Religion and Conflict Resolution in Latin America
Draft Syllabus

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COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course focuses on the role religion plays in political discourses and conflicts in Latin America and how it impacts their resolution. This course is based on the observation that, religio-cultural traditions and institutions are increasingly playing a complex role in communities that are divided among ethno-religious lines. Within this context, many policymakers and religious institutions have begun taking more seriously the potential constructive role religious traditions and institutions can play in responding to challenges faced by violent conflict and in contributing to building stronger social cohesion and sustainable development.

Similar to other contexts, religion continues a complex role in politics and conflicts in Latin America, while the nature of this role is rapidly transforming and new issues and challenges are arising. For instance, in 1950s and 60s Liberation Theology, articulated by leaders such as Gustavo Gutiérrez of Peru arose as a moral reaction to poverty, social, political, and economic injustice; Vatican successfully intervened into various conflicts such as the Beagle Channel conflict between Chile and Argentina; In more recent years, while Catholic Church is still playing a dominant role in the region, Evangelical and Pentecostal churches are experiencing unprecedented growth.

Understanding this dynamic relationship between religion, politics and conflicts changing in the region can potentially contribute to more effective sustainable development and conflict resolution interventions and policies. Therefore, with a particular focus on Latin America, this course treats religion as an aspect of individual and group identity, which influence the causes, dynamics, outcomes of conflicts, and intervention methods; explores the role values and beliefs play in constructing gender roles, patterns of thought, interpretive frames, and behavior in peace-building and conflict resolution efforts; explores concepts such as, stereotyping, prejudices, and analyzes role of religion and culture in peace-building processes such as mediation, interfaith dialogue, and reintegration of ex-combatants.

The course also focuses on specific skills, concepts, and theories relating to effective ways to handle religious differences in conflict and peace building training. It introduces skills and approaches to deal with issues of prejudice, stereotyping, and ethnocentrism in conflict settings as well as interactive exercises, role-plays, and real life case studies to learn constructive ways of addressing intercultural encounters. This course includes lecture presentations, personal development, in-depth group discussions, role-plays, and films. Experiential learning methods are extensively used in this course.

More specifically this course aims to:
1. Help students understand the dynamic relationship between religion, politics and conflict in Latin America
2. Highlight the role of religion and in conflict resolution, peacebuilding intervention strategies in Latin America.
3. Explore the potential for conflict resolution and peacebuilding found within different religious and cultural traditions in the region.
4. Introduce theories and skills that will promote conflict resolution and peacebuilding in multicultural settings.

**PEDAGOGICAL STYLE**

This is an interactive course in which you are expected to engage with the ideas and thoughts presented in the assignments, by the professor, other students -- and yourself. The philosophy of teaching followed is collaborative learning, which favors a model where there is more interaction in the classroom between students and teachers, students and teachers work cooperatively, and assignments involve cooperation and creative thinking. **By taking this course, you are already involved in the process of creative thoughtfulness.**

**What is Collaborative Learning?**

- Collaborative learning means that in addition to the lectures, and the requisite assignments, we will engage in active, ongoing and focused discussion.
- The process is based on the concept that we each -- equally -- hold experience-based knowledge that provides a solution (or stimulus) to another person's question.
- Rather than passive learning, you will be engaged in “doing,” in thinking, creating, rejecting, and building.
- You will be required to analyze the ideas of others, to organize your own and to express them constructively.
- We each have our own learning styles and ways of expression. Becoming aware of these and using them wisely is part of the collaborative process.
- In the collaborative process, we not only listen and observe, but actively participate by contributing ideas, resources and follow-up action. We also adjust our perceived realities.
- Preparedness includes coming to class having read and thought through the assignments, ready to build on what has already been done, to offer new solutions.
- Collaborative learning does not stop when you walk out of the classroom (nor begin when you enter). You are encouraged to continue your discussions and to work collaboratively out of class.

During your journey **please remember:**

*Communication* of an idea is expedited when we are in touch with the core of ourselves. When we are in touch with our core, we open ourselves to creativity. We also discover that the essence of communication is intention.

*Self-expression:* in order for the self to express itself, it must express itself as a whole. When we are presenting papers, we are not only presenting an idea, but we are presenting ourselves. The person is more important that the idea, because it is the person who through effective communication, can transfer that idea to others.

*Active listening* is a communication skill which we develop as we learn to hear not only words and ideas, but also the emotions, feelings, and experiences behind words and ideas. We try to become a clear mirror for another person, reflecting back what we have heard and understood. We use empathy as a tool of analysis.
ASSIGNMENTS

Participation: 30% of your grade of your final grade will be based on the quality of your participation in class. In order to prepare for the class, students are expected to do the required readings, and prepare 1 (one) question for discussion. Also remember: participation entails not only attendance, but also participation in class discussion through active selfexpression and active listening. Active listening is a communication skill which we develop as we learn to hear words, ideas, and opinions, and the emotions behind words, ideas, and opinions. We try to become a clear mirror for another person, reflecting back what we hear and comprehend. Using empathy as a tool of analysis, we seek not only to understand ideas, but also to understand others.

