

**Jordan**  
**Approaches to Conflict Management & Resolution:**  
**Field Work with Syrian Refugees**  
**SAMPLE SYLLABUS**

**CONF 695/385**  
Faculty: Marc Gopin

Dr. Marc Gopin  
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(\*Email is quickest communication)

### **Course Description**

It has been more than a decade since the Syrian uprising began and has gone from being a nonviolent revolution to one of the bloodiest and most tragic conflicts the Middle East has known in modern times.

As the war between the Syrian government forces and the Syrian opposition continues, civilian casualties increase astronomically, the refugee situation worsens daily, military measures become even more extreme, and the most precious jewels of Syrian culture and history are daily being reduced to rubble.

This course will explore nonviolent conflict management and mitigation in the context of extremely intractable war. We will explore the combination of skills and practices necessary to address short-term challenges, but with an eye to the fact that most intractability is only overcome over extended periods of time and in ways that dovetail universal and longstanding trends of human violence reduction. Human violence reduction is associated by science with ideas, philosophies, and behaviors that promote and express empathy leading to compassion and solidarity with strangers, the empowerment of women in conflict situations, the establishment, promotion and indoctrination of laws and principles such as human rights that are absolutely universal in nature, the promotion of business and areas of mutual benefit across sectarian, gender, religious and class lines in any given society, and negotiation, conflict and communication skills that promote compassion, self-control and the use of higher reasoning in tackling human problems, tragedies and struggles.

We will study, observe and practice the following:

- nonviolent conflict management and mitigation in extremely divided, distrustful and psychologically damaging situations (managing the conflict and moving it in a nonviolent direction)

- the benefits and challenges of the application of nonviolent resistance practices to the Syrian situation
- skills of citizen diplomacy
- the art of working across sectarian lines
- human rights promotion and successful conflict resolution
- civil society building
- women's empowerment that leads to less violence
- children's needs as a common interest across many lines that leads to less violence
- trauma and mental health care leading to more rational thinking and problem solving
- solidarity creation across many lines – sectarian lines, gender lines – through acts of compassion and generosity

This class will be a practice class in that half our time will be spent deeply engaging Syrian activists and learning from them, in addition to working with refugees in Jordan.

Explorations will be made of goal-oriented and principled processes of coalition building that focuses less on what or who is being opposed, and more on the ethical practices of what can be built for the future, as well as an ethical approach to nonviolent social change that is radically inclusive in the process of building peaceful post-conflict societies.

The course will entail lectures by Dr. Marc Gopin, touring in Jordan, studies with CRDC's Director of Interfaith Peacebuilding, Hind Kabawat, and engagement with activists and refugees.

## Course Structure

The course will take place over GMU's spring break, in addition to preparatory and follow-up meetings. Students will spend 9 days in Jordan (including travel). Each day will be structured as 3 hours class time, and the rest of the day and evening spent in field experience, guided discussion, and engagement. We will be studying as well as traveling in the country.

## Course Requirements

- A. Participation personally or virtually in one preparatory meeting prior to departure for Jordan.
- B. **Gopin's Compassion Training:** In order to successfully engage in the practice of helping Syrian refugees and children, it is necessary to be prepared for the challenges of this work. There is a simple and harmless technique I will ask you to engage in most nights before the trip, for just five minutes or longer. It is a training in compassion in order to deal better with what is known as empathic distress. Find a comfortable, quiet place and breathe slowly and deeply for about a minute or two, eyes closed, lights low. Then imagine the people and places where

you have had the most wonderful experience of compassion and love in your life, especially in your young years. Imagine those, visualize those, while breathing deeply and slowly, for about three minutes at least. You will find it quite enjoyable. Finally, imagine someone you feel sorry for, visualize them while breathing in slowly, hold the breath for two seconds, and then wish them compassion and blessings and care while breathing out slowly. Do that for two minutes or more as well.

C. Effective and successful engagement with others in Jordan, both in the class and with all Syrians and Jordanians that the class engages. **35% of grade**

D. Two 5-page journals that describe your experience of the intervention and trip, and analytically reflect on class readings, discussion, interviews and day-to-day experiences. Write about how the experience relates to your own ideas and your own way of thinking about and understanding the world. How has your perspective changed? You should also include any critiques of the material presented to you along with your reasoning behind your critiques. **The journals should have a personal as well as an academic element to them.** One journal should be written while you are in Jordan and the other after you return. **Each journal: 15% of grade. First journal due Sunday, April 5. Second journal due Sunday, April 19.**

