

## Draft Syllabus

# **The Mission of Reconciliation in a Violent World**

Raymond G. Helmick, S.J.

*Office Hours:* You will find me more often at St. Mary's Hall than in my office, room 312V in the Campanella Way building . I will regularly be there mornings from 9:00 to 12:00 any class day. You are always welcome other times as well, whenever you find me.

You can check with me by phone, **552-8215**, which rings both in the office and in my room at St. Mary's Hall. When you don't find me there, you will often find me at **617-325-1300** (St. Theresa's Rectory in West Roxbury), and we can set a time for an appointment. Always, please, leave me a number to get back to you.

### **Course Description:**

The course is designed particularly for Americans, and students from elsewhere living and studying in the midst of the current American experience of war and peace.

The 1989 end of the Cold War brought new life to the long commitment of the pioneers of reconciliation – British Quaker Adam Curle, Eugene Sharp, the Mennonites and others – to a non-violent way of dealing with international conflict. After the 45 years of nuclear terror, in which we all lived with the constant threat of Mutually Assured Destruction, our civilization was able to catch its breath and turn to possibilities of peace. There were successes along the way: the victory over Apartheid in South Africa, ceasefires and the eventual Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland, the Oslo Accord in the Middle East, despite the great tragedies of Ruanda and the Balkan countries. Peace studies and peace activism flourished until the watershed day, September 11, 2001, when the attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and elsewhere ushered in a new age of vengeance in a polarized world. A whole new art of conflict transformation struggled to assert itself, but even the World Council of Churches, celebrating, between 2001 and 2011, its Decade to Overcome Violence, could make no significant headway against these new winds.

This course will study the work of these pioneers, the studies sponsored by the Templeton Foundation, the Weatherhead Center at Harvard, Oslo's World Dignity University, the Foundation for Reconciliation in Caracas and others; the techniques and spirit of their work and a practical life experience in mediation and counsel in violent conflicts.

**Requirements:** Rather than a mid-term exam I will require a **critical review of a pertinent book**, due by October 24<sup>th</sup>; also a **term paper** (2,000 words approx.) and a **final exam** (in class). The paper will count for 40% of the grade, the book review and the final exam each 30%.

I will also post a question on the Blackboard Vista after each class, and will look for each student to post a one-page response to it, to which I can then post a reply. I've been finding that this promotes a very active discussion within the class, and works better if not encumbered by any fears that you could be hurt by what you write. Participation will count toward the grade, but the weekly responses will not be graded.

**Required Books:** This is still something of a conundrum for me, as I would prefer to require as few purchases of books as possible. I will want Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz's *America's Battle for God: A European Christian Looks at Civil Religion* (Eerdmans, 2007) and Andrew Bacevich's *The Long War: A New History of U.S. National Security Policy Since World War II* (Columbia University Press, 2007). Of John Paul Lederach's work I want both *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, (Washington, D.C., United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), which will give access to Adam Curle's work, and *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (Oxford University Press, 2005). I have on-line access to all of Evelin Lindner's works on humiliation as the motor of violence for the Oslo World Dignity University and that of Leonel Narvaes at the Caracas Fundacion por la Reconciliacion. Many writings of my own, including the assessment I did last year of all the Templeton Foundation studies and projects in the area of forgiveness and reconciliation of the last two decades, will be on the Blackboard Vista for the class and there will be many postings there of current discussion of conflicts. I will draw on my own notes on Roger Fisher's and William Uri's negotiation work, as well as that of Herb Kelman and Donna Hicks in the Weatherhead Center.

### **Class Calendar:**

**Wed., September 4:** How violent? Calculation of the rate of violence as compared with other historic eras: lower, but more threatening. Legacy of dread from the 20<sup>th</sup> century World Wars and the Cold War era.

**Wed., September 12:** Aspirations to reconciliation: the 1990s. Works sponsored by the Templeton Foundation as examples. Successes in South Africa, Northern Ireland, the Middle East.

**Wed., September 19:** Forgiveness and reconciliation, central Christian imperatives. Lederach's teaching on the art and soul of peace-building. Its reduction, in practice, to a privatized form, the individual's reconciliation with God only.

**Wed., September 26:** The changed climate after the 9/11 attacks of 2001: abrupt shift to a culture of vengeance. Experience of the World Council of Churches' Decade to Overcome Violence as example.

**Wed., October 3:** American exceptionalism: Messianic ambitions and the temptation to Empire. The frontier spirit, the City on the Hill, and the extermination of the American Indians.

Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz's thesis is pertinent here.

- Wed., October 10:** 21<sup>st</sup> century hegemonic inclinations, and their historic roots. The War on Terrorism, pretension to preemptive rights and antipathy to Islam.  
Variations on the basic strategic positions of the United States.
- Wed., October 17:** Necessary linkage of justice and peace. Restorative Justice.
- Wed., October 24:** Non-violence as strategy: Gandhi's example, Martin Luther King, Imam Musa al-Sadr, Nelson Mandela. Life-long work and teaching of Gene Sharp.
- Wed., October 31:** Interpretative role of third-party peacemaker. Track II diplomacy. Discovery and uncovering of alternatives to violence.
- Wed., November 7:** Experience of work as mediator/counselor in Northern Ireland, Israel-Palestine, Lebanon, the Balkan countries.
- Wed., November 14:** Presumption against the demonizing of adversaries. The Ignatian *Praesupponendum*: saving the proposition of the other. How it works out in practice.
- Wed., November 21: Thanksgiving Holidays, No Class**
- Wed., November 28:** How far have the forgiveness and reconciliation imperatives been characteristic of Christian emphases through history?
- Wed., December 5:** Conflict **Transformation** as the right name for what we are doing, rather than Conflict Resolution.