

**Stanford University
Urban Studies 162/Religious Studies 162
Spirituality and Nonviolent Social Transformation**

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Course Description

A life of engagement in social transformation is often built on a foundation of spiritual and religious commitments. Using case studies of several nonviolent social change agents--Rosa Parks in the civil rights movement, Cesar Chavez in the labor movement and Women in Black in the peace movement, we will examine the theory and principles of nonviolence as well as the religious and spiritual underpinnings of their commitments. The class, offered by the Deans for Religious Life, will address social change, spirituality and religious traditions through films and texts. The class will consider the religious and spiritual underpinnings of nonviolence, the streams that fed major nonviolent activists and the philosophers and theologians who influenced them. Additionally, we will address how social change happens, how to stay buoyant over time while engaged in social transformation, and how some communities and organizations are living out nonviolent social transformation. There will be a service-learning component included, with placements in organizations engaged in social transformation.

Course Readings:

The following texts are required and are available for purchase at the Stanford Bookstore. They are also on reserve in Green Library.

Course Reader

Douglas Brinkley, [Rosa Parks](#)

James L. Heft, ed. [Beyond Violence: Religious Sources of Social Transformation in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam](#)

Colman McCarthy, [I'd Rather Teach Peace](#)

Michael Nagler, [Is There No Other Way? The Search for a Nonviolent Future](#)

Note: Permissions to use this material must be obtained directly from the author.

Daniel Smith-Christopher, Subverting Hatred: The Challenge of Nonviolence in Religious Traditions

The following text is required, but out of print: Copies should be available on reserve in Green Library and several copies will be available for loan from the Office for Religious Life.

Martin Luther King Jr., Stride Toward Freedom

Other materials will be available on Stanford CourseWork.

Course Films:

Films related to the course must be screened as preparation for the seminar discussions. They will be available in the library for those unable to come to the class screenings.

Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin
Fight in the Fields: Cesar Chavez and the Farmworkers' Struggle
The Good War and Those who Refused to Fight It
India: Defying the Crown: A Force More Powerful (Gandhi)
Mighty Times (Rosa Parks)
Promises
This Far By Faith: Freedom Faith
We Were Warriors: A Force More Powerful (Civil Rights Movement)

Requirements:

A. Regular class participation

Classes will generally be conducted in a "Socratic" discussion-based style, requiring active participation of all students in each session. Everyone must read critically and carefully. All students are expected to have completed assigned readings before each meeting, to take an active part in discussion, and to discuss readings thoughtfully. You may miss up to two classes in the quarter for any reason without penalty.

B. Written Assignments

1) Weekly response paper. Once per week, you are responsible for writing a response paper (approximately 250 words, which translates to one page, double-spaced) discussing and raising questions about the week's reading.

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These papers are informal. You can use these papers to give personal reactions to the readings and films, synthesize and compare sources or to raise questions to discuss in class. These response papers are due via email on the evening prior to Thursday's class. For any reason, you may miss turning in one response paper, without penalty. Weekly response papers can be emailed to the three instructors' addresses on the first page of the syllabus.

2) A research presentation and paper, 8 pages long (approximately 2000 words)-- on a topic of your choice, offering creative thinking on themes related to the course-- is due at the end of the quarter. This research can be an elaboration of ideas we have surveyed in class or an exploration of material that we were unable to cover (i.e. other movements that have incorporated nonviolence, how nonviolence is understood in a particular religious tradition, the role of religion in current social change issues). The preparation should involve reading beyond the syllabus itself; it may include interviews or use of other media such as film. Be prepared to discuss your research ideas in class on Tuesday, Jan. 25. The instructors are available to meet individually to help formulate topics. Sessions during the last two weeks will be reserved for in-class presentations. Papers are due by 5 p.m. on Friday March 11th.

3) Two journal entries, 3-4 pages long, double-spaced (750-1000 words), based on your experiences with your organization. The journal entries are due during class on Tuesday, March 1st. (See service learning supplement for further direction).

C. Service Learning Community Placement

Students are expected to spend 18 hours during the quarter on the service-learning component of the course. This averages out to 2 hours a week at the placement (not including transportation).

Grading will be based on:

25%-- Class participation

25%-- Response papers

25%-- 8 page double-spaced (2000 words) paper and presentation
(Please provide a word count at the end of your paper)

25%-- Service learning participation and reflection

Class Sessions:

(Syllabus is subject to change during the course. Please check CourseWork regularly).

