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Mainstreaming peace and conflict studies: designing introductory courses to fit liberal arts education requirements

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Peace and conflict studies courses are seldom seen by faculty curriculum committees and university administrators as deserving to be part of their institution's liberal arts education requirements. We show that this unfortunate tendency is rooted in a lack of understanding of not only the compatibility between the two but of their quite complementary connections. These connections include the liberal arts' emphases on the following: producing liberated citizens; respecting diversity; thoughtfully considering different points of view; highlighting not just the rights of the individual but the responsibilities that accompany those rights. Using the experience of Kent State University's Center for Applied Conflict Management as a case study, we show that by bridging the perceived gap between the traditional liberal arts core and peace and conflict studies it is indeed possible to have an introductory course in peace and conflict studies accepted as an option for fulfilling an institution's liberal arts requirements. In the process of 'mainstreaming' peace and conflict studies this way, enrollments will expand exponentially, new generations of students will be equipped with conflict management skills, and the field of peace and conflict studies will gain more respect across academia.

Keywords: liberal arts education; peace and conflict studies; empowerment; liberation; peace education; conflict resolution; service learning

Introduction

Kent State University's Center for Applied Conflict Management boasts one of the country's oldest full degree programs in peace and conflict studies, starting in 1974. But like many other peace and conflict studies programs it remained limited in size and influence on campus, often seen as an afterthought by the university and unable to draw the attention of the mainstream student body. That all began to change in the fall of 2002 after the Center's faculty successfully persuaded faculty curriculum committees and university administrators that its introduction to applied conflict management course aligned with the university's liberal education goals. The addition of this course as a student option to fulfill Kent State's liberal education requirements is, we argue, a winning proposition for the university, the Center and the student body at large because of the interlocking philosophies of liberal education and peace and conflict studies.

As we will detail throughout the paper, the tenets of a liberal arts education actually align closely with the philosophies underlying peace and conflict studies. We will also argue that by bridging the perceived gap between the two, peace studies and

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conflict resolution programs can enhance their enrollments, improve the stature of the field as a whole and contribute positively towards undergraduate education. Our examination begins with profiles of both liberal arts and peace and conflict studies before examining their primary areas of intersection. Following this we explore the Kent State model of exploiting the intersection between the two and its profound impacts upon the Center's enrollments and program. We then proceed to describe how we have attempted to expand on our model by sharing it with colleagues from other institutions. Overall we conclude that while there is no 'one size fits all' model for incorporating peace and conflict studies into liberal arts curriculums, one can make a good beginning by exploring the connections between the two and, where feasible, designing courses that meet the needs of both the program and its host university.

Liberal arts education profile

Liberal education has deep roots in western philosophy, extending from Plato and Socrates forward through the Romans, the Italian humanists and the great European universities of the eighteenth century. The classical Greeks closely connected the value of human life in general and responsible citizenship in particular to an examined, reflective and ultimately liberated experience. The acquisition of knowledge and the development of the ability to think in a disciplined way was the pathway leading to a liberated mind and life lived in freedom. The precepts of liberal arts education have long assumed that to achieve happiness as well as to contribute to the public good, liberated individuals need expansive, cosmopolitan training that prepares them to thoughtfully, and indeed, to dutifully consider points of view that extend beyond their own needs and interests; as well as beyond their own limited experiences. Such practices applied in the service of the continual search for truth are seen as virtuous – with the development of virtue itself a fundamental goal of liberal education (Kagan 1999). The US has long fancied itself as following in these august and ultimately republican footsteps.

Thus, liberal arts education has been a bedrock principle in the history of US higher education, going all the way back to the founding of the republic. Jefferson's commitment to and plan for universal education, for example, was intended to promote both civility and democracy; that is, not only individual virtue but also governing practices for free people (Kimball 1996). There is, in fact, an intimate relationship between liberal arts education and the principles and practices of a deliberative democracy. One can speak of democracy and public education as being mutually interdependent. If the US government is to be of the people, for the people and by the people, the necessity of an educated citizenry – one that is not only culturally sensitive but actually wise in the multitudinous ways of the world – becomes more imperative. As the great US philosopher of education John Dewey put it in *Democracy and education*:

A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own, is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race, and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity. (Dewey 1916, 87)

While liberal arts education in England and on much of the continent often reinforced class and was valued for producing 'gentlemen', the Deweyian sentiment profiled

above helps explain why higher education in the US historically embraced liberal arts education as a social and political equalizer. The federal government established land grant universities, for example, to make liberal arts education and associated professions widely accessible to the working class. We also see in the passage from Dewey another idea central to the American model.

