

Working for Transformation without Recreating the Past

Course Outline

This 12-week course has been divided into three 4-week sections, plus one free preview / introductory course. Register separately for the 12-week course and the preview course.

Dates are as follows:

Free Preview Course: June 10

Part 1: June 17, July 1, 15, 22 (excluding June 24 and July 8)

Part 2: September 9, 16, 23, 30

Part 3: October 14, 28, November 4, 11 (excluding October 21)

PART 1: Social Change and Nonviolence

Synopsis: The world as we know it is defined by intertwined, mutually reinforcing social structures that stubbornly resist change – and that leave their mark on every one of us. This 4-week course introduces nonviolence as a force that can loosen this tangle and bring about genuine transformation. You'll be guided toward aligning all your work with the three building blocks of nonviolence: love, truth, and courage. If you're already committed to a nonviolent life, expect to find new ways of putting your principles into practice. And if you're looking for a pathway into activism, this course can help you approach it from a nonviolent perspective.

1. Week One ~ Understanding Change

- a. What makes change difficult (socialization, fear of consequences, stories of legitimacy, etc)
- b. What makes change possible
 - i. Understanding what doesn't work
 - ii. Seeing clearly that an alternate reality is possible
 - iii. Trusting that change is possible
 - iv. Mobilizing resources (e.g. large numbers or other resources) for action
- c. Placing personal growth in the context of social structures
 - i. Facing the limits of "be the change"
 - ii. Understanding the force that structures exert on individuals (e.g. economic structures, governance, justice systems, etc.)
 - iii. Understanding social-structural power differences (e.g. race, class, gender): distinguishing between prejudice and structural access to resources
 - iv. Understanding how structures reproduce themselves
 - v. Facing privilege and complicity – in yourself and others – with love for all
 - vi. Choosing to work with others to transform structures

2. Week Two ~ Embracing Nonviolence in Thought, Word, and Action

- a. Focusing on vision
 - i. Facing despair about how things are
 - ii. Imagining large and small ways things could be different
 - iii. Strengthening faith in the possibility of transformation
- b. Transcending right/wrong thinking
- c. Transforming enemy images
- d. Sustaining the commitment to doing despair work
- e. Grounding in connection and sufficiency (overcoming separation and scarcity)

3. Week Three ~ Connecting Across Political Differences

- a. Finding common ground through identifying shared needs and values
- b. Developing capacity for listening to others with curiosity and willingness to learn
- c. Retaining the intention to make things work for everyone

4. Week Four ~ Making Sense of the Power of Nonviolent Social Change

- a. Why do nonviolent movements for social change work more often?
- b. The role of Constructive Program
- c. Nonviolent resistance as an escalation of dialogue

PART 2: Working with Others for Change

Synopsis: A commitment to nonviolent social change means you're searching for collaborative, win-win pathways based on respect and care for all involved. Unfortunately – as you may have witnessed – it's all too easy for a group that values inclusion and consensus to slip into a morass of conflict, unacknowledged power dynamics, and endless, fruitless meetings. This course provides you with tools to change that pattern, offer effective leadership, and unleash the gifts of collaboration: buy-in, energy, creativity, and wisdom drawn from all stakeholders.

1. Week One ~ Interpersonal Skills for Social Change Work

- a. Willingness to be changed by dialogue
- b. Meeting differences and disagreements with empathy
- c. Working with conflict
- d. Working across differences in access to resources (privilege)

2. Week Two ~ Working within Groups

- a. Making effective requests in groups
- b. Using skills when needs are unmet by others' behavior
- c. Facilitating group decision-making

