Leveraging Diversity: Teaching Peace in the Public University

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Introduction

Teaching peace and conflict studies is not vastly dissimilar from other fields of teaching; many would agree that the pedagogical issues are generally the same. Indeed they are—and yet they are not. Each academic field is confronted by its own set of complex dynamics arising from the unique demands of the curriculum on instructor, student, and institution. In this basic sense, the field of peace and conflict studies is no different, and its pedagogical dynamics provide their own complexity.

The first such complex dynamic arises from the role of instructional bias within both the instructor and the course texts. The two are intimately related, because the instructor designs the course and chooses the readings and other instructional material. Students may self-select and choose the course because of a widely-known instructional bias or because of their interest in the subject matter, or for other enlightened or mundane reasons (e.g., convenient scheduling). Their own views may not necessarily, however, be aligned with the bias of the instructor. They could even possess an oppositional bias or an orientation that professes the same goal but with a substantially different perspective on the means to achieve it. For example, military personnel may enroll because conflict resolution—and peace—may be their goal, but their philosophical perspective and methodological approach might be at variance with the instructor's if the latter has a pacifist orientation.

In a public university, such openness to diverse perspectives is promoted and extends beyond the classroom crucible to the institutional orbit surrounding it. The institution will support a peace and conflict studies program, even while perhaps not fully sharing the biases of instructors, because of the university's express commitment to a multi-perspectival process of learning. That does not mean the university is free of bias. On the contrary, biases are rampant, but they are many, diverse, conflicting, and situated within healthy debate. For example, some universities with peace

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and conflict studies programs also house institutes of strategic military studies that sometimes describe their research and promotional activities in language not altogether dissimilar from that employed by peace and conflict studies programs.[1]

Nevertheless, in my experience there has always been a generous receptivity and much support for peace and conflict studies, at least within the university where I teach. Nowhere was this more evident than in the 2013 hosting of the Peace and Justice Studies Association Conference, where generous financial and logistical support and institutional encouragement was forthcoming from many sectors of my university, including the Laurier Centre for Military, Strategic and Disarmament Studies.[2]

This leads to a central question of this paper: How does an instructor with a perspectival bias (in my case, a confessionally-supported pacifist orientation, namely Mennonite) teach peace and conflict studies effectively in a university setting where diversity of perspective is assumed, nurtured, and highly valued? How are the views of students valued and respected, and how are learning outcomes and teaching effectiveness measured in the context of academic and philosophical diversity? I will argue that the diversity can be an asset that energizes effective teaching of my subject.

At the same time, I will argue for the validity of possessing a bias, since this is the issue that has created a problem of perception for peace and conflict studies, which has sometimes been declared an illegitimate discipline due to its inherent bias. Most (all?) people teaching in the field are predisposed to view peace as both goal and solution, and to see peace as the final outcome to conflict. It has been suggested that this unavoidable tendency makes it an impure academic field of research. After all, research

[1] Wilfrid Laurier University has a prominent institute with this focus, the *Laurier Centre for Military, Strategic and Disarmament Studies*. In the past, much of its work has focused on military history, hence its web site URL, *canadianmilitaryhistory.ca*. More recently, the focus has begun to change into the wider category of "conflict studies." It also oversees one of the two Canadian offices of the Canadian Landmine Foundation (the other is housed at the University of Winnipeg), a foundation which centers on supporting the 1977 Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty.

[2] The presentation by the keynote speaker, 1997 Nobel Laureate Jody Williams, was made possible by a substantial grant from the Laurier Centre. Every other level of the university was generous in funding the hosting of the conference of the Peace and Justice Studies Association, an organization dedicated to peace and justice as well as activism.

should be unbiased and open-ended. Interestingly, however, no one has suggested the same about medicine, which is biased in favor of health and healing, and against disease.[3]

Below I outline seven key pedagogical principles that I consider important for teaching peace and conflict studies. Several are borrowed from my more general "Teaching Philosophy Statement"[4] but apply here as well. As principles or orientations, they are not meant to be comprehensive, exhaustive, or even unique, but to advance a few approaches for the classroom gleaned from my experience. Embedded in all of these is the question articulated above: How does an instructor with a bias teach with integrity in a diverse context, and leverage that diversity for effective teaching? While every teacher is confronted with this challenge, peace studies with its inherently assumed bias sharpens the pedagogical issues.