It was not just that liberal arts are to be put in the service of engendering appreciations for what it means to be a free citizen in a democratic republic. Equally important is the insistence that the freedom coin has two sides – not just rights but also responsibilities – that produce daily dilemmas for the free citizen. Educators no less than parents understand that we are not born into awareness of the existence of the dilemmas originating between rights and responsibilities; each of us has to learn how to recognize these dilemmas, to say nothing of learning how to beneficially engage them. This is ultimately the job of a liberal arts education: teaching the whole person the full picture, one that includes both rights and responsibilities, as opposed to presenting a truncated view that appeals to only a portion of the person. Only then can free citizens learn how to constructively negotiate the dilemmas inherent in rights coupled with responsibilities, recognizing not only their apparent contradictory impulses but also their less obvious cross-cutting dimensions.

The foremost themes that emerge after reviewing the academic literature on the meanings of liberal arts education is that it is designed to develop a set of virtues and moral values associated with engaged citizenship, mastery of critical analytic abilities, and inculcate a respect for diversity in a complex, increasingly globalized world.¹

Empowerment of the learner is a watchword for liberal education. Thus, although some have historically argued for a separation between classical liberal arts education and the learning of practical skills through hands-on projects, this position is increasingly in the minority as liberal arts education has grown and developed to include community-based research, as well as applied knowledge and problem-solving, including through internships and service learning.

Equally important to a liberal education is the development of a wide and deep world-view – the fruit of the multi-disciplinary approach that marks liberal arts education. This approach creates graduates who have the intellectual tools and practical skills to be lifelong learners, and the passion to accomplish the same. Some of those skills include communication, information literacy, the ability to work cooperatively and collegially, and critical analysis leading to applied problem-solving. For example, writing about the need to more fully connect liberal education in the US with the development of a geoethics of citizenship, Stoddard and Cornwall (2003, 50–1) emphasize that:

... the chief epistemological virtue here is the capacity to listen for and across differences. Second in line is a disposition not to meet differences with a desire to win, to have one's own point of view triumph over others, but instead to meet differences as a project, a sign that power and point of view are likely in play. Intercultural communication skills emerge by this analysis not simply as useful in getting by in a diverse world, but as capacities essential to build a complex account of what is the case and what it is important to do. Filling out the meaning of responsible global citizenship is necessarily a collaborative process.

The field of peace and conflict studies has been blessed to date with seven editions of a curriculum guide in published book form beginning in 1978, with the latest edition in 2009. In addition to the many sample syllabi, which provide immense

practical utility for course design hints and helps, each edition contains many valuable essays written by eminent figures in the field. These essays identify, track, analyze and interpret broad trends and developments in the field. With regard to connections between peace and conflict studies, liberal education and global citizenship, it is worth noting that even the first edition in 1978 discussed topics central to these intersections. In particular, the first edition included an essay entitled ‘The crisis of global transformation, interdependence, and the schools’ (Mendlovitz, Metcalf, and Washburn 1978). The authors presciently argued that in an increasingly globalized world where social, political and economic problems are deeply interconnected across state borders and national identities, educational systems that are committed to teaching about the many ethical dimensions of this interdependence are the best way to confront the problems we faced then and that we continue to confront today in the struggle for a more just world. This is just a single example of the interconnectedness of liberal arts education with peace and conflict studies – a connection that we explore more fully below.

Peace and conflict studies profile

There is a sizable literature charting and interpreting the development of the field of peace and conflict studies (Boulding 1978; Carey 1980; Elias 1990; Harris, Fisk, and Rank 1998; Harris and Morrison 2003; Kriesberg 1991; Lawler 1995; Lopez 1989a, b; Reardon 1988; Stephenson 1989). The field has historically been marked by a broad and diffuse set of concepts and themes. In addition, given its interdisciplinary origins, which have been maintained in the structure of many of today’s programs, generalizations about the field have not always been easy to make. Still, one popular approach to interpreting the development of the field, including its evolving and changing content, has been to characterize it as a series of waves (Stephenson 1989; Wien 2009), time periods (Harris, Fisk, and Rank 1998), phases (Kriesberg 2007), generations (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, and Miall 2005), or life cycles (Jutilla, Pehkonen, and Vayrynen 2008), all within the framework of the late 1960s to the present. In this general line of interpretation, each respective time period is often marked by two things: a wave of new programs that have recently been founded; and a distinctive set of thematic foci for curricula that characterize that period.

