

# SPCS Newsletter: Issue #1:

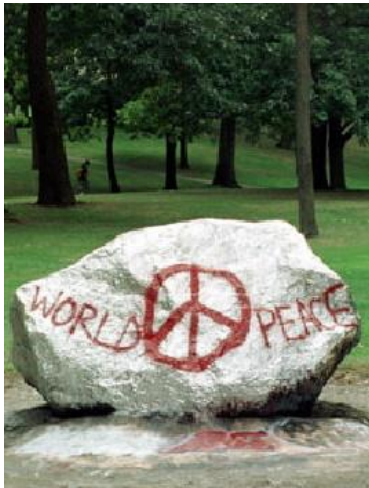


SCHOOL OF PEACE &  
CONFLICT STUDIES  
KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

## April 2022



**Welcome to this first issue** of what will be a regular Newsletter from the School of Peace and Conflict Studies (SPCS). Our aim is to use this to allow students, alumni, and our community of supporters to keep up to date with the work of SPCS as it relates to teaching, research, and the practice of peace. We also hope it will spur current and former students to provide us with updates on your progress, and to provide feedback on how we can better improve on the work we do and deliver on our mission to: “empower people with the knowledge, skills and awareness to prevent, resolve, and transform conflict; and to build more just and sustainable peaceful communities and societies at local, national, and international levels.”



Our launch of the newsletter is timely for several reasons. First, it not only follows the 50th anniversary of our creation in 1971 as the Center for Peaceful Change but presages the forthcoming 50th anniversary of our original degree program, established in 1973. Second, it follows a recent period of growth as the newly renamed School of Peace and Conflict Studies. This has seen us welcome several new faculty members into SPCS, including Tatsushi Arai, Molly Merryman, Ashley Nickels, and, most recently, Elaine Hsiao, who is profiled in more detail in this newsletter. We also plan to recruit a further faculty member in the near term. Third, it follows a period in which we have organized several high-profile events featuring a mix of academics, activists, and practitioners (see below for some of the more notable examples).

Fourth, as illustrated in this newsletter, the range of practical work undertaken by faculty in the school is now really quite remarkable, spanning everything from local initiatives to international work on peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and disarmament. This reflects a distinctive feature of the School of Peace and Conflict Studies, which is that faculty not only contribute to theorizing about peace but are constantly engaged in varied forms of practical peace-work designed to promote peaceful change in the world. I look forward to your feedback on this first newsletter, your new information for subsequent issues, and your continued support for the School of Peace and Conflict Studies.

-Professor Neil Cooper, Director, School of Peace and Conflict Studies

***Institutional background:*** The School of Peace and Conflict Studies (SPCS) evolved from the Center for Peaceful Change, which was established in 1971 as a living memorial to the students killed by the Ohio National Guard during a student protest against the Vietnam War. One way in which we endeavor to realize our goals is through our long-standing work in the fields of mediation and conflict resolution, including in the innovative field of ‘public mediative practice’.

## Introducing New Faculty Member

**Elaine Hsiao:** Elaine (Lan Yin) Hsiao is an Assistant Professor in the School of Peace and Conflict Studies with a focus in environmental peacebuilding and international development. She is a critical socio-legal scholar and political ecologist, integrating peace and conflict studies with transboundary conservation and protected areas, Indigenous and community governance, human rights and rights of nature, and development alternatives. Much of her work seeks to address conflicts in conservation (e.g., human-protected area conflicts, human-wildlife conflicts), conservation in places of conflict (i.e., conflict-sensitive and conflict-resilient conservation), and conflict resolution through conservation (environmental peacebuilding).



# Dr. Johanna Solomon Teaches at the Kent State American Academy in Brazil

During fall semester 2021, Assistant Professor Johanna Solomon traveled to Curitiba Brazil to teach at the American Academy at PUCPR. The School of Peace and Conflict Studies teaches two courses, Introduction to Conflict Management and Negotiation, within this innovative program- the first Liberal Arts Curriculum in Brazil. The program jointly enrolls students at Kent State and PUCPR, welcoming many students to Ohio to finish their bachelor's degrees.

*Dr. Johanna Solomon, middle*



## Selected Examples of Local, National, and International SPCS Projects

**Campus Projects 2017/2018:** Facilitated dialogue among faculty/staff to address tensions within KSU units.

**North Hill Listening Project: 2018**

Public dialogue project involving up to 60 community members

**Akron-Jewish Muslim Dialogue: 2019-Present**

Conversations with up to 200 community members every month

**Mapping May 4<sup>th</sup> Project: 2019-Present**

Digital and physical exhibits mapping stories of the events around May 4, 1970

**Race and Democracy in Ohio Project: 2021**

Part of a series that will include a 10-episode podcast series focused specifically on the intersections of race and democracy in northeast Ohio, community workshops on the topic of race and democracy, online curricular materials (activities, toolkit, concept pages), Blog posts, and a white paper.

