

University of St. La Salle – Bacolod City
Graduate School
and
Pax Christi Pilipinas
Niall O’Brien Center for Active Nonviolence, Reconciliation and Community Futures



**MASTER OF ARTS IN CONFLICT AND
RECONCILIATION STUDIES
MA-CRS**

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Cover Image “Reconciliation of the Testaments” by Rodesa Jayawon

1) INTRODUCTION

Conflict is often perceived as something negative, something better to avoid – until increasing anger and dissatisfaction lead into violent confrontations. But, conflict need not be destructive. As an indicator for changes in needs, conflict can guide us to improve our mindset, make our management more efficient and build or re-build our relationships. Conflict is a motor for development – we just need to know how to use it!

The postgraduate program “Master of Arts in Conflict and Reconciliation Studies” faces the challenges of conflict through a transdisciplinary approach. The course examines how we can act constructively to move beyond cycles of violent conflict, discusses the possibilities and dilemmas of the concept of conflict resolution, and turns our attention to the potentials of reconciliation.

At the end of the program, students will be able to explain the dimensions of conflict and reconciliation and use methods and tools of conflict intervention and transformation. They will be able to transfer and apply knowledge and skills to related fields of work like political, social, environmental, and also health sciences and economics.

Being conflict managers, graduates will be specialists, advocates and multipliers of peace work. They will play an important role in creating a more peaceful society in Negros and the Philippines through nonviolent empowerment of people against injustice. They can serve as architects of crisis prevention measures and as skilled mediators in conflict.

2) ORIGIN OF THE PROGRAM

In May 2004, the Philippine section of the international peace movement Pax Christi opened the Niall O’Brien Center for Active Nonviolence, Reconciliation and Community Futures in Bacolod City. Following the vision of Pax Christi Pilipinas:

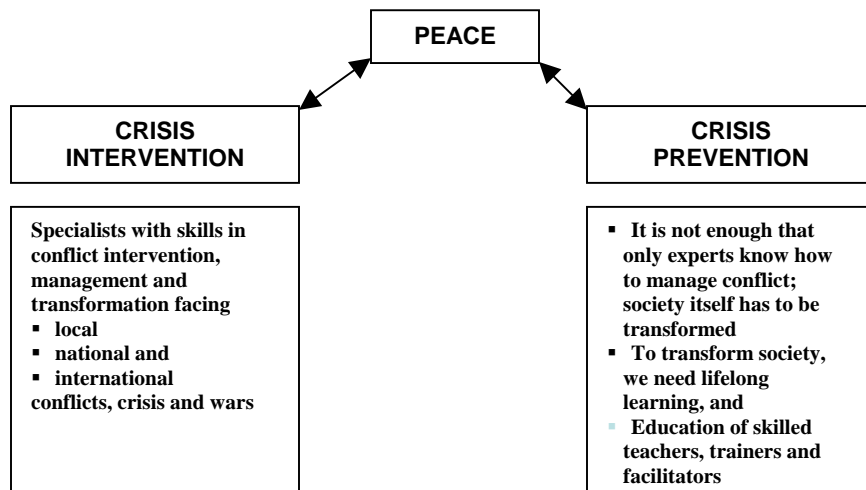
A proactive, nonviolent, responsive, and creative life affirming
movement that reconciles and nurtures relationships and communities
(General Assembly 2004)

in short:

A REVOLUTION FOR RECONCILIATION,

the peace center started to design projects and programs responding to conflicts (conflict management) in Negros and the Philippines.

Being aware of the importance of measures of crisis prevention for a sustainable and just peace, an additional framework of goals, tasks and programs was developed in 2005. The outcome of this process is a holistic approach for lifelong learning on peace building and reconciliation strategies towards the transformation of society.



Picture: Sectors of peace work, Niall O'Brien Center

For both sectors, “crisis intervention” and “crisis prevention”, well-educated and skilled experts on all professional levels are needed. The idea of an academic program was born.

In February 2005 Pax Christi introduced this vision of a postgraduate program on “Peace Sciences” to Br. ‘Gus’ Boquer, FSC, president of the University of St. La Salle. The seed fell on fertile soil...