Another approach to understanding the field is to examine the titles of the degree programs insofar as naming has both symbolic and real meanings, giving us important information as to its content. So in, for example, a 2006 study funded by the Hewlett Foundation that was designed to chart the content taught in the field of peace and conflict studies, one of the issues investigated was the titles of the degree programs (Hedeem and Coy 2006). The researchers found that of the 35 undergraduate majors in the US and Canada for which they had solid data, the term ‘peace’ appears in 27 (75%) of the program titles; ‘conflict’ appears in 16 (44%); while ‘justice’ appears in 10 (28%). Similarly, of the 66 undergraduate minors, the term ‘peace’ appears in 53 (80%) of the program titles; ‘conflict’ shows up in 28 (42%); and ‘justice’ appears in 13 (20%).

Finally, even while recognizing the broad scope of themes historically subsumed under the multidisciplinary umbrella of peace and conflict studies, it is nonetheless possible to identify a core set of topics that have come to define the field (Coy 2009). More specifically, it is helpful to conceptualize the field as having three broad foci: (1) the causes and consequences of destructive and or

	Causes & Consequences of Violence	Methods for Reducing Violent Conflict	The Values, Norms, & Institutions of Peace
Individual	Aggression Socialization Bigotry Inter-Personal Violence	Communication Skills Negotiation Mediation Education	Nonviolence as a lifestyle Ethical/Religious perspectives
Social Group & Instrumental	Economic Disparity Repression Revolution	Arbitration Negotiation Mediation Conflict Resolution Workshops	Nonviolent Direct Action Social Movements Justice Freedom
International	War Arms Race/Trade Xenophobia Intervention Nuclear War	Diplomacy International Peacekeeping Mediation Crisis Management	International Law & Organization Nonoffensive Defense Global Cooperation

(Lopez 1989a, 76)

Figure 1. Conceptual map of peace studies. Used with permission of author.

violent conflict as it is manifested on the individual, social and international levels; (2) the processes used to manage, resolve or transform destructive and or violent conflict on each of the three levels; and (3) the development of norms, practices and institutions designed to build peace, broadly conceived, on each of the three levels (Lopez 2009, 1989a). The content areas usually taught across the three are detailed in Figure 1.

Another distinctive characteristic of peace and conflict studies has been its strong and sustained interest in connecting theory and practice. Over 30 years ago, Jerry Folk (1978) suggested that a distinguishing trait of peace and conflict studies was its interest in having students not only study in the classroom but also observe and even engage in social conflicts beyond the classroom. Anthony Bing (1989) argued a decade later that through experiential education in the form of internships and foreign travel, peace and conflict studies programs can help students both to 'think [their] way into...acting' and to 'act [their] way into...thinking'. Weigert (1990, 48) describes the conceptual and affective challenges students encounter through experiential learning in the peace and conflict studies context, including challenges to ideas, values and identities that they may have previously held uncritically. More recently, Conley-Taylor and Bretherton (2006) describe and analyze how internship programs can effectively synthesize theory and practice in university-based peace education, maximizing student learning outcomes. Finally, Hedeem and Coy (2006) established empirically that the overwhelming majority of programs (nearly two thirds) actually require applied work and experiential education in the form of internships, with others making it available. In their analysis of 35 undergraduate programs in the US and Canada, they found that internships or other applied coursework were required in 22 programs (63%), were optional in five (14%) and unavailable in only eight (23%).

It seems clear that peace and conflict studies has a strong potential for overlap with concepts from liberal education, most especially when examining areas of critical thinking, self-exploration and engagement with the wider community. We turn next to exploring the overlap between the liberal arts and conflict resolution.