A Primary Principle: Classroom as Safe Sanctuary

The university classroom is, for me, a holy sanctuary—a sacred space—and the moments spent in it are holy moments. Some may deem it inappropriate to use religious language to describe a secular or public setting, but I choose the metaphor intentionally. The evocation of sacredness speaks to the transformational intentionality of the learning exchange between professor and students, and the potentially life-transforming impact of what they learn together in that place. Most important, it places a supreme—or ultimate—value on what happens there. Professors and students are journeying together on a pilgrimage of learning. When learning happens the way it should, the effect on both can be "magical" or, as expressed here, a dynamic holy moment.

For true learning to be possible, the classroom must be a safe haven for students; they should feel completely comfortable to explore their worldview by opening their perspectives to others in an environment where they feel safe and free to do so. They should be able to trust their instructor and their peers

[3] For a thorough discussion of this issue, see Conrad Brunk, "Shaping a Vision: The Nature of Peace Studies," in *Patterns of Conflict, Paths to Peace,* ed. Larry Fisk and John Schellenberg (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2000), 11-33, especially 13-20.

[4] Edmund Pries, "Teaching Philosophy Statement" (unpublished; available from the author upon request). My teaching philosophy has ten main points, the first of which explains "the five-step arc of learning."

to assist and support them in this quest for deeper understanding, even and especially when it requires challenging a perspective or when their questions and opinions are formulated incompletely. Most important, they must feel encouraged to disagree with their instructor or fellow students—and still feel supported. When they can do this, everyone in the sacred space is able to learn. When an idea or principle that has been properly examined and challenged is grasped and integrated into a worldview increasingly owned by the student—not carelessly borrowed—then intellectual development can take place.

The classroom can be a physical space on the campus but it need not be. It can be an on-line forum, the university pub, a distant country for a travel course, or any other place where students and instructor meet to learn. The nature and character of the space is created by the instructor, who must ensure that the "classroom" provides an environment conducive to learning and freedom of expression. Views will occasionally or even frequently conflict dramatically, but this is a necessary element for learning to take place as opinions, views, and thoughts are tested and explored, and diverse opinions are respected and encouraged.

One pedagogical device I frequently employ is classroom debates, which require students to argue a position or views they may not hold or be inclined towards. Most commonly, I divide the class into groups of five and have two groups prepare for a debate on a particular date. In a class of fifty students—or ten debate groups—this arrangement provides five topical debates. When students experience the value of intellectual exploration and investigate opposing arguments, it helps sharpen their understanding of an issue. I have also seen them change their views on an issue completely. More important, it helps the entire class to see "the other side." Peace and conflict issues are complex, and students must seek to understand them from the perspective of those on all sides.

Additionally, I assign questions for discussion to on-line forums on the class web page (a forum permitting shy students to participate more fully). Here too there must be limits. I make it clear in a set of on-line discussion policies that attacking a classmate or assailing their character is not permitted. A spirit of mutual respect must prevail, and students are required to address the arguments, and to bolster their own arguments or

counter-arguments with solid evidence or supporting material.[5]

Creating Cognitive Disequilibrium: Classroom as Crucible

Insistence on the classroom as a safe space does not mean it is absent of hard intellectual work or without tough challenges to preconceived ideas. Many students arrive at university with a rigid *Weltanschauung* frequently expressed in blunt terms and organized into discrete categories. This seems especially true for social and political (as well as religious) issues. Such preconceptions can be structured around simple or even simplistic notions regarding war and peace (see below). These views are not always independently owned by the students; they have not been adopted after proper study and thoughtful consideration. Instead, students often inherit these views from parents or other influential persons (e.g., high school teachers). However, in order for learning to occur and new perspectives to be considered, students must be prepared to receive, analyze, and consider a variety of ideas, including those that challenge their pre-existing belief systems. It is the instructor's responsibility to create at least a modicum of cognitive disequilibrium[6] for the students, in order to allow them to consider a variety of viewpoints. Learning can take place only when the intellectual status quo has been unsettled and the mind has been opened to new concepts. This does not mean that all views and opinions are not respected, but that students are encouraged to consider the diversity of ideas available, and that viewpoints are carefully challenged and alternative perspectives presented.

In my early years of teaching I described this process metaphorically and somewhat crassly as a three-fold enterprise in which an instructor required the skills of a logger, a chef, and a farmer. I would take a chainsaw and slice off the top inch of the head (metaphorically!), followed by inserting a hand-held kitchen mixer to stir up the brain cells (another method for creating cognitive disequilibrium), after which I would cultivate the brain's soil with garden tools and plant some fresh seeds. I no longer use this imagery; it is too violent and disrespectful of students, and ascribes to the instructor an overly dominant and

[5] For a complete list of the principles for on-line discussion, see my personal web page: www.wlu.ca/homepage.php?grp_id=2481&ct_id=2150&f_id=148

[6] The notion of "cognitive disequilibrium" stems from developmental psychologist and philosopher Jean Piaget (1896-1980).

manipulative role by removing the interactive, relational dimension essential to cognitive disequilibrium. Creating that disequilibrium is better framed as a dialogue with appropriate challenges designed to open students to exploring various perspectives and views.