Tuesday, January 4—Introduction and Course Overview

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Thursday, January 6—Introduction: Spirituality, Nonviolence and Social Transformation

Reading: Michael Nagler, Is There No Other Way? , Pp. 41-101; 137-142

Decide upon Service Learning placement

Study Questions:

- Define “violence” and “nonviolence”
- What is the relationship among “threat power,” “exchange power” and “integrative power?”
- Does “good” or “useful” power exist? Please provide an example.

Tuesday, January 11—Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott

Reading: Douglas Brinkley, Rosa Parks, pp. 1-175; 226-231

Study Questions:

- What in Rosa Parks’ life enabled her to begin the modern civil rights movement?
- What inspired her not to give up her seat on December 1, 1955?
- How grounded was Rosa Parks’ nonviolence in her religious life? In her work for the NAACP?

Thursday, January 13—Faith and Resistance in the Civil Rights Struggle

Course Reader:

Robert Graetz, Montgomery: A White Preacher’s Memoir, pp. 59-60; 93-94, 125

Juan Williams and Quinton Dixie, This Far by Faith: Stories from the African American Religious Experience, pp. 199-216, 223-229, notes 308-309

Bayard Rustin, Time On Two Crosses: The Collected Writings of Bayard Rustin, pp. 2-5

Vincent Harding, Hope and History, “Fighting for Freedom with Church Fans”, pp. 75-90

William Damon and Anne Colby, Some Do Care: Contemporary Lives of Moral Commitment, “Virginia Durr: Champion of Justice”, pp.90-133, 335-336.

Film Screening: *Mighty Times*

This Far By Faith: Freedom Faith

Study Questions:

- In what ways did religious faith sustain the civil rights movement?

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- *How was Christianity interpreted by different communities?*
- *What is the role of art (music and film) in social transformation? (Note your own reactions as you watch “Mighty Times”).*

Sunday, January 16--Optional Extracurricular Opportunity: University Public Worship: Christian Celebration of the Life of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Rev. Scotty McLennan on “Courage in Spite of Fear”

Tuesday, January 18—Nonviolence in the Civil Rights Struggle

Reading: Martin Luther King Jr. Stride Toward Freedom, pp.17-21, 28-42; 49-52, 60-64, 79-80, 84-107, 134-138, 149-150, 160-174, 205-224

Film Screening: *Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin*

Study Questions:

- *How did Martin Luther King, Jr. become a leader? Did his training prepare him for it?*
- *What was King’s understanding of nonviolence? Was it a tactic or a way of life? How did it differ from Gandhi’s nonviolence?*

Thursday, January 20—Nonviolence in the Civil Rights Struggle

Guest: Rev. James Lawson, Pastor Emeritus, Holman United Methodist Church and Nonviolent Activist and Teacher

Course Reader: Parker Palmer pp. The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher’s Life, “Divided No More: Teaching from a Heart of Hope”, pp. 163-183, 188-189

Film Screening: *A Force More Powerful: We Were Warriors* ZDVD4362

Study Questions:

- *Prepare a question for the next class guest, Rev. James M. Lawson Jr. Rev. James M. Lawson Jr., together with his friend Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. was instrumental in bringing nonviolence to the civil rights movement. He taught nonviolence to activists in Nashville and was President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference for 14 years.*
- *How can you develop the habit of courageous action?*
- *How is the civil disobedience manifested in the civil rights movement different from that manifested in Le Chambon, France, during the Second World War? (If you have not seen the Le Chambon film in class, it is available in the Media Center of Green Library under the title, “Weapons of the Spirit.” Look for the abridged ADL “classroom version,” 38 minutes long. The call number is ZVC 3375.)*

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Thursday, January 20--Optional Extracurricular Opportunity: Lunch with Rev. Lawson in the Round Room, behind Memorial Church at 11:45.

Sunday, January 23--Optional Extracurricular Opportunity: Martin Luther King Jr. Multi-faith Service with guest speaker, Rabbi William Rothschild, followed by lunch with Rabbi Rothschild.

William L. Rothschild, of Atlanta, Georgia is an ordained reform rabbi. His father was Rabbi Jacob M. Rothschild, an early and courageous voice for Civil Rights, and a friend and colleague of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. As a child, Bill experienced the 1958 bombing of his father's synagogue, an event chronicled in Melissa Fay Greene's award-winning book, The Temple Bombing, as well as the progression of Atlanta, through the nonviolent movement, from a segregated southern city to an integrated, multicultural metropolis. Bill will bear personal witness to the spirit of nonviolence then and now.