Primary areas of intersection

In the profile of liberal arts education history above, we emphasized a number of intimate connections between the liberal arts and democratic approaches to governance. Here we will focus on four of them and their connections to peace and conflict studies. First, at the core of the liberal arts approach is the desire to produce citizens who are both willing and able to thoughtfully consider points of view different from their own. This implies an ability to recognize that each one of us has limited experiences and those experiences may be very different from those of our neighbors. We also saw that both John Dewey and Thomas Jefferson thought that responsible governance was predicated on the citizenry being educated in the liberal arts. Democracy is essentially an exercise in the consideration and management of different points of view through the deliberations of engaged citizens. If those citizens have had liberal arts training, they should be better equipped for the consideration of differing points of view. Of course, the ability to respect differences and genuinely consider alternative viewpoints while at the same time constructively advocating for one's own is also at the heart of peace and conflict studies. In fact, these approaches are central dimensions of best practices in conflict resolution, including the following few examples: when a conflict party reflectively listens to their opponent in order to demonstrate full understanding of their opponent's point of view; when a conflict party probes for the interests and needs that underlie their opponent's position, or when conflict parties use those differing interests to build durable win-win solutions; when conflict parties suspend judgment and engage in the creative brainstorming of possible solutions; when a mediator asks a conflict party to put themselves in the shoes of their opponent and consider the problem from their point of view; and even when victorious activists in a nonviolent action campaign create opportunities for their opponents to save face. All of these conflict resolution tactics, and many more, well demonstrate the intimate connections between peace and conflict studies with the goals of liberal arts education and the principles of democratic governance.

Second, our profile of liberal arts education also emphasized the fact that it focuses not only on the rights of a liberated, educated citizenry but also on the responsibilities of the same. In short, when the rights or even the needs of one citizen intersect with the rights or needs of another, each has a responsibility to thoughtfully engage with the other. This is not only sound democratic theory but also good conflict resolution practice – where listening and asserting go hand in hand, where recognizing and affirming the needs of the other can be a precursor to progress toward a conflict's transformation, and where taking responsibility for one's past and future actions is often a key to unlocking a conflict's solution.

Third, in an increasingly globalized world, contemporary liberal arts education sees respect for diversity as a cross-cutting principle, necessarily integrated into all disciplines and fields of study, and also at the heart of the democratic experiment. In conflict resolution theory, this has manifested itself in an increasing attention to the intersections of cultures and conflict, which have now been especially well-studied

and incorporated into curriculums. In conflict resolution practice, meanwhile, diversity awareness exercises, simulations, and trainings from a wide variety of approaches have become standard practice in conflict resolution circles.

Fourth, and finally, there are clear connections between the goal of liberal arts education as described above to create ‘liberated’ individuals in the sense of having lives lived in freedom and happiness, and the themes of empowerment embedded within conflict resolution by some of the field’s prominent thinkers like Adam Curle (1964, 1971), James Laue (Laue and Cormick 1978), and Elise Boulding. In addition, the influential transformative mediation approach advocated by Bush and Folger (1994), the conflict transformation principles articulated by John Paul Lederach (1995), and the cultural re-centering of the field recently advocated by Mary Anne Trujillo and Beth Roy (2008) and their colleagues are all heavily infused with themes of empowerment and liberation. The philosophical underpinnings of peace education and the social dynamics of the conflict resolution movement in the 1970s have both held that education provides an underpinning through which individuals and communities can empower themselves, taking control of their lives and their conflicts and thereby affecting their circumstances. Whether one addresses this through teaching basic conflict management skills of listening, negotiation and assertion or by using the principles of nonviolence to enact social change, empowerment relies in part upon a liberal education that frees the mind and allows for a wider venue of choices and tools with which to address problems in life, thereby increasing chances of happiness. We turn now to a profile of the liberal arts model at Kent State University followed by a description of its intersection with our introductory course in applied conflict management.

The Kent State model

There are two primary ways of examining the KSU model for liberal arts education and the manner in which the Center for Applied Conflict Management (CACM) has negotiated the intersection of liberal arts education and peace and conflict studies. The first involves delineating the content of the introductory course and the second involves integrating that delineation into liberal arts education as it is expressed at KSU.

Theory, practice and the CACM approach to the field

After examining syllabi for introductory courses from several leading programs in peace and conflict studies, we found that there were two basic ways of approaching the field: (1) based on the division between peace studies and conflict management/resolution; and (2) based on a theory versus practice orientation to learning the subject matter. In most programs this division represents an emphasis on one area over the other rather than an exclusionary focus on one area, as evidenced in the Lopez chart above. Still, it is helpful to be clear about the distinctions among programs and the philosophical or pedagogical reasons for those distinctions.