Creating cognitive disequilibrium is particularly important for teaching peace studies, because the dominant societal and political (governmental) views on the subject are not readily oriented towards nonviolent conflict resolution. Many students come with the perspective that peace may be desired but is "unrealistic," suffers from utopian idealism, and cannot be applied in real life or be useful for international relations. This perspective is aided by the language that is used. For example, the "realist" approach to international politics, or at least one branch of it, requires countries to keep building their military strength. Even plans for fighting a nuclear war, including a "tactical" nuclear war, are part of this approach. "Political realism" requires self-interested political leaders and nations to act in accordance with the maintenance of power. Such language creates a problem but also a ready opening for questions that can initiate cognitive disequilibrium. What is "realistic" about a position that calculates fighting a war that results in hundreds of millions dead or the end of life itself due to nuclear winter?[7] Instructors in peace studies have to work especially hard to shake loose broader notions that students have already absorbed, namely that peace is not for the real world. Pedagogical tools for creating cognitive disequilibrium can be useful for that purpose.

This still leaves us with the question of how to create that disequilibrium. My approach is fairly simple. I pose questions like the one in the previous paragraph, and tell stories that contest dominant assumptions and provide a counter-narrative. Challenging existing notions means alternatives must be presented convincingly. In "War: An Interpreted Study," a third-year course partly devoted to challenging common myths about war and answering questions as to why wars are fought, why soldiers fight, and how wars are "sold" to the public, I have showed several films that tell stories providing effective alternative views to prevailing dogmas about war.[8] In

[7] I am aware that the definition of "political realism" is not identical to that of "realistic." However, the linguistic overlap does result in an association, whether intentional or not.

[8] Films used in Global Studies 340S: War: An Interpreted Study included Stanley Kubrick's

order for students to release the logic of war and conflict they held previously, alternative material must be sufficiently convincing in both content and emotion. After all, beliefs and systems are adopted and rejected not only based on statistics and argument but on our emotional affiliation with those elements. Peace and conflict are not devoid of emotional attachment; students in this field know whether they can accept certain outcomes personally or not. This too becomes part of the learning equation.

Building Knowledge and Understanding: Instructional Arts

Re-imagining Existing Patterns, Traditions, Symbols, and Beliefs

The journey from the disorientation of cognitive disequilibrium to the adoption of new ideas and perspectives requires bridges. One such transitional exercise is found in re-imagining—questioning and/or redesigning—what already exists. Some may see it more as a corollary of cognitive disequilibrium; others as the provision of new perspectives. This re-imagination can occur through concrete experiences. For example, whenever a Peace and Conflict Studies course session falls on November 11 (Remembrance Day), I hold a Remembrance Day "Service" and analysis in class in order to examine our understandings of the event and its meaning.

In a third-year course on Religion and Peace,[9] before we observed the moment of silence and listened to music, we evaluated questions on the appropriateness of including religious elements in the ceremony: Should they be included? Why or why not? Why were they included? Should religious personnel be present and blessing such ceremonies? Similarly, who is being remembered was also probed. Do we remember only the soldiers, or also the civilian victims? Do we remember the soldiers as heroes or as victims? Do we remember the soldiers of "the other side" also—especially if we consider all soldiers as victims of a war-mad and propagandized society? Which symbols are appropriate—the red poppy, the white poppy, the red Mennonite Central Committee button ("To Remember is to Work for Peace")? Or all three simultaneously?

Similarly, we compared John McCrae's "In Flanders Fields" with Wilfrid Owen's "Dulce et Decorum Est". The third verse of McCrae's poem

Paths of Glory (1957), Eugene Jarecki's *Why We Fight* (2005), Errol Morris's *The Fog of War* (2003), and Christian Carion's *Joyeux Noel* (2005).

[9] Global Studies 340G: Religion and Peace.

focuses on remembrance as an act of continuing the mission of the fallen:

> Take up our quarrel with the foe: / To you from failing hands we throw / The torch; be yours to hold it high. / If ye break faith with us who die / We shall not sleep, though poppies grow / In Flanders fields.[10]

The last portion of Owen's poem sees war as foisted upon unsuspecting youth with patriotic fervor:

> If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood / Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs, / Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud / Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,— / My friend, you would not tell with such high zest / To children ardent for some desperate glory, / The old Lie: *Dulce et decorum est / Pro patria mori*.[11]

Other themes were also pursued and dissected. The point is the importance for greater understanding of getting students to reflect on what they are doing and why they are participating. Such questioning also encourages them to apply a similar interpretive analysis in other areas.