Final Exam: 70% of your grade will be your final exam to be taken on the last day of classes. The exam will consist of a couple of essay questions based upon the readings and class discussions. Students are also required to keep a reflective journal to take notes and write down their reflections daily about the topics discussed throughout the course. While these reflection journals will not be graded, reviewing them will assist the students during the final exam.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Part I. Conceptual and theoretical Framework: First Part of the workshop will focus on the conceptual and theoretical aspects of religion and conflict resolution.

Day 1: What is Conflict and Conflict Resolution: This session will define what is conflict, what are different forms of violence (such as direct, structural and cultural), and define sustainable peacebuilding. This session we will also review map of the conflict resolution field and introduce Conflict Sensitive analysis as a tool.

Required Reading:

Day 2: Defining culture/religion; Linking Culture/religion and Conflict Resolution: This session we will discuss what is culture and religion, why is it necessary to study their role in conflict both as a divider and a connector. We will also explore how religion and culture impacts politics and public space.

Required Reading:

Part II: Second Part of the course will explore observable and unobservable aspects of religio-cultural traditions that impact conflicts and their resolution. This section will also discuss how

Day 3: Identity Construction and Ethnocentricism vs. Ethnorelativism: This week will focus on the relationship between culture/religion and identity constriction in the context of ethno-religious conflicts. We will also discuss the role of social-psychological drivers of conflict such as ethnocentrism, stereotypes and prejudice in conflict and explore how we can move from ethno-centrism to ethnorelativism. This session we will also talk about empathy as a tool to resolve conflicts.

Required Reading:
Bennett, Milton. “Towards Ethnorelativism: A Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity.” In Education for the Intercultural Experience M. Paige (Ed.), (pp. 22-71)

Recommended Reading

Day 4: Religion-Culture and Worldviews: This week the class will look at how worldviews, cosmologies and myths contribute to violence as well as conflict resolution and peace building. We will look at the conflict involving Mapuche Pehuenche Indigenous Community and Spanish Multi-national Company Endesa over the construction of Ranca Dam over Bio Bio River. This session we will also introduce consensus building as a tool to address conflicts.

Reading:

Day 5: Religion-Culture and Gender: This week the class will look at role of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding and how religio-cultural traditions influence gender roles in society. As case studies we will explore Madres de Playa Mayo among others.

Required Reading:

**Recommended Readings:**

**Video:**
Documentary of “Las Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo and the Search for Identity”, available here:
- English Version: [http://youtu.be/rZGq15IhAi0](http://youtu.be/rZGq15IhAi0)
- Spanish with English Subtitles: [http://youtu.be/34tl6Uvc-i0](http://youtu.be/34tl6Uvc-i0)

**Day 6: Rituals, Symbols and Healing:** Healing and reconciliation are central to conflict resolution and peace building. Rituals and Symbols play an important transformative role in reconciliation and healing. This week we will look at different cultural rituals and symbols as sources for healing and peace building and focus on the Reconciliation process in Peru.

**Required Reading:**

**Day 7: Religion Culture and Third Party Intervention:** Different communities have different preferences regarding who can intervene into conflicts and what are the right processes to address conflicts. This session we will look at how religion culture impacts third-party intervention in conflicts such as mediation and look at outsider-impartial and insider-partial mediation models. We will discuss case studies of Mediation in Central America and Vatican’s mediation in Beagle Channel Conflict.

**Required Reading:**


**Day 8: Conflict Resolution through Grassroots Organization and Nonviolence:** This session we will explore resolving conflict through nonviolent civil action and discuss how religion and culture plays a role thereof. We will also discuss power asymmetry and conflict. As a case study we will look at Chile and watch the documentary A Force More Powerful: Chile
**Required Reading:**


**Recommended Readings:**

**Day 9: Communication and Interfaith Dialogue:** this session we will talk about how religion and culture impacts communication styles and the role of interfaith dialogue in establishing sustainable peace. We will also explore interfaith dialogue in the context of Latin America.

**Required Reading:**
Ayse Kadayici-Orellana “Interfaith Dialogue and Conflict Resolution”

**Video:**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XumF6uPx_fo

**Day 10: Post Conflict Peacebuilding and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants:**
Reintegration of ex-combatants is a critical component of sustainable peace and conflict resolution. Reintegration of ex-combatants requires careful planning and a good understanding of religio-cultural context of the society it is taking place. More recently community based, approaches that are rooted in the social, cultural traditions of the community has been adopted as a more effective mechanism. As a case study we will look at the Re-integration of Ex-combatants in Colombia **Case of Colombia**

**Required Reading:**

**Recommended Readings:**
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-l-phillips/preventing-ex-combatants_b_9144472.html