E. **Research Paper: The research paper should analyze one or a few of the above approaches to conflict management and violence reduction (bullet point list on pages 1-2 above) over the short term and over the long term in the Syrian situation, studying the challenges to each approach in the short and long term. The second half of the paper should propose bold recommendations for future projects and interventions, both by parties inside the conflict and by those individuals or states who are outside the conflict but perhaps contributing to it.** The length of this paper should be a minimum of 20 pages double-spaced (for undergraduate students, a minimum of 15 pages double-spaced). **35% of grade. Due Sunday, April 26.**

**A required paragraph summary/paper proposal must be submitted to Dr. Gopin no later than Sunday, April 12. This paragraph can be brief, but it must contain your research question in question — not statement — form. A bulleted proposal is also acceptable for this requirement as long as it contains your research question.**

F. Follow up meeting, post-trip, in April to prepare for papers and evaluate the experience.

G. **Submitting assignments:** For all assignments listed above, submissions should be made to Dr. Gopin via email at mgopin@gmu.edu. Students must submit from their university email address, and **not** from a personal or work email account. Your full name (as it appears on university documents) must be included in the body of the

email. Failure to submit assignments according to these guidelines can result in late grades, which might impact your graduation status or financial aid. **No exceptions.**

- H. **Early grading:** If you need your final grade to be submitted earlier than Mason's semester grading deadline, you *must* notify Dr. Gopin via email no later than one week after the trip ends. All assignments must be submitted no less than two weeks in advance of when the early grade is due to your institution. Late requests for early grades and/or submission of papers later than two weeks before the requested due date are not guaranteed to be graded in time. **No exceptions.**

The total classroom time for this course will be no less than 46 hours. This is based on 1 two-hour preparatory class before travel, 8 three-hour class sessions while in Jordan, as well as hearing from multiple guest speakers in the region, and 1 two-hour classroom session a few weeks after returning home from the course.

## Course Topics

1. An introduction to the Syrian war and all the contributing parties and factors, including the global players.
2. An introduction to the efforts to stop or mitigate the violence, including nonviolent resistance, civil society efforts, and international diplomacy (or lack thereof), including the lack of ceasefire efforts.
3. An exploration of what leads to less violence universally and how – if at all – this pertains to the Syrian situation.
4. The complex question of religion and sectarianism versus the manipulation of global and regional actors to perpetuate the conflict, and the question in general of Syrian Islamic extremism and the reality on the ground.
5. Nonviolent conflict management and mitigation in extremely divided, distrustful and psychologically damaging situations (managing the conflict and moving it in a nonviolent direction).
6. An examination and critique of the following methods of social change in the context of Syria:
  - the benefits and challenges of the application of nonviolent resistance practices to the Syrian situation
  - skills of citizen diplomacy
  - the art of working across sectarian lines
  - human rights promotion and successful conflict resolution
  - civil society building
  - women's empowerment that leads to less violence
  - children's needs as a common interest across many lines that leads to less violence
  - trauma and mental health care leading to more rational thinking and problem solving
  - solidarity creation across many lines – sectarian lines, gender lines – through acts of compassion and generosity

## Reading Materials

### Required Text for Purchase

Gopin, Marc. (2009). *To make the earth whole: The art of citizen diplomacy in an age of religious militancy*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

McHugo, John. (2015). *Syria: A Recent History*. London: Saqi Books.

### Required articles and book chapters

Gopin, Marc. *Bridges across an Impossible Divide: The Inner Lives of Arab and Jewish Peacemakers*. Oxford University Press, 2012. Chapters 7 & 8 (e-reserve)

Stephan, Maria, and Erica Chenoweth. "Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict." *International Security* 33 (2008): 7 - 44.  
[http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/files/IS3301\\_pp007-044\\_Stephan\\_Chenoweth.pdf](http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/files/IS3301_pp007-044_Stephan_Chenoweth.pdf)

Nan, Susan Allen. "Conflict Resolution in a Network Society." *International Negotiation* 13 (2008): 111 - 131.  
<http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/journals/10.1163/138234008x297995>

Polk, William, R. "Understanding Syria: From Pre-Civil War to Post-Assad." *The Atlantic*. 10 December 2013.  
<http://m.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/12/understanding-syria-from-pre-civil-war-to-post-assad/281989/>

McClelland, Mac. "How to Build a Perfect Refugee Camp." *The New York Times*. 13 February 2014. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/16/magazine/how-to-build-a-perfect-refugee-camp.html?hpw&rref=magazine&r=1>

Masten, Ann S. "Global Perspectives on Resilience in Children and Youth." *Child Development* 85 (2014): 6 – 20.