Passion of the Instructor: Prerequisite for Effectiveness

Effective instructors must possess a two-fold passion. First, they must care deeply for their students, both as a group or class and as individuals, and must desire to see them grow and develop as adults, and to attain a greater understanding of the world. Such teachers will do almost anything to help or motivate them to achieve their goals. In this respect, teachers are also mentors. What does this mean for those teaching peace and conflict studies? It reminds us that we must not only teach concepts, ideas, and theories, but seek to embed these elements in our teacher-student relationships. We have to care for the students, no matter what their perspectives. Some who have drawn closest to me over the years are those whose views on war and conflict,

[10] John McCrae, "In Flanders Fields," accessed November 3, 2012, http://www.inflandersfields.ca/poem.html.

[11] Wilfrid Owen, "Dulce et Decorum est," accessed February 8, 2014, www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/175898. The comparative point is made by Kenneth Westhues in his 2007 blog post: http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/~kwesthue/rememday.htm, accessed October 27, 2012.

initially at least, differed radically from my own. Respect for a diversity of viewpoints, contexts, and student experiences is crucial when modeling a "peace" perspective.

Second, effective teachers must communicate a passion for the subject. They must be fully convinced themselves before they will persuade others of the value of their field, and they need to communicate this conviction. Not surprisingly, such teachers tend to have strong biases, as they should, which poses another question: When and how should these biases be shared? Moreover, what does it mean for someone who comes at the agenda of peace studies with the additional bias of religious convictions, as Mennonites, Quakers, and some others do? In my case, how do I handle this within a public university context (which I cherish), especially as someone who admits to the complicated embrace of these manifold convictions?

I am not hesitant to express my passionate convictions, although I do so carefully in order not to inhibit the views of my students, and I do not usually offer my thoughts before I have given them a chance to express their perspectives. Even then, I ensure they have had the opportunity to explore the issue fully, so that they can see my opinions are not negating theirs. My critiques of government policies, for example, are shared in context (e.g., regarding disarmament and militarization in a class dealing with that subject)[12] and are not presented as the final word, although they are given as my opinion.

My personal feelings about war and pacifism are never fully hidden, nor are they fully revealed, at least not initially. The revealing might happen later in the course if the occasion requires it; frequently it is left until the very end. In one recent case, students in a course on Religion and Peace[13] asked about my perspective and orientation at the beginning. I hesitated, but then briefly articulated my belief context, because in this kind of course it was legitimate to do so, especially since representatives of at least six different religions would be presenting. I also gave a more detailed explanation nearer the end of the course. Here I should emphasize that my Mennonite orientation is not unique, not only because there are many Mennonite instructors at my university, but because so many colleagues from other religious and

[12] Global Studies 435: Disarming Conflict: Weapons of War and the Quest for Peace.
[13] Global Studies 340G: Religion and Peace.

non-religious convictions hold very similar views on war and pacifism. In this respect, being a Mennonite instructor of peace studies is not about standing on an ideological pedestal, but about working in collaboration and cooperation with others with similar—or diverse—perspectives.

My religious convictions are brought to bear in another, slightly different way. I believe that understanding the role of religion in global relations and international conflict is essential for understanding the subject matter. Any subject on global affairs that is taught without considering the role of religion provides an incomplete picture. I once made this clear to my class on global ethics,[14] when some students criticized reading about religious perspectives on ethical relations, and I have had to repeat the same argument in other classes. How, I asked, did they expect to work in a global context without grasping the perspectives of those they hoped to be working with? This has nothing to do with being in a secular university instead of a religious one; rather, it is about understanding the religious convictions of people in the real world.

As a result, I do not teach any course without at least one session that includes a discussion of religious perspectives on the issue. Again, I am not alone in this; several colleagues from different religious traditions and others with non-religious convictions do the same. My bias does not involve imposing my own views on others but being in a healthy dialogical learning relationship with them, especially students.

The Possibility of Peace: The Value of Utopian Thinking

Utopian or idealized thinking is often characterized as unrealistic, impractical, and even useless, especially in relation to peace and conflict studies. It is for this reason that a problem-solving approach is dominant in this field. I too focus heavily on problem-solving, especially when teaching courses or seminars on disarmament treaties.[15] Peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding are all deeply rooted in this approach.

