assessment:* In this course, I am far more interested in formative assessment than summative assessment. In other words, I am far more interested in gaining an understanding of the development of your thinking over the length of the course. The assignments are organized to provide different ‘entry points’ for you to demonstrate your understanding of the ideas, issues, and values that we are wrestling with in class. Hence, the emphasis on discussion, writing and reflection.

**Final Note:** Expect change. I will freely adapt the syllabus and modify assignments as we proceed throughout the semester.