

PEACE STUDIES COMES OF AGE

*As programs proliferate on college campuses,
academics are struggling to define what it means.*

BY JOHN FEFFER

When Barbara Wien answered her telephone one day last year and found that Richard Perle was on the line, it was a sure indication that peace studies had finally graduated to the academic big time.

What did the "Prince of Darkness"—the former assistant secretary of defense under Ronald Reagan—want from a peace studies specialist at the Institute for Policy Studies, that favorite target of right-wing red-baiting? Advice, believe it or not, on which peace studies programs the U.S. government should fund through its Institute for Peace. Perle, who used to sit on the institute's board, called Wien several times afterwards asking for additional assistance, which she has given despite her skepticism of the institute's political goals.

What's going on? It was difficult enough getting used to Ronald Reagan's newfound warmth for the "Evil Empire." Now, the most hawkish administration in decades is giving peace studies a good name, not to mention a million dollars a year.

With such mainstream benefactors, peace studies has apparently made the successful transition from orphan-child of academia to family member in good standing. Where five years ago, peace studies programs were scrambling for students and fighting off charges of trendiness, today such programs are receiving millions of dollars annually and enrolling thousands of students. The statistics are impressive:

- More than 300 colleges and universities offer peace studies courses;
- 150 colleges offer degree programs and 30 have graduate programs;
- 111 law schools offer courses in alterna-

tive dispute resolution compared to only 10 schools a decade ago;

■ The Peace Studies Association recently formed to serve the needs of the growing community of peace educators.

Why such success? In part, the flowering of peace studies can be credited to the disarmament movement. The Freeze campaign of the early 1980s gave nuclear war issues such wide exposure that significant numbers of students were drawn to courses and institutions that taught about those issues. Since the demise of the Freeze, peace studies has continued to grow, evolving beyond the study of nuclear weapons issues.

This evolution, however, has triggered a debate within the peace studies community. Has success transformed peace studies into just another academic subject? Has peace studies become *too* respectable?

GARY WEAVER LECTURES LIKE A stand-up comedian. In his graduate class on cross-cultural communication at American University in Washington, D.C., Weaver peppers his presentation with anecdotes about cultural misunderstandings. There's the one about the visitors from Botswana who try to tip the cashier at Burger King and the one about the Moslem farmer who takes religious offense when pressed by an insensitive American official to predict the future of his crops.

Weaver's class is not your stereotypical peace studies course. He makes little mention of nuclear weapons, global security, international law or nonviolence. It's not "touchy-feely," but it's not heavy on academic jargon either. His syllabus is bulging with books and articles on culture and history. For all of Weaver's funny stories, this is a serious class.

Nor do the students in the class conform to the peace studies stereotype. No tie-dyed Deadheads. No fire-and-brimstone ideologues. Instead, there are a few middle-aged students, conservatively dressed. Several students major in international education, others in international relations. There is even one student who carefully explains during the break that he is in "conflict management," *not* peace studies. Most students stress they are in the class to learn skills, not simply facts and statistics.

With its academic rigor and interdisciplinary spirit, Weaver's class is a good example of the new generation of peace studies instruction, a field now entering its fifth decade. The first peace studies courses, established in 1948 at Manchester College in Indiana, were primarily attempts to grapple with the central paradox of the postwar age: the invention of the atom bomb and the founding of the United Nations. Those early courses, according to Ken Brown, director of the Peace Studies Institute at Manchester, tended to be more philosophical than technical, favoring the study of Gandhi over the analysis of atomic war. During the Cold War, the field barely survived by concentrating on ideologically "safe" topics like world law.

At the height of the Vietnam War protests, peace studies gained new momentum, as activists sought to straddle the gap between ideas taught in the classrooms and demands shouted over bullhorns at demonstrations. Programs sprang up at Kent State, Notre Dame, Colgate and Penn State. When campus activism tailed off, some programs, like Penn State's Center for the Study of World Problems, suffered premature deaths.

A decade later, however, peace studies

was back with a new focus: nuclear weapons. The enormous popularity of the Nuclear Weapons Freeze campaign spread onto campus, and suddenly peace studies—originally conceived as a multi-issue discipline—became linked in the public mind with disarmament studies.

