Peace can be studied from various points of view. Let us together explore specifics and big pictures, by pondering the meaning of peace for our inner selves and amidst shared cultures, for particular social structures and amidst broad social forces, for any given society and amidst the far reaches of the living planet as a whole—the biosphere. In this sociology of peace, we give analytical attention to the challenge of peace in relation to the hard realities of war, economic injustice, ecological degradation and human insecurity. There are complex sets of factors which threaten and undermine social peace. We study peace in relation to the inner self, social change, social power, revolution, personal conscience, spirituality, religion, ecology, political economy, and something the insightful philosopher Hannah Arendt once used to entitle one of her books—the human condition. One sociological concept, coined by C.Wright Mills, provides a key organizing principle for our course together these ten weeks: the sociological imagination. **We engage our sociological imaginations and our sense of dramatization to get at the deeper meaning of peace movements and peace as a social practice and social force.** I shall hopefully encourage each of you to make connections between personal biography and public history as these unfold across generations and places. We learn from each other’s stories as well as from numerous types of social research. I am confident you will likewise help me to grow in my awareness. As a community of learning we can invite one another to share insights and interpretations, doing so in large group and small group processes.


Our assignments and basis of grading: 1) Do the readings as assigned, ahead of the sessions when these selected pages will be the catalysts for discussion. 2) Develop a high quality research & reflection paper, ten pages (for graduate students, fifteen pages); guidelines to be provided during class Week Three. 3) Work with members of your team—teams will be formed during Week Four—to develop a thoughtful, creative, and educational mini-theatre (a short dramatic enactment) on social peace in a specific thematic and socio-historical context; again, guidelines to be provided as the teams form in Week Four. 4) Regular attendance and thoughtful participation—be sure to encourage each person in the room and remember that
active listening is a huge gift we can all share. (Note: More than three unexcused absences will result in a half letter deduction; more than six in a full letter deduction, and so on; excused absences must be legitimate and verifiable.) Please make every effort to attend all of our sessions. Each of these four dimensions counts for 25% of total grade. In this course, as in all of my courses, if you make a genuine effort on these four dimensions you can know that you shall do well, or perhaps do very well, or even excel. Just strive to learn and grow together, this is what being a community of learning can be all about.

Here ahead see the week by week focus of our discussions:

Week One January 7 and 9 **Sociological Imagination and Our Formative Understandings of Peace** For Thursday session please read in *Approaches to Peace*, Preface, Introduction, and also: “Ahimsa, or the Way of Nonviolence” Mohandas Gandhi 258-265; “Sexism and the War System” Betty Reardon 295-302.

Week Two January 14 and 16 Aung San Suu Kyi and **Revolution of the Spirit** Please read *The Voice of Hope* Introduction through Chapter 6.

Week Three January 21 and 23 Aung San Suu Kyi and **More Insights on Inner Peace and Social Peace** from *The Voice of Hope* and from poignant film, “The Lady” Please read from *TVOH* Chapter 7 through C. 13. Note: Guidelines for paper will be shared on Thursday of this week.

Week Four January 28 and 30 **Peace as a Social Force** This week we shall watch and discuss the documentary, “A Force More Powerful” Please read in *Approaches to Peace*, “Seeking a Solution to the Problem of War” Gene Sharp 266-277. Recommended: *Waging Nonviolent Struggle: 20th Century Practice and 21st Century Potential*, by Gene Sharp. Note: Guidelines for mini-theatre dramatizations will be shared on Thursday of this week. Peace theatre teams form on Thursday of this week.

Week Five February 4 and 6 **War & Peace** This week please read in *Approaches to Peace*, “Warfare is Only an Invention—Not a Biological Necessity” Margaret Mead 20-23; “Neither Victims Nor Executioners” Albert Camus 256-258. Note: On Thursday of this week each theatre team will focus creative energy in preparing for your dramatization—with discussion of selected reading from *Approaches to Peace* (this will have been explained during Week Four when you are given the guidelines for the dramatizations).