**The Growing Democracy Project: 2019-Present**

Bringing together communities for civic engagement and providing online resources and a weekly podcast

**Strait Talk: 2005-Present**

23 dialogues thus far between delegates from China, Taiwan, and the United States

**Mediation for Peace Certificate Program: 2019-Present**

Provides training in mediation and negotiation for diplomats

**Queer Pandemic Project: 2020-Present**

Exploration of how queer communities have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic

**Building Essential Skills in Conflict Analysis and Resolution, Singapore: 2020**

Two-day workshop in Singapore for senior Singaporean ministers and representatives

**Theorizing Disarmament Project: 2021-Present**

Remote workshops to discuss global disarmament with policy experts and academics

**Inclusive Conservation in the Eastern Serengeti: 2021-Present**

Co-Developing a mobile app to address human-wildlife and conservation conflicts by and for Massai communities



## Selected Examples of Recent SPCS Events



## Mapping May 4 Project

Dr. Sara Koopman recently launched the Mapping May 4th app, which she created with Dr. Jennifer Mapes, in the Geography department. It takes stories from the oral histories that describe memories tied to particular places across both town and campus from the days of May 1st through May 4th, 1970. It serves as a dialogic digital memorial, both honoring the events and opening an online space for dialogue and reconciliation. Please join the conversation by adding a comment or a photo after any site or story on the map. New photos (to compare to the old photos on the site) are warmly welcomed! Feedback using the "Take the Survey" button on the site would also be appreciated support for this project. Visit <https://mappingmay4.kent.edu/> for more information.

## New SPCS Secretary Dina Rathburn

My name is Dina Rathburn and I am thrilled to be joining Kent State University as the Administrative Secretary for the School of Peace and Conflict Studies. Throughout my educational and professional career, no matter the discipline, I have always been a passionate and voracious learner. I have a deep respect for traditional universities as a place of active learning and a point of access to knowledge and research in an ever-expanding global community. I am from northeast Ohio, but have lived in Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Florida, and Colorado, gathering experiences and making connections wherever I've roamed. Luckily, my partner of sixteen years, Wyatt, has been an enthusiastic and supportive adventurer. While my formal educational background is in Political Science and Psychology, I have spent a majority of my career working in Dermatologic Surgery. The past four years, I assisted my father in running our family's trade school as the School Administrator and subsequently, Director of Admissions and Marketing. I love the student interaction and look forward to building new relationships with both faculty and students in SPCS. I am particularly excited to be joining SPCS after reading the biographies and incredibly diverse interest areas of the faculty. I look forward to growing in the department and becoming an integral part of the growth of the department itself.



# PeaceJam Conference



In spring 2021, SPCS hosted a virtual PeaceJam Conference. PeaceJam focuses on organizing events inspired by Nobel laureate winners, connecting Nobel Peace Prize Winners with local communities. SPCS is honored to have connected with an organization that has been nominated 9 times for the Nobel Peace prize. Our students decided to design a virtual conference between our local schools and Nobel Peace Prize Winner Rigoberta Menchú focused on solidarity. Through this process our students became mentors, utilizing Rigoberta Menchú's story and message as inspiration to support our local high schools. In addition, we were fortunate to host Rigoberta Menchú as keynote speaker due to the great efforts of our translators, including our own Professor Sara Koopman. We are proud to say our conference was a great success with participants gaining unparalleled access to a Nobel Laureate, and a once in lifetime experience in the midst of a pandemic.

*Nobel Peace Prize Winner, Rigoberta Menchú*

## Professor Landon Hancock's Work at the UN

Dr. Landon Hancock is a current recipient of an International Affairs Fellowship from the Council on Foreign Relations, one of the oldest and best-known think tanks focusing on international relations. For this fellowship he is serving as Local Peacebuilding Advisor to the UN Secretary General's Peacebuilding Fund at the United Nations, where he is a member of the PBF's Design, Monitoring, & Evaluation Team. His main project there is to develop what is known as Community-Based Monitoring & Evaluation (CBM&E). This is now a formalized method that includes the voices of beneficiary communities in the evaluation processes for UN PBF-funded projects. He is currently in the process of developing a practice note designed to assist UN and partner staff to select from a range of options to operationalize CBM&E in several pilot settings over the next 3 to 5 years.

In addition, he has assisted the PBF staff with two of their current thematic reviews, one on Gender and Peacebuilding and one on Youth and Local Peacebuilding. He also provided training for local researchers working on this project.

In October 2021 he travelled to New York City and spent a week working at UN Headquarters, giving several talks to UN staff, including an introduction to CBM&E, a more in-depth discussion with the Fund's program officers, and a well-attended presentation of his own research on zones of peace and peacebuilding.