At the same time, however, I emphasize the value of utopian thinking for peace education. It is important for students and instructors to engage in possibility thinking, to imagine what a nonviolent outcome to conflict,

[14] Global Studies 421: Ethical Encounters.

[15] Global Studies 435: Disarming Conflict: Weapons of War and the Quest for Peace.

a harmonious society, or a peaceful environment might look like. Utopian thinking can spur the imagination and help organize people's thoughts towards a goal. Indeed, some of the world's most successful projects and events were once considered utopian dreams. It is often the idealistic dimensions, many with a spiritual aspect (broadly interpreted) deeply embedded within them, that provide incentive and motivation towards involvement, including protest or critique, that is not offered solely by practical problem-solving. The greater motivational vision, the emotional investment, and the need to address global issues (e.g., nuclear war) and philosophical foundations that transcend specific problems all require a broader orientation that ties the individual's personal commitment to the global and even the metaphysical. This is where an instructor's passion becomes a key dimension of the teaching experience. Can he or she provide a vision—an *alternate* vision to the normative reality—that connects students to a world they wish to live in? In my experience this approach motivates engagement and action every bit as much as the problem-solving approach and perhaps even more so. Both approaches are necessary—the practical and the ideal—and peace education must provide both.

Towards Owned Intellectual Growth: Learning Integration

Despite my reflexive predilection for the Socratic lecture, I believe that classroom learning should be as pedagogically diverse as possible. Learning from the writings of the ancients or contemporary analysts is critically important, but didactic theory should not be the primary form of learning. Rather, diverse forms of engagement are required to employ the multiplicity of students' learning faculties and capacities—and to recognize that not everyone learns equally well in the same way. Some students learn by actively engaging their motor skill reflexes; others through creative expression; while still others through intellectual debate; and so on. All these learning styles are well-established truisms, and utilizing a variety of pedagogical tools is promoted on most campuses. The uniqueness of peace studies provides both an expanded creative opportunity and the *necessity* to use alternative modes of engagement. Since peace studies are also in some measure aspirational in emphasis and direction—and certainly reach towards idealism—finding a creative fit that combines the ideal and the practical presents an additional opportunity that should never be ignored.

Let me provide two examples from my own teaching. The first is from a field study course (not specifically peace and conflict studies), and the second is related more directly to peace and conflict studies. In my institutional home, the Department of Global Studies, we offer students an overseas experience known as the Global Studies Experience (GSE). In the summer between their third and fourth undergraduate year, they pursue a volunteer internship in an overseas environment. Typically, they are spread all over the world. The GSE is bookended by a winter semester seminar preparing them for the experience (e.g., cross-cultural issues, etc.),[16] and a fall post-field placement seminar[17] helping them unpack their experience after their return.

Recently, I gave students several assignments prior to their departure, including the traditional standard one of journaling. A new assignment required each person to collect at least one recipe from the country they were travelling to, and to learn how to make it so that they could share it with classmates in a potluck upon their return. They also had to relate one story connecting the recipe with their experience. This worked well beyond my expectations! In our post-field placement seminar, we had two potluck meals where, in each, half the class prepared their recipe (sufficient for the whole class), explained the food, and told a story relating to it and their GSE internship. It is well known since ancient times that eating together changes the relational dynamic; in this case it opened classmates to each other and helped them share their experiences on a deep, intimate level. In the end, students collected their material along with photographs, and created a recipe and story booklet as a memento for the class. This group, with diverse worldwide experiences, bonded and learned in an engaged way I have rarely seen, and they were willing to expose and share the vulnerabilities they experienced overseas.

The second example involved engaging students in the international "Lend Your Leg" (LYL) campaign. LYL was initiated in 2011 in Colombia to draw attention to the number of active landmines still in existence (110 million; a similar amount is stockpiled), the ongoing death and injury toll (one victim every 22 minutes), the removal of remaining landmines, and to

[16] Global Studies 398: Global Studies in Practice.
[17] Global Studies 399: Post-Field Placement.

continue global pressure for a total ban and for support of victims. April 4 is the annual International Day for Mine Awareness, and in 2012, with the endorsement and support of the UN General Secretary, the campaign went global.[18] That first year it also came to Wilfrid Laurier University via my third-year Global Citizenship class.[19]

The next year (April 4, 2013), I transferred it to my second-year class on Globalization and Cultures: The Cosmopolitan Village?[20]As a substitute for one of three essay questions on the final exam, students were permitted (and encouraged) to take the LYL Option. Those choosing it were required to:

> 1) sign up for a planning and preparation committee,
>
> 2) participate in the LYL Day's events (including a rally with guest speaker and the march), and
>
> 3) write a three-page essay in which they reflected on the event and their involvement, and also explained how this related to the cosmopolitan principles discussed in class.

