BA in Peace Studies

The Peace Studies program prepares students to work as local and global change agents by cultivating curiosity, compassion, and courage and developing the knowledge and skills to foster a more just, equitable, and sustainable world. The 36-credit Peace Studies major offers an interdisciplinary approach to the study of peace, conflict, and transformative action, engaging students in service, research, and creative projects that take them into the community and bring the community into the classroom.

Faculty design and promote active learning environments, encouraging independent and collaborative projects that reflect students’ personal passions and commitments. The program approaches the study of peace and conflict holistically—with attention to personal and social transformation, to the needs of individuals, communities, and the global commons. From introductory to advanced courses, the program creates opportunities for students to integrate and apply their learning.

The Peace Studies major includes primary and cross-listed courses in education, environmental studies, psychology, and religious studies. Students complete an internship and a senior project as part of the major.

Program Vision

The Peace Studies program offers an interdisciplinary approach to the study of peace and conflict that takes students into the community and brings the community into the classroom. Faculty and students work together to create dynamic learning communities that cultivate compassion and develop the knowledge and skills to engage complex, real-world issues. While some students choose to focus on local civic engagement projects and initiatives, others are drawn to work nationally and internationally. The program approaches the study of peace and conflict holistically—with attention to personal and social transformation, to the needs of individuals, communities, and the global commons.

Entering the Major

In accordance with University policy, students can declare their major at any time. Please consult with your Academic Advisor to plan your schedule in the program.

Degree Requirements

BA in Peace Studies

- PAX250 Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies (3)
- PAX327 Law, Human Rights, and Social Change (3)
- PAX335 Socially Engaged Spirituality (3)
- PAX340 Conflict Transformation: Theory and Practice (3)
- PAX345 Skills for Peacebuilding: Leadership, Restorative Justice, and Dialogue (3)
- PAX360 International Affairs (3)
- PAX450 Internship (3)
- PAX480 Senior Project (3)

SUBTOTAL 24

Choose 3 credits from Themes in Peace & Conflict Studies

- EDU352 Poverty Matters (3)
- ENV355 Environmental Justice (3)
- PSYB359 Learning from Trauma: Understanding Its Effects and Building Personal Resources (3)
- PAX370 Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship (3)

SUBTOTAL 3

Choose 9 credits from Interdisciplinary Explorations

- PAX370 Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship (3)
- EDU245 Education, Culture, and Critical Pedagogy (3)
- EDU352 Poverty Matters (3)
- ENV215 Sustainability (3)
- ENV253 Environmental Economics (3)
- ENV260 Introduction to Permaculture (3)
- ENV318 Deep Ecology (3)
- ENV342 Permaculture Design (3)
- ENV355 Environmental Justice (3)
- INTD210 Introduction to Gender and Women’s Studies (3)
- PSYB359 Learning from Trauma: Understanding Its Effects and Building Personal Resources (3)
- PSYB373 Social Psychology (3)
- REL212 Queer Theory, Feminism, and Religion (3)
- WRI380 Writing Workshop: Eco-Poetics (3)

SUBTOTAL 9

TOTAL CREDITS 36

Course Listings

PAX250
Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies (3)

Key questions in the field of peace and conflict studies are investigated: What are the causes and conditions of violence and the conditions that foster peace and social justice? What is the difference between “negative” and “positive” peace? How do ordinary citizens, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations contribute to peacebuilding? What are the ethical values and practical tools of peacebuilders across cultures and traditions? The aim of the course is to deepen understanding of peace research and initiatives as well as the root causes of violence.

PAX315
Gender, Politics, and Social Change (3)

Gender is investigated as a lens on global politics and social change. The course examines the impact of war and violence on women, and historical and contemporary examples of women’s peace activism and political leadership. Through selected case studies, students become familiar with a range of interlocking issues that affect women globally, examining the gendered politics of war and peace and multiple versions of feminism and coalition building. We move the classroom into the community through field trips.
and partnerships with local community groups and invite scholars, activists, and community leaders from diverse locations into the classroom. Prerequisite: COR115.