*Dr. Landon Hancock*



# The Strait Talk Project

Strait Talk is a youth-led trilateral (US, Taiwan, Hong Kong) and bicoastal (Berkeley, Providence, Washington DC) dialogue movement for peacemaking across the Taiwan Strait. Since 2005, SPCS faculty member Dr. Tatsushi Arai has led over twenty weeklong Interactive Conflict Resolution (ICR) dialogues between civil society delegates from both sides of the Taiwan Strait and the United States while mentoring Chinese, Taiwanese, and international facilitators who can now lead ICR dialogues on their own. Many of the 900 plus Strait Talk alumni remain connected through their alumni network. They play active roles in government, diplomacy, civil society, academia, business, media, and other realms of cross-Strait exchange. The Strait Talk dialogues and public outreach activities have generated a number of research publications.



*Inaugural 2005 Strait Talk workshop, Providence, Rhode Island*

## Panels on Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

SPCS faculty have been guest speakers and chairs for several panels and seminars examining the issues raised by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. To date this has included two panels convened by the College of Arts & Sciences at Kent State, one in conjunction with the University of Akron and a further panel at Lancaster University in the UK. Molly Merryman spoke about Gender identity in the conflict and Neil Cooper moderated the panel. Dr. Cooper also gave a presentation at a further panel on March 9<sup>th</sup>, at which he discussed the debate over the Ukraine war leading to world war three and reviewed the data on the consequences of nuclear war. Dr. Cooper also took part in a panel discussion on Ukraine at the University of Lancaster UK.



*Dr. Molly Merryman, middle left table;  
Dr. Neil Cooper, right of right table*

# Dr. Molly Merryman Grant from US Embassy in London

2022: Molly Merryman has received funding from the US Embassy in London to support a traveling exhibition and lecture series celebrating the launch of the Queer Britain National LGBTQ Museum. The exhibition will tour England, Northern Ireland, and Wales, and features video-based oral histories from the Queer Pandemic oral history project that explores experiences of LGBTQ+ people living in the time of COVID. Her project is titled “Resilience During the Pandemic: LGBTQ+ Stories.”



## SPCS Visiting Scholar Jack Shephard



SPCS Visiting Scholar, Jack Shepherd is a researcher from the European Tourism Research Institute at Mid Sweden University, Östersund, Sweden, and a Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Wakayama, Japan. Jack’s research bridges insights from both tourism and peace studies in order to explore the relationship between tourism and peacebuilding. In particular, Jack states: “my research has focused on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and has looked at a variety of different initiatives that are tackling the conflict in their own ways. This journey has taken me from places that seek to expose the grimmest elements of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, such as the Israeli separation wall, which is the subject of British street artist Banksy’s popular Walled Off Hotel, to places that seek to rise above the conflict entirely and promote visions of cross-cultural unity, such as the trans-Middle East Abraham Path”. Jack will be based in SPCS over the coming months as he explores aspects of his research with SPCS faculty member Sara Koopman.

## May 4 Scholarships

The May 4th Legacy Scholarship Program was established by Kent State University in 2020. This program provides four scholarships to be given to students majoring in our Peace and Conflict Studies program. Each scholarship bears the name of one of the students killed (Allison Krause, Jeffrey Miller, Sandra Scheuer, and William Schroeder) to serve as a lasting testament to their lives and presence at Kent State.

Visit [Kent.edu/spcs/2022-may-4th-legacy-scholarships-and-how-apply](https://kent.edu/spcs/2022-may-4th-legacy-scholarships-and-how-apply) for more information.

If you wish to contribute to the scholarship, visit <https://www.kent.edu/may4kentstate50/may-4-legacy-scholarships> or contact Neil Cooper at [Cooper@kent.edu](mailto:Cooper@kent.edu).

**To students and alumni: If you have notable achievements, awards, or just recollections from your time as a student, contact [drathbur@kent.edu](mailto:drathbur@kent.edu) to be included in the newsletter!**

## Recent Awards and Grants

2020: Jacqueline Bleak: College of Arts and Sciences Distinguished Teacher Award.

2021: Landon Hancock: Received a Fulbright Specialist Program award to complete a project at Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Colombia.

2021: Landon Hancock: Awarded International Affairs Fellowship from the Council on Foreign Relations. Professor Hancock will undertake research on the role of accountability in peacebuilding, including issues of legitimacy and local ownership. For the 2021-22 year, he will serve as a Local Peacebuilding Advisor to the United Nation's Peacebuilding Support Office where he will assist the Design, Monitoring and Evaluation Team of the Financing for the PBSO's Financing for Peacebuilding branch.

2021: Ashley Nickels: Awarded a prestigious Democracy Visiting Fellowship from the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation in the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Dr. Nickels will be in residence at Harvard University for the 2021/22 academic year, working on her collaborative, multi-site research project, "Local Democracy and Community Development Systems".