Week Six February 11 and 13 **Dr. King’s Understanding of Peace—and Our Own Developing Sociological Perspectives on Peace** This week please read in *Approaches to Peace*, “Letter From a Birmingham Jail” 226-230; also “On Humane Governance” Richard Falk 287-295 and “An Insider’s Guide to the UN” Linda Fasulo 143-148. Recommended: *Women Building*
Peace: What They Do, Why It Matters, by Sanam Naraghi Anderlini. Note: On Thursday of this week each theatre team will have first hour and a half to practice for your theatre dramatization; we will schedule the skits during the last part of class on this day.

Week Seven  February 18 and 20  **Theatre Teams Take the Stage**—according to schedule arranged on Thursday of Week Six.

Week Eight  February 25 and 27  **Theatre Teams Continue**

Week Nine  March 4 and 6  **Round of Reports** from your quality research/reflection papers, which are due as edited, polished works, to be handed in (not email) as print copies on Tuesday, March 11 at the beginning of class.

Week Ten  March 11 and 13  We will bring the currents of the course together this week. I will ask each of you to share a brief reflection and analysis on what you have discovered—especially in relation to a critical and hopeful examination of the challenges of peace. I will also share with you my own evolving perspective, “A Frank View of Peace & Society”. We will do self-evaluations and course evaluations before the completion of our final day, Thursday, March 13.

There are dozens of good books, documentaries, and web sites, but rather than throw a list at you here I will just bring various sources and leads to your attention throughout the course. One key source to note here: American Sociological Association, Section on Peace, War & Social Conflict (see Resources). And, to be sure, recommend some of your own good reads and leads as well, so that we can all learn from one another.

Philosophy of Teaching & Learning Together

Dr. Frank A. Fromherz

A college professor – especially one dedicated to the study of society in relation to religion, war, justice, and peace, through both descriptive and normative study and praxis – ought to try to inspire sisters and brothers to seek truth from each other and to consider the merits and shortcomings of all points of view as these are gradually encountered. I bring to each seminar more than thirty years of experience as a student of religion, society, cultures, social ethics, social justice, freedom, war, and peace—all situated in local and global contexts. I have been involved in normative struggles for justice and peace over the years. Often I find value in the constructive and critical sociological and philosophical/social ethical review of social action. Likewise, I see merit in the activist critique of what can at times happen to us in the academy. I try—through a background in both realms—to foster a spirit of empathy and mutual respect.
It is my conviction that each person in the classroom, including myself, is (even if there are times when we just do not feel like it) a student, a lifelong learner—seeking truth and understanding through life experience which includes serious study and scholarship—but also includes introspection and self-examination. I hope to help light a fire of curiosity, a quest for meaning and insight, in each student. Often my task is simply to affirm the fire already alight. I invite you to join me in a community of shared learning. Questions and the quest for diverse ways of knowing—these are the heart and soul of the experience.

As students may we become deeply engaged in the community of learning as we foster a spirit of mutual trust and commitment to explore diverse perspectives. I want students to relate theoretical work to their own life experiences, so therefore I try to bring the sociological imagination (as in C. Wright Mills) and philosophical curiosity (Socrates) into everything we do; personal biographies and large public issues and social forces, always seeking to make the connections.

Perhaps my philosophy of teaching & learning (and trying to participate in steps to foster greater justice and peace)—that is to say, what I aspire to though surely what I do not attain—can be summarized in one word, a concept shaped through the thought and practice of Gandhi: Satyagraha. This involves the mind and the heart; the intellect, body, and spirit. Satyagraha does not happen by virtue of the solitary self. We seek truth and we do so through social analysis and through experiments in the quest for understanding, compassion, beauty, and goodness. We do this with acceptance of our human condition, trying to acknowledge the paradoxes of being human, even trying to do so with a blend of compassion and humor😊.