The first distinction, i.e., between peace studies and conflict resolution/management, is in some senses nominal. However, these specific approaches are diverse enough to discern the philosophical differences between the two branches of the field. Briefly, the main differences between these two branches have to do largely with differences in philosophical approaches to social change. In peace studies much of the content is concerned with societal and global changes designed to increase social justice, often through the use of strategic nonviolence. There is a much stronger

emphasis on social justice, social action and individual responsibility for making social change. Likewise, peace studies programs may have stronger links to the humanities, in particular philosophy, religion or literature than conflict resolution or conflict management programs.

Conflict management/resolution, by contrast, often seeks to engage with specific conflict situations in order to either settle disputes – through alternative dispute resolution mechanisms – or to assist in the resolution of deep-rooted conflicts using rich analyses and academic or Track II involvement with stakeholders in workshops or other unofficial venues. The connecting thread between the management and resolution (continuing into the transformation) arenas of conflict studies is the focus on the dynamics and processes of conflict and its resolution. In this sense, the differences between peace studies and conflict studies may provide a weak reflection between the comparison of programs that are theory-driven and those which are more practice-driven or applied; with many peace studies programs placing more emphasis on theory and philosophy and conflict management programs emphasizing the acquisition of skills.

The second primary way of distinguishing between programs is through their relative degrees of emphasis on theoretical knowledge versus on applied skills for practice. This is particularly true when one examines syllabi for introductory courses which serve as a gateway to degree programs (both major and minor) and can, as we show below, exemplify the intersection between liberal arts and peace and conflict studies. Courses that are more theoretically-driven typically emphasize the historical context of peace and conflict studies, examining the sources of conflict as well as the causes of war. Depending on the philosophical orientation of the program, these courses may focus more upon conflict resolution processes or may, instead, focus on philosophies of peace and the tenets of nonviolence. By contrast courses that are more practice-driven tend to emphasize the overlap of peace and conflict studies with communication, business and other professional or applied disciplines, although with a philosophy very much derived from the tenets of peace and conflict theory.

Here at the Center for Applied Conflict Management, we take the term ‘applied’ very seriously. Consequently, the introductory course for our undergraduate major and minor degree in applied conflict management also has a pronounced emphasis on the acquisition of applied skills in conflict management. The course has five main sections: personal conflict styles, communication skills including active listening and constructive asserting, principled negotiation, informal mediation, and nonviolent action. This emphasis reflects our belief that acquisition of these skills is a process of self-learning and even of self-discovery, one that embodies the goals of liberal arts education to produce whole persons who are able to understand multiple perspectives and who can engage meaningfully with both their rights and responsibilities. We turn now to a brief description of the Kent State University liberal arts education program and our introduction to applied conflict management course’s relationship to that program.

CACM and the liberal education requirement process

The main way that Kent State University (KSU) has organized its liberal arts education from the early 1990s through 2010 has been through its system of liberal education requirements (LERs). The university describes these requirements as being at the core of its ‘mission to prepare students to live in today’s complex, global society’, arguing

that the fulfillment of these requirements will ‘broaden intellectual perspectives, foster ethical and humanitarian values, and prepare students for responsible citizenship’ (KSU 2008, 85). More specifically, the goals of LER courses are to enable students to:

- Acquire critical-thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Apply principles of effective written and oral communication.
- Broaden their imagination and develop their creativity.
- Cultivate their natural curiosity and begin a lifelong pursuit of knowledge.
- Develop competencies and values vital to responsible uses of information and technology.
- Engage in independent thinking, develop their own voice and vision, and become informed, responsible citizens.
- Improve their understanding of issues and behaviors concerning inclusion, community and tolerance.
- Increase their awareness of the ethical implications of their own and others’ actions.
- Integrate their major studies into the broader context of a liberal education.
- Strengthen quantitative reasoning skills.
- Understand basic concepts of the academic disciplines.

In addition to its liberal education requirements, KSU requires students to complete two diversity courses, one with a global focus and one with a domestic focus. In order to determine which courses would be admitted to the list of KSU’s LERs, individual departments had to respond to a series of questions that corresponded to the learning goals listed above. The Center for Applied Conflict Management applied for LER status for our introductory course in 2001 and renewed that application in 2010. In doing so, we stressed the intersection between peace and conflict studies and a liberal arts education.