In May 2005 – after only four months of fruitful cooperation – the first nineteen students enrolled in the first batch of the “Master of Arts in Conflict and Reconciliation Studies”.

3) A MASTER OF ARTS ON CONFLICT AND RECONCILIATION

Conflict is the root of all peace studies. It is a challenge to monitor, analyze and evaluate its causes, processes, progressions, and characteristics in all its dimensions – practical, theoretical, and spiritual. Before we can think of solutions we need to draw a picture of its origin, appearance, and possible developments. This fact-finding mission will never be finished nor completed; its strategies and methods are always in need of improvement and adjustment. Therefore, the study program imparts knowledge and skills for a comprehensive analysis, and a sensitive and constructive management of conflict and its parties involved.

After the civil wars in the Balkans and in Rwanda in the early 1990s peace researchers and practitioners started to reconsider measures of conflict resolution. Even in the Philippines – after about 40 years of violent conflict – conflict resolution alone doesn’t seem to be appropriate any more. Conflict resolution gives the impression that a given conflict could be resolved but this is a wrong notion. No conflict can be completely and fully “resolved”.

An ancient religious but in peace studies relatively new approach might be the concept of reconciliation, the building and rebuilding of relationship. Close to the Philippine reality of a family oriented and community-based culture, reconciliation strategies could take an important role in the process of conflict transformation. Therefore, the study program sets a focus on discovering opportunities and obstacles of reconciliation as a useful strategy for restoring a just peace.

Even if conflict studies follow a scientific approach, the first priority in the Masters program is not given to a scientific procurement. Practical conflict work is foremost in need of creativity and flexibility; it is always more of an ART than a science. Giving graduates of the program the academic title “Master of Arts” should always remind them that the goal of conflict transformation is only achievable through creative cooperation of all people and parties involved.

4) CONTENTS AND METHODS

CURRICULUM

The postgraduate program consists of three basic, seven major courses and several electives.

The three basic courses cover introductions to “Methods of Research” (with special focus on the challenges of online studies), “Statistical Methods”, as well as “Foundations, Issues and Trends of Peace Sciences”.

In the group of major courses, other disciplines join for dialogue: history, communication sciences, religious studies, philosophy, education, psychology, business and development management, and law. This transdisciplinary approach shall maximize the capacities for peace processes and research.

Finally the electives are experience-based trainings and workshops that establish a connection to the grassroots level and are as such a strong linkage to life in current conflicts and human-made disasters in the Philippines. To ensure maximum diversity and exchange in the trainings with people from different professional backgrounds, not more than one third of participants should be students of the MA program.

AIKIDO

Aikido is a Japanese martial art, founded by Morihei Ueshiba (1883-1969) during World War I and II – one of the darkest periods of human history. The Way (*Do*) of harmonizing (*Ai*) with universal energies (*Ki*) is indeed not a combatant sport or pure self-defense. It is based on a complex philosophy, follows the highest standards of ethics and etiquette of all martial arts, and unexceptionally uses methods of active nonviolence.

Aikido is an extensively drafted Asian approach of dealing nonviolently with conflict that was developed independently from Western models and out of a different tradition. The comparison of both approaches opens the opportunity for dialogue and mutual fertilization.

In addition, *Aikido* as a martial art offers a holistic concept of peaceful behavior that can be physically tested and experienced.

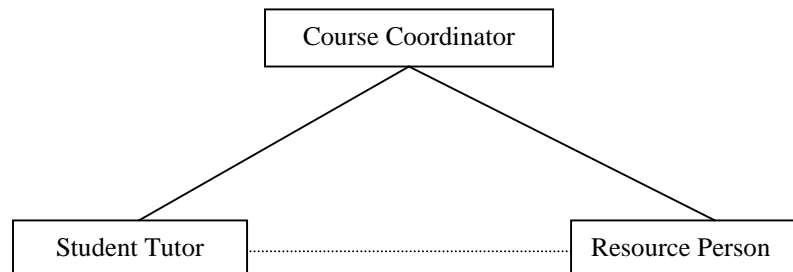
Students have the chance to understand the approach of *Aikido* as a cross cutting subject through various lectures and physical practice. Up to a quarter of the whole study program is related to its concept and methods. No other university worldwide offers such a strong connection with *Aikido* on a postgraduate level.

