

USU Heravi Peace Institute Offers Students a Chance to Practice Peace

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HPI faculty Clair Canfield instructs a group of students

By Tammy Proctor, Heravi Peace Institute Interim Director
Give peace a chance? Utah State University students now have a chance to consider what conflict transformation and peacebuilding might look like in our world through a new introductory course offered in fall 2023. For the nearly two dozen students in the class, this was an opportunity to delve into important concepts, learn about career paths, interact with practitioners, and reflect on how they might personally make a difference in the world. As one student wrote, "It was a perfect blend of really important material, incredible mentorship, and a classroom community close enough to enable candid discussions about meaningful things."

The Heravi Peace Institute (HPI), a center that encompasses five different certificate programs in peacebuilding, leadership and diplomacy, non-profit management, conflict transformation, and interfaith leadership, launched eighteen months ago with a generous gift from Mehdi Heravi, a USU alumnus and major supporter of the university's mission. Heravi's vision of an interdisciplinary group of scholars led to the creation of PI 1010 Introduction to Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution as a way for students to learn the basics of the programs on offer. After taking this course, students have

the opportunity to delve into other classes that fall under the broad umbrella of the HPI, but that also align with their own career interests and vocations.

"This course gives the HPI a real sense of cohesion and provides a way for first-year students especially to work toward understanding conflict and approaches to its resolution," said Tammy M. Proctor, interim director.

The course was initially taught by Clair Canfield, a faculty member in Communication Studies, and Patrick Mason, the Arrington Chair of Mormon History and Culture in the History Department. Canfield and Mason drew on their own diverse areas of expertise, but they also brought in guest lecturers from the other specializations, such as interfaith leadership and non-profit management. Canfield was particularly proud of the applied and personal nature of the course goals, noting, "I believe that the class offered students a chance to wrestle with the challenging reality of what it means to build peace in their own lives and have an impact on the lives of others within their sphere of influence."

PI 1010 is organized around two central questions, "What is peace? How do we achieve it – in our personal lives, our relationships, our communities, our nation, and around the world?" In addressing these questions, students examined case studies of transformational change and read about people who have grappled with the problem of peace in meaningful ways. This course will now become a permanent part of the HPI's offerings, and will provide context for the internships and experiential learning students undertake later in their university careers.

In fall 2024, a new incoming faculty member in the Religious Studies program and author of *Dangerous Love: Transforming Fear and Conflict at Home, at Work, and in the World* (2020), Chad Ford, will teach PI 1010. Ford, whose background is in mediation and international conflict transformation, will once again rely on visiting faculty to bring students a multitude of perspectives on intransigent problems.

For now, Mason is particularly pleased with this first offering of the course, calling it a highlight of his career: "Every day was special, and I regularly walked away from class equipped with powerful new insights I gained both from Clair and from the students. It was truly inspiring to hear the students' final presentations, where they detailed how the concepts we discussed throughout the semester had a transformative effect on them, not just academically but also personally."

Want to learn more about peace? [Learn about our certificates](#)