Incorporating **Peace Literacy into an introductory college course in Philosophy, Ethics, or Political Theory**

Lesson Plan prepared by Sharyn Clough, 2017
Oregon State University

For more biographical info visit http://www.peaceliteracy.org/about

*Works best in a 90 minute session*

**Goals:**

- Encourage students to take a more critically engaged approach to citizenship.
- Help students recognize that virtues, such as phronesis (practical wisdom) and peace, are skills that require practice, literacy.

**Outline:**

- Taking a more critically engaged approach to our citizenship involves peace literacy.
- Peace literacy requires reflection and practice, it is a skill, like reading.
- There are a number of ways to be critically engaged as citizens.
  - One is to become more involved in direct actions in the community – such as protests, or sit-ins, or marches.
  - And inevitably if we engage in any of these activities we’re going to need to be literate in peace, in particular we’re going to need to know what our limits are, especially around violence.
  - We are going to do an exercise that gets us to reflect on what counts as violence or not.
  - Then we’re going to do an exercise that gets us to practice a non-violent activity.

**Texts/Materials:**

  and Ch. 6 from *The Art of Waging Peace*, Prospecta Press, 2013
Discuss Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*

Virtue is a skill that develops throughout life. Seeing virtue as a skill implies that we must work hard to master it. For example, we can learn to become generous in the same way that we can learn to play the piano or become an athlete. Virtues are skills that must be actively maintained, rather than passively habituated.

**Identify her thesis**
- Ch. 2, p. 14
- Ch. 3, p. 16

**Note about her method**
- She has a particular account of ethics that attends to both descriptive features of practical action and normative features guiding action.
- She wants to use the concept of “virtue” to name this account.
- We use the word “virtue” to mean all kinds of things, so she has to help us train ourselves to think about the concept of “virtue” in a very particular way, following Aristotle and the ancient Greeks.
- She appeals to the evidence of our experience to argue that we already employ the concept of virtue in this way, and that when we don’t employ it this way, we are being inconsistent or sloppy in our thinking.

**Questions/Vocabulary?**
- Articulacy p. 20
- Phronesis p. 30

Discuss Chappell, *Why the World Needs Peace Literacy*

**Identify his thesis**
- p. 4 (put in the form of a question) then answered explicitly in the last sentence on p. 8.

**Note about his method**
- Chappell wants to give an account of the necessity of peace for learning how to be human.
- He wants to use the concept of “literacy” for this account.
- We use the word “literacy” to mean all kinds of things, he has to help us train ourselves to think about the concept of “literacy,” in a different way.
- He appeals to the evidence of our experience to argue that when we think of peace in terms of literacy, peace makes more sense.
- When we don’t employ it this way, we are being inconsistent or sloppy in our thinking (e.g., when we don’t think about peace as literacy then we just assume we can be peaceful without learning how).
Questions/Vocabulary?

Discuss:

*What is the relation between Annas’s account of virtue and Chappell’s account of peace literacy?*

**Quote from Chappell:**

“The military has really excellent training in waging war, but most activists have no training in waging peace, and I realized that activists need to be as well trained in waging peace as soldiers are in waging war. Violinists, martial artists, and filmmakers all realize they need some sort of training to be effective, but activism is the only art form where people think they can just show up to a protest and not have any training and write something on a sign and think they’re going to be effective. And I think we have to change the paradigm of activism toward recognizing that it is an extremely difficult art form. Your job is to transform how people think about the most controversial issues in the world, and you’re trying to transform how people think when people might potentially kill you over these issues. It requires very detailed training.”

— Paul K. Chappell, in an interview in *Guernica Magazine*

**Break/prep room for exercises**

- Clear desks to sides of the room
- Tape up signs on each of the four walls designating two axes:
  - violent/not violent
  - justified/not justified

**Exercise 1: Reflecting on violence**


Divide the room into four quadrants. Along one axis, violent/not violent; along the other justified/not justified. Listen to three scenarios (as below). After each one, stand in a quadrant that best represents your views on whether the scenario illustrates an action that is violent or not; an action that is justified, or not.
For now, this is not about defending our positions; the point is to reflect on them.

Begin with a deep slow breath, in and out through the nose.

Plant feet.

**Listen:**

1. The police in your neighborhood have once again shot and killed an unarmed black teenage boy. You join in a protest outside the police station and you get in a heated argument with a very angry counter-protestor. He steps toward you as if to hit you, you push him away from you.
   - Move to the quadrant that best fits your position.
   - If you thought any of the scenarios involved violence, and that the violence was justified, now ask yourself the further question:
     - Does the justified violence involve simply reacting or responding? Does the justified violence lead to further justice or injustice?
     - Does it solve the problem in the long-term or merely offer a short–term solution?
     - Does it make things better or worse?
     - Given these considerations, is the violent act, even if justified, prudent?
     - Why or why not?

2. The protest lasts into the night and a message is sent to the police chief demanding that they address your group. The police chief refuses. After five hours of waiting, chanting, and comforting your distraught colleagues, you pick up a garbage can and throw it into the window of the police station, breaking the window.
   - Move to the quadrant that best fits your position.
   - If you thought any of the scenarios involved violence, and that the violence was justified, now ask yourself the further question:
     - Does the justified violence involve simply reacting or responding? Does the justified violence lead to further justice or injustice?
     - Does it solve the problem in the long-term or merely offer a short–term solution?
     - Does it make things better or worse?
     - Given these considerations, is the violent act, even if justified, prudent?
     - Why or why not?
3. On the way home from the long night of protesting you stop at McDonalds to purchase and eat an Egg McMuffin that contains bacon from a pig raised in what you suspect is a factory farm, and packed at what you suspect is a processing plant that exploits cheap immigrant labor.

- Move to the quadrant that best fits your position.
- If you thought any of the scenarios involved violence, and that the violence was justified, now ask yourself the further question:
  o Does the justified violence involve simply reacting or responding? Does the justified violence lead to further justice or injustice?
  o Does it solve the problem in the long-term or merely offer a short-term solution?
  o Does it make things better or worse?
  o Given these considerations, is the violent act, even if justified, prudent?
  o Why or why not?

**Exercise 2: Practicing non-violence**

Focusing on whichever of the issues above generated the most polarization

- Form a line along the violence/ non-violence continuum only
- Join hands, and double back until everyone is facing someone from the other end of the continuum.
- We’re now going to practice a non-controversially non-violent act, specifically, *listening respectfully*.
- This sounds easy and straightforward but in fact we all need practice at it.
- Choose which partner will speak first about their view/rationale
- The first partner speaks for ONE MINUTE, the other partner DOES NOT SPEAK, BUT LISTENS CAREFULLY, then for ONE MINUTE the partner repeats what they heard, then for ONE MINUTE they both clarify any points that were missed.
- Now switch.

**Debrief**

**For more info visit:**

http://paulkhappell.com/