2020: Ashley Nickels: Awarded the American Political Science Association (APSA) Robert A. Dahl Award for her book, *Power, Participation, and Protest in Flint, Michigan: Unpacking the Policy Paradox of Municipal Takeovers*. This book exemplifies the model of Dahl's inquiry into local politics to illuminate how democracy does or does not function to serve its citizens.

2020: Ashley Nickels: Received an 'honorable mention' from APSA's Dennis Judd Best Book Award for her book, *Power, Participation, and Protest in Flint, Michigan: Unpacking the Policy Paradox of Municipal Takeovers*.

2021: Sara Koopman: College of Arts and Sciences Restart Grant to undertake research on: *Solidarity Stories: international companions blogging for peace in Colombia: International protective accompaniment (sometimes called unarmed civilian protection) is a grassroots alternative security tactic used around the world where internationals serve as 'unarmed bodyguards' to peace activists under threat. In a conflict zone certain outsiders are less likely to be attacked than others. This research contributes both to the understanding of how this protection works and is a digital humanities project that makes some of the work of companions publicly accessible through a digital archive created of 385 blog posts by companions with the organization Fellowship of Reconciliation, Peace Presence in Colombia.*

2020: Sara Koopman: May 4th Mapping Project: \$20,000 from Kent State commemoration funds for Mapping May 4, with co-PI. Key output is a web app that draws from the oral histories in the May 4th Collection of Kent State Special Collections and Archives. This maps accounts from those histories that describe memories of events at a particular place in Kent between May 1st and May 5th, 1970. The web app serves as a digital memorial, to remember and honor these events and as a space for dialogue and reconciliation on the history of May 4th. See: <https://mappingmay4.kent.edu/>.



# Selected List of Recent Publications

- Allen, Susan H., **Landon E. Hancock**, C. R. Mitchell, and Mouly Cécile. *Confronting Peace: Local Peacebuilding in Wake of a National Peace Agreement*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2022.
- Arai, Tatsushi.** Conflict resolution and historical reconciliation in East Asia: Lessons from China-Taiwan civil society dialogues. *Development in reconciliation studies: Memories, emotions, and values – Series for the development in reconciliation studies 1: Principles and methods*. Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, Tokyo, 2021, 196-243.
- Hancock, L.** (2021). *Resilient Communities: Non-Violence and Civilian Agency in Communal War*. By Jana Krause. Cambridge University Press, 2018. *Perspectives on Politics*, 19(3), 1040-1042. doi:10.1017/S1537592721001390
- Koopman, Sara.** "Mona, Mona, Mona! Tropicality and the Imaginative Geographies of Whiteness in Colombia." *Journal of Latin American Geography*, vol. 20 no. 1, 2021, p. 49-78. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/lag.2021.0002.
- Koopman, Sara**, et al. "Critical Geopolitics/Critical Geopolitics 25 Years On." *Political Geography*, vol. 90, 2021, p. 102421., <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2021.102421>.
- Koopman, Sara.** "Building an Inclusive Peace Is an Uneven Socio-Spatial Process: Colombia's Differential Approach." *Political Geography*, vol. 83, 2020, p. 102252., <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2020.102252>.
- Koopman, Sara**, and **Laine Seliga.** "Teaching Peace by Using Nonviolent Communication for Difficult Conversations in the College Classroom." *Peace and Conflict Studies*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.46743/1082-7307/2021.1692>.
- Matthew, R., **Hsiao, E.**, Le Billon, P., & Saintz, G. (2022). 'Species on the move: Environmental change, displacement and conservation'. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2021.1999200>
- Neil Cooper**, 'Humanitarian Disarmament II: Case Studies' in in Gëzim Visoka and Oliver Richmond (eds), *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Peace and Conflict Studies*. First online 21 Jan 2022. Available at: [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-11795-5\\_200-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-11795-5_200-1)
- Neil Cooper**, 'Humanitarian Disarmament and the Era of Disarmament Without Disarmament' in Gëzim Visoka and Oliver Richmond (eds), *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Peace and Conflict Studies*. First Online: 07 October 2021. Available at: [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-11795-5\\_58-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-11795-5_58-1)
- Neil Cooper**, 'Race, Sovereignty and Free Trade: Arms Trade Regulation and Humanitarian Arms Control in the Age of Empire', *Journal of Global Security Studies*, 3:4: 444-462, 2018: <https://doi.org/10.1093/jogss/ogy013>
- Solomon, Johanna.** Editor. July 6th, 2021. *Four Dead in Ohio: The Global Legacy of Youth Activism and State Repression*. *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*. Emerald Publishing. ISBN-13: 978-1800718081
- Solomon, J.**, Kaplan, D., & **Hancock, L.** (2019). "Ethno-Nationalist Views Amongst Blue Lives Matters Supporters." *Geopolitics*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2019.1642876>