PAX327
Law, Human Rights, and Social Change (3)
Selected aspects of U.S. law, legal institutions, and traditions with a view toward understanding how they respond to and effect social change are surveyed. The course examines landmark court cases, such as Miranda v. Arizona, Roe v. Wade, and Brown v. Board of Education, that demonstrate how the judicial branch of government affects everyday life and develops, shapes, and enforces social policy. We also consider how the United States is, or is not, influenced by international treaties such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the Geneva Convention. Students are introduced to and practice legal skills, such as case law analysis, advocacy, issue analysis, fact/evidence selection and relevance, and the ability to examine and argue both sides of an issue. Prerequisite: COR115 or COR113.

PAX335
Socially Engaged Spirituality (3)
A study of varied traditions and ways of articulating socially engaged spirituality from historical and contemporary perspectives. The lives and work of Gandhi and King are used as reference points, and examples from around the globe engage students in understanding the dynamics of socially engaged spirituality in different settings and in their own lives. As they investigate the relationship between personal and social transformation, students develop a personal dialogue with selected peacemakers and justice seekers. Assignments encourage students to clarify their own ethical principles and commitments, deepening the inquiry through shared exploration. Source material may range from autobiography and biography to literary texts and film. Methods include individual and group contemplative practices, community-based fieldwork, and creative expression.

PAX340
Conflict Transformation: Theory and Practice (3)
An exploration of theories and practices of conflict transformation in a range of settings and locations. The course examines interpersonal and structural dynamics of conflict, building skills to work effectively with individuals and small groups and studying attempts to end cycles of violence, revenge and trauma at the national and international level. We investigate our own assumptions about conflict, the potency of cultural and religious differences, the complexities of intervention and the possibility of transformation. We consider the role of curiosity, creativity, and the moral imagination in peacebuilding. Students in this course write and produce original digital stories and acquire beginning level skills in mediation. Prerequisite: COR 113 or COR 130.

PAX360
International Affairs (3)
This course introduces students to the field of international relations and international politics. We study a number of theoretical approaches in International Relations and key concepts in the field to illuminate selected aspects of contemporary global issues. Themes will vary from semester to semester but may include globalization, geopolitics and nationalism, international food politics, human rights and humanitarian intervention, and refugees. Using a case study approach, we will explore key themes in regional contexts, which will vary depending on current hot spots and the areas of specialization of the instructor.

PAX370
Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship (3)
This interdisciplinary seminar introduces students to the emerging field of social entrepreneurship through readings, case studies, guest lectures, films, and field trips. As we examine the history and methods, the challenges and opportunities of local and global social entrepreneurs and innovators, we elicit our own bold visions for the future. We engage the local community as an incubator of social innovation, exploring the role of creativity, collaboration, courage, and compassion in social entrepreneurship. Students in this course build practical skills, developing business plans and models for ventures that address social challenges in education, health-care, human rights, and food security, among others. Students from all disciplines who seek to build capacity as visionary, pragmatic change agents are welcome. Prerequisite: COR113.

PAX450
Internship (3)
The internship provides students with opportunities to deepen their understanding of the practical means of working for social change by working on projects that require a range of skills—grassroots organizing, coalition building, lobbying, policy research, grant-writing, and fundraising. Students may pursue internships that build on prior experience or pursue a new direction. Internship placements range from community-based media to restorative justice initiatives and to educational organizations working on issues of social justice, peace, human rights, and environmental sustainability. The internship culminates in presentations to the community in which students bring back new knowledge and skills to the Naropa community.

PAX480
Senior Project (3)
The senior project requires both sustained independent work and collaboration, as students read and research, conduct interviews in the community, and receive feedback from a faculty mentor. Students are encouraged to design senior projects that include self-reflection and inquiry, creativity and scholarship, and the intention to serve a specific community. Senior project research methods range from case study and community-based research to arts-based research, bibliography, and oral history. The outcomes vary +publication, performance, building organizational capacity, and other forms of public work. Students complete a self-assessment as part of their senior projects, which culminate in celebratory presentations to the community. Cross-listed as ENV480.
PAX499
Independent Study: Peace Studies (0.5)