Both of our submissions emphasized the fact that the skills-based orientation of the course provided students with a set of unique experiences that help them to develop personally, think critically, address conflict creatively, and increase their understanding and tolerance of diversity locally and globally. The five core concepts that address these areas are embodied in understanding one’s own conflict styles, improving communication and listening, understanding and using principled negotiation skills, being introduced to and experiencing mediation processes, and studying the theory and practice of nonviolence. The course itself relies heavily upon in-class exercises and out of class practice requirements combined with a number of reflective exercises designed to integrate theory with practice and to put students on a life-long path of self-learning and self-awareness.

Impact of the KSU model

The history of the Center for Applied Conflict Management is long and varied. Beginning with its establishment in 1971 as the Center for Peaceful Change, it has been at the heart of KSU’s response to the deaths of four KSU students at the hands of the Ohio National Guard on 4 May 1970 during a protest against the US invasion of Cambodia and the presence of the National Guard on KSU’s campus. The Center started one of the earliest degree programs in the US in peace and conflict studies in 1974. Figures for the period of 1994 through the spring of 2002 (the year when our introductory course

was first offered as an option for fulfilling the University's liberal arts requirement) showed that average enrollments were 275 students per year, with 35% of those enrolled in introduction to conflict management. More significantly, since introduction to conflict management was offered as an LER in the fall of 2002, the Center's average enrollments per year rose by 334%! This translates into a 550% rise in introduction to conflict management enrollments and a 346% rise in enrollments for the rest of the curriculum over an eight-year period. As an LER, introduction to conflict management's portion of enrollments rose from 35% of the Center's yearly totals to 61% of its yearly totals. Figure 2 shows a steady upward trend beginning in 1996–1997 when one author engaged in a sustained public relations campaign to raise the profile of the Center on the KSU campus. This trend shows a further and very considerable jump in 2002–2003, when enrollments for introduction to conflict management equaled the Center's entire enrollments for the prior academic year. This was a direct outcome of our introduction to conflict management becoming an option for fulfilling KSU's liberal education requirements (LER). Since that year, this trend has shown a steady increase in the Center's enrollments, exceeding 1000 students per year in 2007–2008 and increasing the viability and visibility of the program both locally and nation-wide.

The number of course sections offered by the Center has increased following the inclusion of introduction to conflict management as an LER and the subsequent increased interest in other courses offered by the Center. The Center offered just nine course sections in the fall of 2002, including three sections of introduction to conflict management. By the fall of 2009, the number of course offerings had increased to 20, with one-half of those being introduction to conflict management sections. In

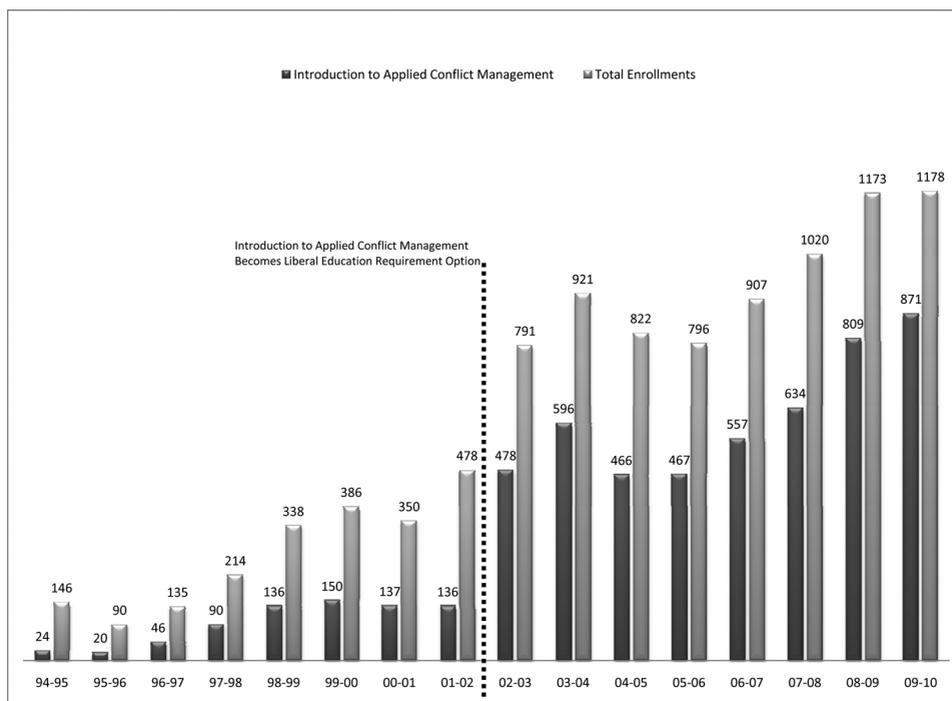


Figure 2. Center for Applied Conflict Management enrolments by academic year.

