In this course we study the social dynamics of peace. We look at concrete cases of nonviolent social action in different parts of the world. The stories and ideas of classic and contemporary practitioners of peacemaking will be part of our seminar discussions.

We explore some of the ways that sociology—in collaboration with other fields—can shed light on the complex relationships between peace and other dimensions in real-world contexts. Such dimensions include economic justice, ecological concerns, ideological systems, security concerns, human rights, freedom, and conscience. The complex story of peace is perhaps best understood through a blend of contemplation, social analysis, and action. Biography and history (as in C. Wright Mills and the sociological imagination) help guide us. And we will certainly link our study of the social dynamics of peace to considerations of global justice today. The other half of the story (the ancient and persistent story of war and peace) is the subject of a “companion” course I offer: the sociology of war.

Three books, required for the course, form the core of our seminar. *The Voice of Hope, Aung San Suu Kyi*, by Alan Clements, gives a powerful example of nonviolent action for democracy and just peace in Burma (Myanmar). *Waging Nonviolent Struggle: 20th Century Practice and 21st Century Potential*, by Gene Sharp, helps us examine key aspects and challenges of nonviolent struggles across the globe. One aspect of great significance in the sociology of peace is an analysis of social power—and this analysis is central to the work of Gene Sharp. To better understand movements and social theories of peace, we study David Cortright’s *Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas*.

Two recommended reads (not required) are: *Nonviolent Social Movements: A Geographical Perspective*, by Stephen Zunes, Lester Kurtz, and Sarah Beth Asher (this book provides poignant accounts of peace and justice efforts in various continents) and *Women Building Peace: What They Do, Why It Matters*, by Sanam Naraghi Anderlini (this book is a rich trove of inspiration and analytical research on the leadership role of women in regard to UN issues such as “the responsibility to protect” and other aspects of international NGO work). Some other recommended reads (we will refer to other sources, including websites such as the Social Science Research Council, the Center for Global Nonkilling, the Nonviolent Peace Force, the Global Peace Index, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the Albert Einstein Institute, Veterans for Peace, the American Sociological Association section on peace, war, and social conflict, and the United States Institute of Peace):

Week One – June 21 and 23  Who has inspired us in the quest for peace? Who has taught us about the complexities of war and peace and justice and power? Peace: the world as it is (how we do sociological analysis); the world as it ought to be (how we rely upon social analysis as we develop normative arguments); and how we work to change the world (the links between social theory, social analysis, moral arguments, and social action). The sociological imagination and the moral imagination. Communities of memory. Personal biography and public history. Peace: how we experience and understand peace—in relation to war, to injustices, and to major concerns such as security, ecology, basic human needs and other crucial human rights. We will explore various ways of knowing; the points of view which inform our conceptions of peace. Please read the opening chapters of all three required books (for discussion on Thursday of this week) and spend some time reflecting on your own personal biography and how your life experience (and your own communities of memory) relate to large public concerns today across history—as history unfolds.

Week Two – June 28 and June 30  Continue to read from all three required books (before Tuesday’s class please read through page 101 of The Voice of Hope, through page 148 of Waging Nonviolent Struggle, and through page 154 of Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas; we will dig into key ideas found in these books as we develop our seminar discussion this week).

Week Three – July 5 and July 7  We move deep into themes such as specific cases of nonviolent struggle and how these struggles shape the conceptions of peace. Other key themes this week include conscience, a revolution of the spirit, and disarmament. Continue to read from the three books (we will assign pages from each book, and will do so on Thursday of Week Two; by mid-course we will have a sense of how the reading is going and how you are relating the reading to your own understanding and analysis of peace and society).

Week Four – July 12 and July 14  Social power and social strategy; Gandhi and other major voices for peace; idealism and realism; most significant points to shape a sociology of peace; and your own presentations on themes to be developed during the course.

Grade based on three aspects of equal value:
Class attendance and thoughtful participation each session; worth 50% of course grade.
Five-page essay (guidelines to be announced during second day of the first week, paper due on July 14 at the beginning of class); worth 25% of course grade.
Final exam, open-book with essay-type questions; exam will take place during the final two hours of the last day of class (July 14); worth 25% of course grade.