"There was a big surge in the early 1980s," says Michael Klare, director of the Five College Peace and World Security Studies Program in Amherst, Massachusetts, "and we thought that it would peter out. But in fact the growth of programs has continued at a steady rate in the 1980s." Klare's office receives notices of new programs at the rate of two or three a month and he estimates that there are at least twice as many that he doesn't hear about.

Unlike those developed in the Freeze days, the new programs reflect a trend away from a nuclear weapons emphasis. The very titles of the programs give an indication of their diversity: global studies, conflict resolution studies, peace and non-violence studies. As Klare points out, "You can't really find two programs with the same name. The field is really peace studies and then 'fill in the blank.'"

The differences in course titles are also reflected in curriculum content. Where five years ago, Klare notes, courses on nuclear weapons contained mostly nuclear scare literature, a similar course today covers a much wider range of issues: the history of the arms race, nuclear doctrine, U.S.-Soviet relations, verification and compliance, Third World issues. And these new courses frequently offer literature from a pro-nuclear point of view as well, treating nuclear weapons as necessary evils.

The students who take such courses have often undergone a similar evolution themselves. Initially drawn to peace studies because of an interest in preventing nuclear war, they often end up focusing on another aspect of the field. Dale Largent, a senior at Manchester College, says that he turned to peace studies because of an interest in disarmament. Now, however, he concentrates his studies on interpersonal conflict resolution and the historical roots of war. Deborah St. Claire, a graduate student at Columbia Teachers College, discovered peace studies because of a seminar she attended on arms control. Now she believes "that there is more to peace education than nuclear age education."

DESPITE THE INCREASED POPULARITY and, some say, sophistication of peace studies, old criticisms can still be heard: "You can't do anything with a peace studies degree," "Peace studies is biased," "Peace studies isn't rigorous."

Secretary of Education William Bennett and various right-wing think tanks have attacked peace studies because they say it has allowed leftists to infiltrate American campuses. Leftists themselves criticize peace studies for not being sufficiently advocacy oriented.

New peace studies programs still have to address these questions. But, as many programs successfully move into middle age,

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the debate is no longer fueled by outside critics. Peace educators are now beginning to debate among themselves.

The first question debated is a definitional one: what should and should not be considered peace studies. The field, after all, is not an undifferentiated mass. Listed cheek-and-jowl in peace studies course catalogs are classes on arms control and hunger, nonviolence and human rights, women's issues and the environment.

But it isn't so much the range of topics that causes friction. More divisive in peace studies is the *respectability* of the issues. The field is a continuum, stretching from topics offbeat and radical like "future imaging" to mainstream concerns like arms control negotiating.

Colman McCarthy clearly falls in the offbeat camp. As a peace educator and syndicated columnist, he has raised many administrative eyebrows with his innovative teaching style and controversial views on the virtues of nonviolence. At American University in 1986, McCarthy initially let his students grade themselves before the university insisted on the more traditional arrangement. His lengthy reading list, which is virtually all "unrequired," joins Martin Luther King and pacifism together with vegetarianism and anti-abortionism.

Finally, McCarthy encourages his students to volunteer in the community. "High school and college students tend to be idea-rich but experience-poor," he says. "One solution I've found is to take them into the community: to literacy programs, homeless shelters, soup kitchens, or homes for the elderly and get them to volunteer

there during the semester. They've learned more in one week about the English language while teaching in a literacy program than in majoring in English."

This emphasis on "experiential" education and internships in the community contributes to making peace studies programs unique in academia. But some educators fear that peace studies is in danger of losing its uniqueness. Peace studies at the university level has become "too discipline-bound," says Betty Reardon, a professor at Columbia Teachers College. Contrasting teaching *about* peace and teaching *for* peace, Reardon maintains that peace is a way of life, not simply an academic discipline like political science. The idea of peace studies, she explains, is not simply to establish one little corner of academia that teaches peace. Rather, she argues, peace studies should be spread throughout the entire academic curriculum.