3. Week Three ~ Power and Leadership: Modeling the World You Want to Create

- a. Reclaiming power and leadership
 - i. Distinguishing between source of power (e.g. social-structural, structural, internal) and use of power (power-over vs. power-with)
 - ii. Transcending myths of power that block increased functioning
 - iii. Moving beyond personal obstacles to taking power
 - iv. Learning to respond to others' reactions to power and leadership
- b. Moving towards power-with while attending to purpose and function
 - i. Creating structures of accountability that are based on collaboration
 - ii. Soliciting input productively and taking it seriously
 - iii. Involving people in decisions that affect them
 - iv. Cleaning up unintended consequences when making unilateral decisions
 - v. Making requests instead of demands whenever possible
 - vi. Counteracting internalized disempowerment by encouraging "no"
 - vii. Seeking feedback to increase our own and others' awareness of the ways we might be unconsciously using power over others instead of with others
- c. Developing skills for leading across social-structural power differences
 - i. Leading from the dominant class, race, gender, etc.: become aware of power dynamics; support full participation of non-dominant groups; directly reduce disparities and increase access; model responsiveness to privilege and oppression
 - ii. Leading from non-dominant groups: build mutual support; strive to see the full humanity of privileged people; if willing, grow capacity to speak authentically about experiences of oppression to dominant group members

4. Week Four ~ Engaging with Those in Positions of Structural Power

- a. Transcending the pull to see people as their roles, rather than as human
- b. Finding connection in a context based on demands
- c. Transforming our enemy images about power and those who hold it, so as to see clearly the humanity of the person in power (and ourselves)
- d. Offering empathic understanding
- e. Positioning ourselves as supporters to the person in power even while seeking to change their behavior
- f. Combining the power of truth and love
- g. Making requests designed to contribute to the whole

PART 3: Creating a World that Works for All

Synopsis: As you move toward making real shifts in the world, you face the pitfall of social-structural power differences – race, class, and the like – that shape who is heard and who benefits from change. To help you create solutions that truly work for all, this course starts with how to challenge those patterns of domination. Another foundational step is learning to build institutions and structures that nurture a new paradigm and can go to scale. Then comes the crown of your movement: strategic, vision-driven campaigns to engage and influence the powers that be.

1. Week One ~ Engaging with Social Power and Privilege

- a. Review from Parts I and II: facing privilege, power-aware leadership
- b. Deepening internal resources to support engagement with conversations about social power, diversity, and privilege
- c. Mobilizing personal privilege in service of the whole and working to transform the structures of separation and privilege
- d. Forging alliances across differences

2. Week Two ~ Building Alternative Structures and Scaling Up

- a. Placing shared purpose at the center
- b. Ensuring that processes, policies, and practices support collaboration, especially in terms of use of power
- c. Embedding collaboration in systems
 - i. Achieving clarity about who makes which decisions, with input from whom, and informing whom
 - ii. Establishing free information flow within the entire organization
 - iii. Identifying and strengthening feedback loops within the organization and with its stakeholders
 - iv. Naming clear agreements about conflict resolution mechanisms
 - v. Attending to the complexity of shared agreements about resource allocation

3. Week Three ~ Systemic (Societal) Engagement

- a. Envisioning change on larger and larger scales
 - i. Expanding the principle of attending to needs to the level of national and global systems
 - ii. Taking on specific systems and unpacking them (e.g. how could transportation be designed to attend to needs? Health care? Education? Justice? etc.)
 - iii. Engaging with others to develop and solidify visions
- b. Infusing vision into every action, campaign, and movement-building strategy
 - i. Challenging the singular focus on protest activities
 - ii. Developing strategies for implementing vision within campaigns (in a manner similar to the lunch counter sit-ins modeling the world beyond segregation)
 - iii. Developing criteria for success that measure movement towards vision

- c. Capacity to engage with people with power
 - i. Developing access methods
 - ii. Committing to attending to everyone's needs
 - iii. Discerning when dialogue is no longer possible and shifting to nonviolent resistance while retaining care for those in power

- d. Readiness to seize opportunities

4. Week Four ~ Closure: Where to Go from Here

- a. Review of the entire course
- b. Q&A about any aspect of any person's work and struggles