addition to increasing the number of courses and sections offered, the Center has been able to increase the diversity of courses, adding courses in transitional justice, international conflict resolution, workplace conflict resolution and environmental conflict resolution. In addition, ‘special topics’ courses in divorce mediation, dispute systems design, traumatic stress, and creativity and conflict have been offered in part because of the increased interest in our degree program thanks to having our introductory course included as an LER option. Finally, this robust enrollment growth has translated into an increase in faculty members as well. The Center now has five full-time faculty members whose primary teaching is the delivery of its degree program in applied conflict management. We also employ two–four part-time faculty, depending on the year.

The focus of the Center’s introduction to conflict management course on skills rather than just theory has also had a demonstrable impact on attracting students to the course. Surveys administered to introduction to conflict management students between 2006 and 2009 indicate that they take the course for a number of reasons. Notable among their reasons is the fact that 30% of respondents indicated that their primary reason for taking the course was the fact that it was an LER. But the most significant finding of the surveys was that 69% of students indicated at the beginning of the semester that improving their conflict management skills and abilities was their main reason for taking the course. Student feedback for the course indicates that students have a high regard for the skills that they learn in the course and, when used outside of the classroom, they report improvements in their personal and professional relationships as well as the ability to successfully negotiate in a number of arenas and, on occasion, to act as informal mediators at home, in the family, at school and in the workplace. Overall, the inclusion of our introduction to conflict management course as a core component of KSU’s liberal arts education has had benefits for both the Center and for those students – more than 850 per year – who enroll in it. This kind of impact is just the sort of goal we believe educators in peace and conflict studies are seeking when they choose to enter the field and attempt to engage with students. In what follows we describe a workshop we conducted with colleagues from other institutions in an attempt to help others achieve similar results at their institutions.

The workshop: expanding the model

As a part of the Center’s commitment to reflective practice we shared what we have learned about integrating peace and conflict studies into a liberal arts curriculum by conducting a workshop for the Third International Conference on Conflict Resolution Education, held at Cuyahoga Community College in March 2010. The organization of our workshop followed the basic outline of this article, starting with the nature of liberal arts education, moving to core concepts in peace and conflict studies, and then asking each team to take a philosophical viewpoint and design an introductory course that combines that philosophy with core liberal arts concepts in order to better ensure acceptance of the course as a liberal education requirement.

Each of the three teams put together their own conceptual map of an introductory course, with two approaching the exercise from the conflict resolution/management end of the field and the other from the peace studies end of the field. One key element that emerged was the difficulty in grappling with the division between theory-driven courses and skills-driven courses. This led to a recognition of the many difficult

choices that one encounters in introductory course design, especially defining the limits of what might be achieved. In addition, all three teams attempted to address the recent drive in higher education for students to have engagement in their local communities as a sort of hands-on application of theoretical learning. However, the main result of this was the inclusion of some form of service-learning or internship into the course design rather than an explicit focus on a skills-based approach in the classroom itself.

Feedback from our participants was positive, with one indicating that she had 'gained useful information and ideas' for her own program and several others planning to initiate discussions at their home universities in an attempt to build upon the workshop and create a course that could be integrated into their own liberal education requirements. To facilitate this process for our participants and other interested parties we suggest using our workshop with certain caveats and modifications. First, we suggest beginning with a core of interested and associated faculty, presumably those who would be responsible for teaching such a course, but not only them. At universities with small peace and conflict studies programs one might find that the introductory courses are taught by only one or two individuals; whereas we have found that it was beneficial to have all of our faculty teach the course on a regular basis – we currently have nine Center faculty members teaching the course, including graduate students and affiliated faculty at our regional KSU campuses. Therefore we would suggest that a wider group of faculty be consulted in order to garner multiple perspectives and most especially to create 'ownership' that will increase the chance that the course will gain acceptance as a liberal education requirement option. Including a wider group of faculty members may also create a pool of possible teaching faculty for when demand begins to increase. Additionally, depending on the administrative structure of the university where the program is housed, it might be beneficial to invite guidance counselors or other interested administrators to better integrate the course with university requirements and to make the new course known to those who are assisting incoming students with course choice. Finally, if the group is seriously thinking about incorporating a service-learning component to the course or curriculum, it might be useful to invite someone from one of the organizations that students might serve or intern with to ensure that the skills taught are a good match for the needs of local organizations.