The institutionalization of peace studies in the academy has been accomplished, others argue, at considerable cost to original ideals. "As peace studies succeeds, it gets assimilated, co-opted," says Robert Johansen, senior fellow at Notre Dame University's Institute for International Peace Studies. "Peace studies courses get adopted by universities, but the content of the courses gets watered down." The courses that achieve the most success in this context, he continues, "are those that tend to be heavily empirical and do not challenge the underlying assumptions of the status quo."

Those courses most accepted within the university make up the "respectable" end of the peace studies spectrum: arms control or security studies, international relations and conflict resolution. In some peace studies programs, all three coexist in the same department. But some educators are careful to stress the distinctions, for instance, between peace studies and arms control studies. "People entering the arcane world of arms control lose sight of the fundamental questions," says Barbara Wien. "Arms control studies has done a lot of damage. It has further institutionalized the arms race."

But perhaps the largest irritant to peace educators involved in nonviolent studies or world order studies is the financial support lavished on the three sister fields. Arms control studies receives the lion's share of foundation support. The MacArthur Foundation, for instance, sends the majority of its institutional grants to high-profile strategic studies programs at Columbia University, Stanford University and the University of Maryland. Conflict resolution programs, like George Mason's in Virginia or Syra-

cuse University in New York, have attracted sizable contributions from Hewlett-Packard's foundation.

Furthermore, the major foundations favor graduate programs, primarily in strategic studies, leaving undergraduate education out in the cold. "We think undergraduate education is very important," says Joel Federman, associate director of the Peace and Conflict Studies Program at University of Southern California (USC). "But the foundations haven't come around to that yet. They want a tangible product, but they don't realize that students are tangible products."

For many undergraduate peace studies departments, the financial situation is precarious. For example, at Berkeley's Peace and Conflict Studies program—despite some outside funding—the professors aren't even paid for the peace studies courses they teach. Many undergraduate programs "rely on the good will of faculty to do additional work for which they are compensated little," according to Neil Katz, director of the Program in Nonviolent Conflict and Change at Syracuse University. "It's often a way for the university to get more mileage out of faculty because of their passion and commitment."

With major funding sources often inaccessible to them, many programs have begun to look elsewhere. USC has linked up with progressive Hollywood stars like Barbra Streisand, who provided a \$15,000 grant through her foundation. At the University of California at Irvine, the Global Peace and Conflict Studies program funded a chair in peace research entirely through contributions from local businesses. Notre Dame's Institute for International Peace Studies has been blessed with a generous principal benefactor, philanthropist Joan Kroc, the widow of the late McDonald's hamburger chain magnate. Kroc's foundation has given the program \$12 million, a figure only dreamed about by peace studies proponents several years ago.

And then there's the U.S. Institute for Peace, established in 1986 to promote peaceful resolution to international conflict. In 1988, Congress allocated \$4.3 million, of which at least one quarter must be given to research programs: a cool million for peace research.

Many activists, however, are suspicious of the institute's goals. "Everyone knows that the deck is stacked against peace studies in terms of getting meaningful support from the institute," says Robert Elias, founder of the Peace and Justice Program at Tufts University.

Why? Some point to a board of directors that consists of *ex officio* members like Lt.

General Bradley Hosmer, president of the National Defense University, and Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci. Others note that the grants are principally directed to large research centers like the Brookings Institution or the Hoover Institution, rather than small, poorly-funded peace studies programs.

But even the institute's harshest critics realize that it operates very much like a foundation, rarely funding smaller programs, and generally going with the institutions with proven track records. And the institute's grants are minor compared to the other money available: one million dollars is only 9 percent of what the MacArthur Foundation provided in institutional funding alone in 1987.

So the money is out there for peace studies, but only for a certain type of peace studies: conflict resolution, arms control studies, research fellowships. What about the more visionary peace study programs? "They don't have to be competing factions," says Barbara Wien. "They could be complementary. Some people are trying to bridge the gap, but I'm skeptical. The future of peace studies is up for grabs." □

John Feffer is a Scoville fellow working at Nuclear Times.



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