Tuesday, January 25-- Interlude: Politics and Religion

Discussion of Research Paper Topics

Reading: Michael Nagler, Is There No Other Way?, pp. 204-215

Course Reader:

Roger Gottlieb, Joining Hands: Politics and Religion Together for Social Change, pp. XI, 6-15, 41-42, 56-60, 65-71, 78-87;

Film Screening: *India: Defying the Crown: A Force More Powerful*
ZDVD 4365

Study Questions:

- *What are the opportunities and pitfalls in mixing religion and politics?*
- *Critique Nagler's thermodynamic model of community.*
- *What is the relationship between individual nonviolence conversions and political nonviolence?*

Thursday, January 27— Interlude: Politics and Religion in Our Time

Course Reader:

Martin Marty, Politics, Religion, and the Common Good: Advancing a Distinctly American Conversation about Religion's Role in our Shared Life, pp. 1-42

Note: Permissions to use this material must be obtained directly from the author.

E.J. Dionne, Jr., Jean Bethke Elshtain, and Kayla M. Drogosz,
editors

One Electorate under God? : A Dialogue on Religion and American
Politics, pp.1-38, 228-233

Study Questions:

- *Should religious shape politics?*
- *What is unique about religion and politics in America?*
- *What are Cuomo's and Souder's distinctly religious motivations?*

Tuesday, February 1— Interlude: Nonviolence in Other Religious Traditions

Reading: Daniel Smith-Christopher Subverting Hatred: The Challenge of
Nonviolence in Religious Traditions pp. 9-48, 67-84, 167-177

Course Reader:

Thich Nhat Hanh, Creating True Peace: Ending Violence in
Yourself, Your Family, Your Community and Your World, pp 1-10,
182-206

Study Questions:

- *How do Eastern traditions' (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism) approach to nonviolence compare to Western traditions' (Judaism, Christianity, Islam)?*
- *Can nonviolence be meaningfully translated into politics in all religious traditions?*
- *What is the role of symbols and stories in religiously based nonviolence?*

Thursday, February 3— Cesar Chavez and the Labor Movement: A Vision of Liberation

Course Reader:

Frederick John Dalton: The Moral Vision of Cesar Chavez, pp. 117-
147, 180-182

Film Screening: *The Fight in the Fields: Cesar Chavez and the
Farmworkers' Struggle*

Study Questions:

- *How was the use or misuse of power evident in the challenges Cesar Chavez faced?*

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- *How was Cesar Chavez and “la causa” an example of religion in the public square? What influence did Catholic Social Teaching have on the effectiveness of “la causa”?*
- *How is the film “Fight in the Fields” a convincing portrayal of spirituality and social transformation?*

Tuesday, February 8— Cesar Chavez

Guest: Dolores C. Huerta, co-founder and First Vice President Emeritus of the United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO (UFW) and President of the Dolores Huerta Foundation. She is the mother of 11 children, 20 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Course Reader:

John Hammerback, *The Rhetorical Career of Cesar Chavez*,
 “Chavez Conception of Rhetorical Communication, pp. 24-43
 Richard Jensen and John Hammerback, *The Words of Cesar Chavez*,
 Pp. 1-45, 168-173, 191

Study Questions:

- *What role did rhetorical discourse play in Cesar Chavez’ effectiveness as the organizer and leader of “la causa”?*
- *How did images and rituals form the moral ethos of the farmworkers’ union?*
- *What enabled Cesar Chavez to model such a stark contrast to the American way of life, the “American dream,” where seizing opportunity and accumulating wealth is considered a worthy goal?*
- *Please prepare a question for our guest, Dolores C. Huerta, about her political and spiritual commitments.*

Tuesday, February 8—Optional Extracurricular opportunity—Lunch with Dolores Huerta

Thursday, February 10— Women in Black and Peacemaking in Israel and Palestine

Course Reader:

Reuven Kaminer, *Politics of Protest*, pp. XI-XXII, 1-48, 82-97,
 E. M. Broner, *Bringing Home the Light*, pp. 124-127
 Scott Hunt: *The Future of Peace*, “The Peacemakers of Israel and Palestine” pp. 91-155, 343-344

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Study Questions:

- *How effective do you think Women in Black can be as a form of nonviolent action?*
- *Is there any spiritual dimension to the work of Women in Black?*
- *From the Hunt and Kaminer readings, what specific hope for peace do you have for Israel and Palestine?*

Tuesday, February 15— Nonviolent Efforts for Peace in the Middle East

Guest: Byron Bland, Associate Director of the Stanford Center on Conflict and Negotiation, Center for Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law

Reading Handout: "Getting Beyond Cheap Talk: Fruitful Dialogue and Building Productive Working Relationships"