ONLINE AND FACE-TO-FACE-STUDIES

More than two thirds of the postgraduate program takes place in the Internet. Students usually have to master three weeks’ online studies with their coordinating professor until they have the chance to meet, share and discuss face-to-face for one weekend with their professors or resource speakers on their subject. This structure was created:

- to allow postgraduate students – usually fulltime-professionals – to schedule their study themselves,
- to maximize the face-to-face training units with a teacher through previous knowledge and appropriate preparation
- to introduce students to the “new medium” of the world wide web, its online research structures and resources (usually far bigger than average libraries) and communication opportunities.

In other words, the online course puts maximum freedom but also responsibility on students’ shoulders to achieve their study and research goals. The professors gain more time for their own research projects or for nurturing the individual academic development of their students.



Course Coordinator (e.g. professor for peace psychology)

The coordinator is in charge of a subject. He/she provides study materials for the students and gives a certain task (like questions to the study materials and research) before a study week starts. At the end of the study week, he/she views the short student assignments, answers or collects the questions of students, gives hints for further research and other remarks on students’ studies.

Resource Person/Expert (e.g. specialist in trauma work)

At the end of the three weeks’ online-study, we invite an expert who shares his/her insights about his/her subject or expertise with the students. The expert will be informed about the study process of the students (what material they studied, what kind of questions they came up with, what they want to know more about) and facilitates a weekend course.

Student Tutor (student with theoretical or practical background in psychology)

The student tutor is a participant of the study program but already is an expert on the field of his or her tutorial (either by profession or previous studies). The student tutor ensures that all students submit their assignment on time. As an “internal resource speaker”, he/she can also be consulted for assistance.

THE PIONEER CLASS

The first batch of the MA in Conflict and Reconciliation Studies is a “professors only class”. The nineteen participants are all either faculty of colleges and universities or professionals with certain conflict work related expertise.

Specialists from different domestic or foreign universities and peace institutes teach them on the foundations, issues and trends of their subjects.

Beginning school year 2006/07, many of the participants will “take over” from their national or international professors. As professors they will be continuously in charge of improving the curriculum closer to people’s needs and the Philippine context and situation.

The first batch was fully sponsored by the Niall O’Brien Center (Pax Christi Pilipinas) through funds from the civil peace service program of the German government. All German professors – Dr. Michael Tewes, Alexander Koop, M.A. and Dr. Reinhard Voss – worked voluntarily for the program.

FACULTY

Course Coordinators:

- Christine Joy Atotubo-Ballada – Statistical Methods
- Patrick Koop – Methods of Research, Peace Sciences, Religious Studies/Philosophy
- Rudy Rodil – Conflict History in the Philippines
- Atty. Raymundo Pandan Jr. – Human Rights/Humanitarian Law
- Dr. Loreta Castro – Peace Education
- Alexander Koop – Crisis Management in the Business Sector
- Dr. Michael Tewes – Conflict Communication
- Eva Guanzon – Peace Psychology

Resource Persons/Assistant Professors:

Dr. Reinhard Voss – Secretary General, Pax Christi Germany

Josephine Perez – Prg. Director, Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute,
Ateneo de Manila

Antonia Koop – Documentray Filmmaker, C.\CREAT filmproduction

Cesar Villanueva – Director, Niall O’Brien Center

Anton Meemana – Professor UNO-R, Sacred Heart Seminary

Stella Fuentes – Sensei 2nd Dan, Kyokan Dojo Bacolod City

Noel Fuentes – Sensei 1st Dan, Kyokan Dojo Bacolod City

PROGRAM COORDINATORS

The postgraduate program was initiated and developed by Patrick Koop, German civil peace service volunteer and program advisor of the Niall O’Brien Center. He coordinates the professors, guest speakers, and student tutors and is responsible for the content of the program.

Dr. Donna Echaus, dean of the graduate school of the University of St. La Salle (USLS) in Bacolod City, took care of the adjustment of the curriculum and other requirements to USLS standards. She coordinates the administrative implementation of the program.