

Restorative practices sample syllabus

Columbia University, School of Professional Studies

Negotiation and Conflict Resolution (NECR 5107) | Summer 2026 | 3 Credits

Note for handbook readers: This syllabus is offered as a reusable model. It locates Restorative Practices within the peace studies lineage rather than treating the concept as a free-standing conflict-resolution technique, so that program developers can see how the two bodies of work reinforce one another.

Course Description

This course introduces Restorative Practices as both a philosophy and a set of methods for building positive peace within institutions and communities. Students examine how restorative approaches, circles, conferences, and relational accountability processes, address structural violence, repair harm, and sustain reconciliation. The course positions Restorative Practices within the wider peacebuilding field, drawing on conflict transformation theory while engaging directly with critiques of liberal peacebuilding and the risk that restorative language can become a veneer over unchanged power relations.

Learning Objectives

1. Locate Restorative Practices within the peacebuilding and conflict transformation tradition.
2. Facilitate restorative circles and restorative conferences in institutional and community settings.
3. Analyze how restorative processes address structural violence and advance positive peace.
4. Apply a critical lens to both the liberal-peace critique and the restorative-veneer critique, recognizing their shared structure.
5. Design a restorative intervention appropriate to a defined institutional or community context.

Required Texts

- Lederach, J. P. (2005). *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*. Oxford University Press.
- Zehr, H. (2015). *The Little Book of Restorative Justice* (Rev. ed.). Good Books.
- Pranis, K. (2005). *The Little Book of Circle Processes*. Good Books.
- Course-site readings (provided): selections engaging Galtung on structural and cultural violence; Mac Ginty on hybrid and everyday peace; and Richmond on critiques of the liberal peace.

Session Schedule

Day	Topic	Focus
1	Peace, Violence, and the Restorative Turn	Galtung's positive/negative peace; where restorative practices enter the peacebuilding lineage
2	Foundations of Restorative Practice	Zehr and Pranis; principles, values, and the relational core
3	Circles and Conferences in Practice	Facilitation methods; experiential practice with both formats
4	Restorative Practices and Structural Violence	Moral imagination (Lederach); addressing harm embedded in systems
5	Two Critiques in Parallel	The liberal-peace critique and the restorative-veneer critique, run side by side as structurally identical warnings

Assessment

- Participation and circle facilitation (30%)
- Critical reading responses (25%)
- Final restorative intervention design (45%)