For the planning, preparation, and participation, students could organize awareness campaigns on campus and in the community, using signs, posters, brochures, flash-mobs, and other creative approaches in order to recruit participation for the events, especially persuading people to roll up a pant leg, a key symbolic global gesture of this initiative.[21] Students also made dozens of protest signs for the big rally and protest march. On the day itself, they presented a guest speaker provided by Mines Action Canada, and held the rally and the march. The march wound its way through campus and through the wider community. Students were fully engaged.

While such events require grades to be attached in order to generate participation, students were not only engaged but even quite enthusiastic.

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[18] Video links to the Lend Your Leg movement, accessed February 8, 2014, include: www.youtube.com/watch?v=XGduCYrPlAo; www.unmultimedia.org/tv/webcast/c/lendyourleg.html

[19] Global Studies 340B: Global Citizenship.

[20] Full course title: Global Studies 221: Globalization and Cultures: The Cosmopolitan Village?

[21] Or rolling down a sock, or wearing a bandana on a bare leg for those not wearing pants. See www.youtube.com/watch?v=dOVFA0ESs0c&nofeather=True.

The class was in a carnival mood, but the pedagogical results were significant. Students learned not only the details of the Ottawa Treaty (the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty), but about affected countries and cultures, the consequences of military ventures, and the impact of political actions in a way that affected them more deeply than encountering a lecture or a book on such issues. They also understood cosmopolitan principles in a new way, and grappled with this question: Am I responsible for a person's suffering in another part of the world if I can do something to prevent it or alleviate it?

A change that I made for the second year of LYL was to leave the planning and organization of the event up to interested students. The only piece I offered was the exam question incentive. This paid dividends, as students gained leadership experience and felt ownership of the event. I also provided advice and guidance as needed.

I found the reflections of the students particularly interesting and inspiring—and was reminded how experiential learning can inspire classroom teaching. Students who had not been engaged with the theory of the course, or found it difficult to access, were drawn in and became enthusiastic. Suddenly principles made sense that had previously seemed distant, and connections were made that they had not made before. Students felt they could speak out on an issue about which they had known little, [22] and found it was something they really cared about. They also discovered they now had an outlet, however small, to express their peace and social justice ideals. Universities focus much on social critique, with the result that students can feel the darkness of the world closing in around them. They need the opportunity to express ideals of hope and positive change, even as they critique negative aspects of the global cultural and political environment. This can be transformative for learning, and it can spark creativity.[23]

At the time of this writing, my students are planning another LYL event for April 4, 2014. Although I have teaching assistants for this course, which will again serve as the event's home base, I reserve for myself the

[22] It is easy to forget that most of today's students were not even toddlers at the time of the Ottawa Treaty banning landmines.

[23] Students produced a Facebook page and a website, and created interactive events to engage the university campus. One gifted student, Prince David Okebalama, produced a fine You Tube video of the event: www.youtube.com/watch?v=dOVFA0ESs0c&nofeather=True.

reading and grading of student reflections on their experience. I want to understand what they have learned and gauge whether it resulted in greater integration of their classroom learning. If past experience is an indication, it will not be dull, and there will be surprises!

Developing Alternatives: From Critical to Creative Thinking

Critical thinking is foundational for a university arts education. Unfortunately, as important as it is, it can become mired there. Moving our pedagogy to the next step—to *creative* thinking—is essential for intellectual growth. This is particularly imperative for peace education. Conflict resolution by nature needs to generate perpetually new ideas and creative solutions out of a relational impasse. Peace education must engage the minds of students towards exploring creative solutions to problems and developing alternatives to conflict.

Perhaps the best way to illustrate this is to discuss one assignment I developed for a senior Research Specialization Option (RSO) in 2012-2013, an intensive two-semester course designed for high-achieving students.[24] The focus was a thorough study of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). In the first half of the second semester, the class identified gaps in IHL based on intensive study of the conventions and protocols making up the body of IHL. The 21 students were divided into five groups. Each group was assigned a gap in existing IHL from a list created earlier by the class, and was required to write a new set of laws to cover the gap. It was a four-step process that required students to:

> 1) examine existing IHL to find any applicable portions to the issue (perhaps there were pieces that already engaged the problem elsewhere);
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> 2) research the theme and explain the existence of the gap;
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> 3) provide case studies/examples of the problem and explain why IHL protocols should be developed to address the gap; and,

[24] Global Studies 400L: International Humanitarian Law. This course, known as the Research Specialization Option (RSO), was a full-year 2-semester seminar counting as 1.5 credits (the equivalent of 3 single-semester courses).

most importantly,

4) write a new set of laws to address the gap in IHL—in a format similar to existing IHL conventions and protocols.