Film Screening: *Promises* ZVC18019

Study Questions:

- *How, practically, can the cycle of revenge killing be broken? How, then, can there be reconciliation with those who have killed one's own people?*
- *Are children the most or the least effective advocates for peace? Why?*
- *Please prepare a question for our guest, Byron Bland, about the process of conflict resolution.*

Thursday, February 17— Jewish and Muslim Perspectives on Nonviolence

Reading: Daniel Smith-Christopher Subverting Hatred: The Challenge of Nonviolence in Religious Traditions, pp.95-139
James L. Heft, ed. Beyond Violence, Religious Sources of Social Transformation in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, pp. 57-112

Study Questions:

- *In what ways can ijihad be considered nonviolence?*
- *What scriptural support for nonviolence seems compelling in Judaism?*
- *What commonalities do you see between Jewish and Muslim perspectives on nonviolence?*

Tuesday, February 22— Conscientious Objection and Military Refusal in Israel

Course Reader:

Note: Permissions to use this material must be obtained directly from the author.

Reuven Kaminer, Politics of Protest, “Yesh Gevul: Selective Refusal Extended from Lebanon to the Occupied Territories,” “Taking Protest Personally”, pp. 66-81, 133- 136
Ronit Chacham, Breaking Ranks: Refusing to Serve in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, pp. 1-14, 87-103, 121-136, 155-162

Film Screening: *The Good War and Those who Refused to Fight it*

Study Questions:

- *To what extent can conscientious objection to serving in the military be considered effective nonviolent social transformation?*
- *Why do conscientious objectors to war engender so much anger and hatred?*
- *How should one make decisions about balancing community commitments with individual conscience?*
- *How essential a role does spirituality or religion play in becoming a conscientious objector?*

Thursday, February 24—Spiritual Teachers

Readings: Colman McCarthy, I’d Rather Teach Peace

Course Reader:

Rosalie G. Riegler, Dorothy Day: Portraits by Those who Knew Her, p. 5-42. 77-107

Study Questions:

- *What in Dorothy Day’s life enabled her to begin the Catholic Worker movement?*
- *To what extent can education be a force for social transformation?*
- *Who are your spiritual teachers and why?*

Tuesday, March 1— Service Learning Reflections, Journal Entries Due
Possible video link with Anna Robinson in Berlin

Thursday, March 3—Student Presentations;

Tuesday, March 8—Student Presentations

Thursday, March 10—Student Presentations

Friday, March 11—Research Paper Due by 5 p.m.

Recommended Reading List or “Books we couldn’t fit into the syllabus but wish we could...”

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One electorate under God? : a dialogue on religion and American politics, E.J. Dionne, Jr., Jean Bethke Elshtain, and Kayla M. Drogosz, editors.

Democracy and tradition, Jeffrey Stout.

The culture of disbelief : how American law and politics trivialize religious devotion, Carter, Stephen L.

The naked public square : religion and democracy in America, Neuhaus, Richard John.

Lubavitchers as citizens : a paradox of liberal democracy, Jan Feldman.

Habits of the heart: individualism and commitment in American life Robert N. Bellah , Richard Madson, William Sullivan, Ann Swidler, Steven Tipton.

Getting saved from the sixties: moral meaning in conversion and cultural change, Tipton, Steven.

Bible believers : fundamentalists in the modern world, Ammerman, Nancy Tatom.

The American soul : rediscovering the wisdom of the founders, Needleman, Jacob.

Church on Sunday, work on Monday : the challenge of fusing Christian values with business life,
Nash, Laura L. and Scotty McLennan.

The seduction of the spirit; the use and misuse of people's religion, Cox, Harvey Gallagher.

Daybreak of freedom: the Montgomery bus boycott, ed. Stewart Burns

Quiet strength: the faith, the hope, and the heart of a woman who changed a nation, Parks, Rosa,

Rosa Parks, my story, Parks, Rosa

The Montgomery bus boycott and the women who started it: the memoir of Jo Ann Gibson Robinson, Robinson, Jo Ann Gibson

The Temple Bombing, Melissa Fay Greene

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The Montgomery bus boycott: case study in the emergence and career of a social movement

Millner, Steven Michael.

The dream: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the speech that inspired a nation,
Hansen, Drew D.

The autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr, Martin Luther King Jr. ed. Clayborne Carson.

A stone of hope: prophetic religion and the death of Jim Crow, Chappell, David L.

Outside the magic circle: the autobiography of Virginia Foster Durr, Durr, Virginia Foster

Audio and video recordings of civil rights leaders produced by Vincent Harding

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