We feel that the workshop itself can best be run just as we did with an initial focus on liberal education, then peace and conflict studies and finally the intersection of the two as illuminated by the university's specific requirements for liberal education courses. Regardless of whether the group decides to redesign an existing course or design a new course from the bottom-up, there are a few lessons from our workshop that one might want to keep in mind. The first is that our workshop highlighted the significant difference between conceptualizing an introductory course as primarily a gateway to a degree or certificate program as opposed to designing a course that primarily serves the larger university community. One of the realities, indeed one of the goals, of integrating an introductory course into the general education structures of a university is that with rising enrollments a smaller overall percentage of introductory course students will continue to take other courses in the program. What this means is that in order to make the course satisfying and useful for those students who choose not to go on, one needs to be aware of the balance between tantalizing students with deeper knowledge and overwhelming them with concepts and tactics that they can learn 'later' in other courses. In other words, the

introductory course should be useful to students in and of itself as well as providing a ‘tantalizing gateway’ to more knowledge and skills to those interested in pursuing them.

The second lesson, drawn from the key element above, is the necessity to find an appropriate balance between skills-driven and theory-driven components of an introductory course. This balance will depend, in part, on the nature of the institution as well as upon the student body. At our large, public sector university we have found the skills-based focus of our introduction to applied conflict management course immensely popular with our students. Perhaps a similar course at a small liberal arts college would have more theoretical than skills-focused content. As with the overall design of the course, the key to this lesson is to provide a balance of theory and skills that students will find useful in the immediate short term as well as for their long-term growth and development.

Conclusion

The Center’s experience of mainstreaming our introduction to applied conflict management course into KSU’s Liberal Education Requirements has a number of useful lessons both philosophically and pedagogically. Aside from the necessity to draw in new students in the increasingly business-oriented atmosphere of higher education, the expansion of peace and conflict studies outside of its own boundaries is important to the philosophy behind both peace studies and conflict resolution. Both approaches have presented themselves as ‘alternatives’ to dominant ways of thinking about being and interacting in the world. As such, peace and conflict studies has often been at a disadvantage when compared to ‘traditional’ disciplines such as economics, politics or philosophy. But there is no inherent reason that this need be so. As posited by Kuhn (1996), one of the main differences between ‘new’ and ‘set’ science is the extent to which that science is seen as accepted by larger communities. We argue the key to this acceptance is awareness by these communities of the philosophies behind and the skills used in peace and conflict studies. Additionally, one goal of the conflict and alternative dispute resolution communities has been the widespread dissemination of these techniques and their use throughout the social sphere. If we are to create societies based on Galtung’s (1969) positive peace and that address Burton’s (1997) human needs, then one sure step towards that goal is to expand peace and conflict studies into the mainstream of academia through the inclusion of more courses as a part of liberal education requirements.

As we have shown, the expansion of peace and conflict studies into the mainstream of academia is not just good for these programs or for creating better societies based on their philosophies, but also provides a new avenue by which the traditional goals of liberal education can be transmitted to new generations of students. This transmission strengthens the traditional goals of liberal education and provides a bulwark against the increasing commercialization of education, where education becomes more of a product with the end goal of a job rather than a process with an end goal of an educated citizen ready to fully participate in his or her community, society and country. The strong connections between liberal arts and peace and conflict studies allows educators in peace and conflict studies to impart the values put forth by the founders of liberal arts in a manner that speaks to the current generation and gives them both skills for today and abilities for the future.

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Note

1. For a particularly accessible overview of the liberal arts, see the American Association of Colleges and Universities website tab entitled, 'What is liberal education?' We found it quite useful and have relied on it in preparing this review, see: http://www.aacu.org/leap/What_is_liberal_education.cfm

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