The greatest stress was on writing and articulating the new laws, which we dubbed "The Laurier Protocols." These new laws then had to be presented to the class for analysis, critique, and emendation, so that they could be improved before submission as the completed group assignment. We utilized an "active learning classroom" giving each group access to their own computer-operated wall screen and allowing them to edit the document submitted at the front of the class.[25] These edits and recommendations were presented to the class and discussed.

This learning exercise proved fruitful. Students could understand and debate the problem in a comprehensive way, and they began to appreciate the difficulty of developing new laws to treat complex issues. Since they also had to provide guidelines on how these laws might be successfully implemented, they also had to address the delicacy of both national and cultural sensitivities in various global contexts. They proved to themselves and each other that they could indeed come up with potential solutions. Most important, this assignment provided an opportunity for creative thinking. Instead of just critiquing IHL and its frequent failures—something that is frequently done and that these students had themselves done in the previous semester—they now had to provide the alternatives, the solutions. They learned this was not easy. They discovered, however, that they can make a contribution—and that their ideas are as potentially well-written and valuable as those created by international law experts. The pedagogical results were clear: when provided with this opportunity, students approached it with enthusiasm.

Some students resolved to edit the completed pieces into one comprehensive work so that all class members could have a copy of "The Laurier Protocols" as a summary of their collective work. Not surprisingly, several chose to apply for law school, in part because of their experience in

[25] An "active learning classroom" is arranged into round table group clusters with each group of students having access to a dedicated laptop, their own projector, screen and whiteboard. Hand-written whiteboard edits can be saved back to the computer document. Further information can be accessed here: www.wlu.ca/homepage.php?grp_id=13149.

working intensively with law and legal issues in this course. Some chose other international conflict resolution programs. One even went to work for the Canadian Red Cross as a summer intern and helped organize a conference on IHL at the University of Toronto. Overall, the learning impact of this experience was undeniable, and students continue to reference it. Why not participate in developing creative solutions? These students learned they can do so.

Student Transformation: In Whose Image?

Despite academia's frequently pronounced caution about biasing a student's learning and self-discovery, I contend that the primary goal of all university teaching, and indeed of all teaching, is student transformation. It is the final step in the "arc of learning."[26] Learning must not only be integrated into students' thought process; ultimately and ideally it should help students redirect their lives in accordance with what they have learned. However, questions quickly arise: Should instructors attempt to (re)make a student in their own image? Should I, a pacifist teacher, attempt to transform the student into a pacifist?

These questions are not easy to answer. Peace education is by nature a mission of proselytization: we seek to convince people of the positive value of the way of peace. It is, after all, possible to reduce violence only if more people take the peaceful approach and reject war and conflict as a solution. As noted earlier, peace and conflict studies are biased in favor of peace. The issue, however, is more complex than that. We can explore it more fully if I describe three examples from my classes, which have featured a diversity of students, including a few employed by the military and many whose parents or other family members are thus employed.

Some years ago, I had a student in a course[27] who was a part-time member of the military while studying at university. It wasn't long before he was taking the class materials, duplicating them, and sharing them with the soldiers he was responsible for training. In his words, "No one had asked these questions." He struggled with why we actually fight, why Canada was in Afghanistan, and whether war was the most effective way to resolve differences. This young man eventually left the military with the hope of

[26] Pries, "Teaching Philosophy Statement."
[27] Global Studies 340S: War: An Interpreted Study.

beginning a counter-recruitment operation. His reason: he was recruited in high school and had not been told what he now considered to be a fuller story.

A second student was not in the military, but his family and relatives had a long and storied military history and were still deeply involved. When he joined my class on global ethics (Global Studies 421: Ethical Encounters), his goal was to become an elite military sniper, like a relative he admired. By the end of the course, a full-year offering at that time, he decided to pursue a career in humanitarian work instead.

A third student, in a more recent class on Contemporary Global Conflicts (Global Studies 331), was enrolled as a mature student, married with children, and an active member of the Canadian Army who had served two tours of duty in Afghanistan. He was also one of the top students in the class. In the end, he chose to follow through with graduate work at a military academy and continue his career in the military.

