

Overview

The Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding initiative fosters research, teaching, and engaged service in an emerging and important sub-field in the study of religion. The individuals involved in the initiative aim to deepen the understanding of religions' roles in fostering and sustaining violence and conflict, as well as religions' ability to build peace and understanding. We also aim to cultivate, in ourselves and in our students, the skills necessary to be peacebuilders within the various communities in which we are involved.

We accomplish these goals by drawing on Emory's strengths and distinctiveness as an ethically engaged university, with a broad humanistic perspective in the study of religion, significant ties to the Atlanta community, and an active and productive commitment to international education and service.

The ethnic and religious violence that characterizes much of contemporary life calls for creative scholarship and teaching that are intellectually rigorous, interdisciplinary and engaged. These approaches must take seriously their obligation to be useful and accessible to individuals working to overcome violence and to reconstruct divided and broken societies. The initiative in Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding is a focused effort by Emory University to produce such scholarship. Given the multi-faceted nature of this work, the initiative undertakes numerous activities and presents various programs designed to explore and illuminate understandings of and approaches to the issues of religiously motivated violence and religions' roles in overcoming that violence and its consequences.

"Our university faculty possess a number of strengths in the field of Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding — from research in the area of religion and violence, to a longstanding history of civil rights work in the Atlanta community. We are proud to be able to offer this unique educational opportunity to pass on this knowledge and experience to our students."

— Earl Lewis, Provost and Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs

Initiative Leaders

Laurie Patton
Charles Howard Candler Professor of Religions
Director of the Center for Faculty Development and Excellence

Edward Queen
Director of the D. Abbot Turner Program in Ethics and Servant Leadership
Coordinator of Undergraduate Studies at the Center for Ethics
Director of Research for the Institute of Human Rights

Affiliated Faculty

Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im
Charles Howard Candler Professor of Law

Michael Berger
Assoc. Professor in Religion and Jewish Studies
Director of Undergraduate Studies in Religion

Elizabeth Bounds
Assoc. Professor of Christian Ethics
Director of Faith and the City

Sam Cherribi
Senior Lecturer in Sociology

Vincent Cornell
Asa Griggs Candler Professor of Middle East and Islamic Studies

Elizabeth Corrie
Asst. Professor in the Practice of Youth Education and Peacebuilding
Director of Youth Theological Initiative

Tara Doyle
Senior Lecturer
Director of Tibetan Studies Program in India

John Dunne
Assoc. Professor of Buddhist Studies

Tom Flores
Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding Associate

David Jenkins
Asst. Professor in the Practice of Church and Community Ministries
Director of Contextual Education I and International Initiatives

Bernard Lafayette
Distinguished Senior Scholar in Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding

Jan Love
Dean of Candler School of Theology
Professor of Christianity and World Politics

Ellen Ott Marshall
Assoc. Professor in Christian Ethics and Conflict Transformation

Richard C. Martin
Professor of Islamic Studies and History of Religions

Gordon Newby
Chair and Professor of Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies

Michael Owens
Assoc. Professor of Political Science

Michael Perry
Robert W. Woodruff Professor of Law

Don Seeman
Assoc. Professor of Religion and Jewish Studies

Luther Smith
Professor of Church and Community

Thee Smith
Assoc. Professor in Religion and Conflict

Jacob Vance
Asst. Professor of French

Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding Initiative



2007 Summit with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Rabbi David Rosen and Professor Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im

"The Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding initiative adds depth to an emerging scholarly field, providing the opportunity for students of religion at all levels to use their analytical skills in learning and teaching about religion, as well as its interface with the prevention of violence. This teaching takes place not only in the classroom, but also in wider society where interreligious literacy plays an increasingly vital role in global well-being."

— Jim Wagner, President of Emory University

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Educational Resources

Education is critical to transforming relations between the world's religions. To take one example: in a recent poll, nearly half of Americans said they had a negative view of Islam, while at the same time, 60% admitted having scarcely any knowledge of it.

Public education is a key component of the program. In addition to providing speakers and information for print and broadcast media, the Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding initiative works to produce publicly accessible scholarship and to provide curricula on world religions for primary and secondary schools.

International Summits

The initiative holds regular international summits on Religious Conflict and Peacebuilding. These events are designed to collect, benchmark and publicize the valuable lessons learned through the global network. Emphasizing the work of NGO's in their peacebuilding practices, these summits also provide an invaluable opportunity for religious leaders around the world to come together in a safe space for disciplined reflection, to address the issues that divide them and to develop peaceful solutions.

The first summit held October 21, 2007 began with an address by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, with responses from world religious leaders including Rabbi David Rosen, Sister Joan Chittister and Professor Rajmohan Gandhi. The second international summit is currently planned for Fall 2010.

Global Networks

Because of their varying societal roles, universities, religious entities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) too often operate independently, failing to build upon the distinctive knowledge and activities each has to offer. Emory's initiative strives to work across these differences to create networks for the sharing of knowledge and the coordination and implementation of conflict resolution and peacebuilding strategies.

Through exchanges with NGOs, faculty, fellows and students acquire valuable on-the-ground experience. Leaders and officers in humanitarian organizations come to Emory to reflect, research, teach and write about their experiences and develop a central databank on best practices in peacebuilding.

Atlanta and the World

Atlanta is an ideal site to develop a "glocal" scope for the new initiatives: global and local in its perspective. Atlanta is recognized as the cradle of the Civil Rights movement and the base of two of America's most internationally admired citizens and Nobel Peace Prize Winners, Martin Luther King, Jr. and President Jimmy Carter.

Lecture Series

The initiative in Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding sponsors public lectures featuring distinguished scholar-practioners who have made significant contributions worldwide in the field. As an institution deeply concerned with the growing challenges related to religious conflict and violence, Emory is proud to invite these experts to share their insights with the Emory and Atlanta community, and to explore and foster new possibilities for sustained peacebuilding. The 2006-2007 inaugural lecture series included Cynthia Mahmood, Mohammed Abu-Nimer, John Paul Lederach and Marc Gopin.

Brochure design by Juana Clem McGhee
Photographs courtesy of Myron McGhee

Doctoral Concentration

Emory advances learning and engagement by supporting the most distinguished teaching, research and writing on religion, conflict and peacebuilding. The university's doctoral minor track provides distinctive experience for students, educating them to be scholars and practitioners, academic and civic leaders. The concentration's combination of superior academic teaching, research and direct practical experience provides its graduates with the skills and knowledge to make major contributions to society, by addressing a wide range of problems in a rapidly changing world.

"For students seeking to engage the deepening import of religious scholarship for peacebuilding, Emory's Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding concentration offers membership into a community of diverse yet like-devoted mentors, teachers and fellows. In conversations with these persons, I find my interests expanded and myself pressed towards actions that matter. They also provide me with the global resources to take these actions."

— Jeremy Lowe, Graduate Student

"My concentration in Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding brings a new set of questions to my research in Hinduism and South Asia. Issues of difference, boundaries and the limits of toleration invite comparison between Shirdi Sai Baba's nineteenth-century message of nonsectarian, syncretic devotionism and how this message is interpreted and practiced in present-day India. Such an approach adds nuance to research and broadens conversations across fields of study."

— Jonathan Loar, Graduate Student



Jim Wagner, President of Emory University with Bisera Turkovic, Bosnia's Ambassador to the U.S., at "The Pictures Without Borders" exhibit sponsored by the Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding Initiative.

EMORY UNIVERSITY

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