So, which student(s) made the right decision? Did I "win two and lose one"? No. All three made the decision they believed was best for them. All three were exposed to hard questions about ethical human relations and conflict resolution. By teaching from my convictions as a pacifist, my goal was not to remake them into disciples of my convictions, although some familiar with my anti-war passion might argue that point. Rather, my goal was, is, and always should be to raise important questions, consider all perspectives, and ensure that students have sufficient information to make thoroughly informed decisions. If I merely told half of the story, I would be mirroring the same experience the first student claimed he had when he was recruited. My role is to be supportive, provide the information, and be a mentor.

As a mentor, I treat students a little as parents treat young adult children, providing counsel, supplying information, listening intently, and offering feedback. In the end, however, they should let their sons or daughters make their own decisions and be supportive. This does not mean they will not passionately give their perspective. On the contrary, loving parents will seek to present persuasive arguments. It is no different in teaching. Again, my personal perspective will quite often be both visible and available, and passionately presented. But if I am to be effective, I must respect the views of

students and be available for the mentoring relationship. It is in this ongoing relationship that the greatest teacher-student experiences are realized. As for those who continue in a military career, they may be soldiers with a different consciousness now and may take a different approach to their work. I need to trust that compassionate mentoring and guidance into various peace studies perspectives will bear fruit in multiple ways over time.

Indeed, transformation does not end with formal class instruction. Much, or even most, of the transformational process, a very individual experience, will occur over many years and decades, and will establish itself within the student's self-consciousness in a multiplicity of ways. This is surely one of the most exciting aspects of teaching: the ideas shared and the mentoring bequeathed will bear fruit and ripen in times, places, and ways instructors cannot fully anticipate or imagine. Likewise, since teaching is a dialogically engaged art, educators will continue to be influenced by encounters with their students long after the immediate classroom experience.

The Gift of Classroom Epiphanies

In one noteworthy respect, teaching peace studies is no different than teaching other subjects. Teachers live for the classroom epiphanies, the "aha!" moments. Every educator knows these are the most rewarding experiences of all. One such moment appeared several years ago in my senior seminar on Disarming Conflict: Weapons of War and the Quest for Peace (Global Studies 435), a documents-based course focusing on disarmament treaties for all the different classes of weapons. That year, the class consisted of 24 students from Ontario and one exchange student from Japan. One of the books assigned in the first month was *The Seventh Decade* by Jonathan Schell,[28] who claims that the uranium in the bomb that incinerated Hiroshima "came from a mine at Great Bear Lake in the Northwest Territories"[29] and "it was thus literally a tiny piece of Canada, extracted by mining and then refined, whose fissioning obliterated the Japanese city."[30]

[28] Jonathan Schell, *The Seventh Decade: The New Shape of Nuclear Danger* (New York: Metropolitan Books—Henry Holt & Co., 2007).
[29] Ibid., 22.
[30] Ibid.

I asked the class how they felt about a piece of our iconic Canadian Shield being used to incinerate the citizens of Hiroshima. The usually quiet Japanese exchange student spoke up: "I had always thought of Canada as a friendly and peaceful nation; now I am not sure about that any longer." She added that she now felt conflicted about Canadians as a friendly people. You could have heard a pin drop. The silent embarrassment of her classmates spoke volumes; none of them knew what to say. It was a "holy" teaching moment in that classroom sanctuary.

In response to this incident, I assigned a two-page reflection asking students to address this question by the end of term: *"Since Canada provided a piece of its land, a piece of the Canadian Shield in the form of uranium, to blow up Hiroshima, do we have a responsibility for that horrific event? Should we apologize to Japan and its people for our role in that devastating act?"* I wanted them to grapple with the close reality of the issues they were studying and the question posed by their Japanese classmate. I did not wish to lose the teaching moment but to sharpen it by raising the question of a formal apology. What was their role as Canadians and as global citizens in respect of such issues, and what was their responsibility to their classmate?

Peace is not only *what* those of us in peace and conflict studies teach; it is really *how* we teach and provide opportunities for learning. If we can provide an open classroom learning environment, a passionate engagement with the world, as well as care and mentoring, students will find the way of peace, and we may not even always know how they got there. Furthermore, respecting their views opens the door to ongoing relationships. I have been privileged to observe students growing into active peacemakers and having a wider community impact. This is why I feel fortunate to teach peace studies in a public university; the opportunity to mentor students on the road to peace has never been more open, and they are active partners in a dynamic dialogue. The diversity of their contexts has contributed to the richness of the discourse, and has made the art of teaching peace studies a creative and rewarding experience.

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