Hosseini, Khaled. "Syria's Lost Generation." *The New York Times*. 11 April 2014.  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/13/opinion/sunday/syrias-lost-generation.html?hpw&rref=opinion&r=0>

Forced Migration Review, "The Syria crisis, displacement and protection."  
<http://www.fmreview.org/syria>

Rudoren, Jodi. "Inside a Jordanian Refugee Camp: Reporter's Notebook." *New York Times*. 22 September 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/22/insider/inside-a-jordanian-refugee-camp-reporters-notebook.html>

UNHCR. “Service Guide for Syrian Refugees.” September 2015.  
<http://www.data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=3188>

UNICEF. “Access to Education for Syrian Refugee Children and Youth in Jordan Host Communities.” March 2015.  
[http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/REACH\\_JENA\\_HC\\_March\\_2015\\_.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/REACH_JENA_HC_March_2015_.pdf)

*Articles by CRDC staff (required)*

Gopin, Marc. “Refugee.” 29 May 2017.  
[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/refugee\\_us\\_592c201ae4b07d848fdc0541](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/refugee_us_592c201ae4b07d848fdc0541)

Gopin, Marc. “The Honorable Thing to Do Is Kill Someone: Defeating Men’s Culture of Honor to Overcome the Syrian Catastrophe.” 1 September 2014.  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marc-gopin/the-honorable-thing-to-do\\_b\\_5551778.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marc-gopin/the-honorable-thing-to-do_b_5551778.html)

Gopin, Marc. “Imagine a Violent World Where You Have No Military Option: What Would You Do?” 13 June 2014.  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marc-gopin/imagine-a-violent-world-w\\_b\\_5489989.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marc-gopin/imagine-a-violent-world-w_b_5489989.html)

Gopin, Marc. “Crowds and Revolutions Versus the Bonds That Endure.” 6 March 2014.  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marc-gopin/crowds-and-revolutions-ve\\_b\\_4905908.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marc-gopin/crowds-and-revolutions-ve_b_4905908.html)

Gopin, Marc. “‘Less Violent’ Does Not Have to Mean ‘Apathetic.’” 25 February 2014.  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marc-gopin/less-violent-does-not-hav\\_b\\_4847582.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marc-gopin/less-violent-does-not-hav_b_4847582.html)

Gopin, Marc. “‘Ceasefire’ is the Syria Word We Need to Hear.” 2 January 2014.  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marc-gopin/ceasefire-is-the-syria-wo\\_b\\_4532727.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marc-gopin/ceasefire-is-the-syria-wo_b_4532727.html)

Gopin, Marc. “Humanitarian Missiles are Superior to Cruise Missiles.” 31 August 2013.  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marc-gopin/humanitarian-missiles-are\\_b\\_3831768.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marc-gopin/humanitarian-missiles-are_b_3831768.html)

Kabawat, Nousha. “Life in Syria for Christians: teaching tolerance and harmony among the faithful.” 10 May 2015. <http://national.deseretnews.com/article/4402/life-in-syria-for-christians-teaching-tolerance-and-harmony-among-the-faithful.html>

Articles by Hind Kabawat:

**ALL articles** found at <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/author/hindkabawat-515>

(To read the articles in chronological order, start from the bottom)

- Idlib Women in Jeopardy. What is next?
- In Geneva, Trying to Keep Syrian Civilians Safe
- At Geneva, Syria's Future Put on Hold Yet Again
- Astana Must Be a Stepping Stone to UN-led Negotiations in Geneva
- The International Community's Duty to Protect Syrian Women
- The Time for Leadership to Protect All Civilians Across Syria
- Europe Must Help Syria's Women Make Peace
- A Syrian call to Europe for help
- Lingering Questions Surround Geneva III
- Riyadh Conference: What Makes It Different?
- My Memories of the First Syrian Film Festival in Toronto
- A Story of a Refugee Woman in Zaatari
- Syrian Ramadan at the Edge of War
- Yarmouk Camp, Anybody still there?
- A Syrian School's Healing Powers
- Hidden Minorities, Hidden Tragedies: A Beautiful Syrian World in Trouble
- Muslim and Christian Prayer
- Women of Syria Tell The Real Story
- From Green to Black: What Happens to a Revolution Without Support
- Children of Syria
- Meet the Women Rebuilding Syria in the Midst of War
- Two Evils in the Syrian Revolution

### **Other articles by CRDC students or about Project Amal ou Salam**

VIDEO. "What A 6-Year-Old Girl Does To Get An Education In A War-Torn City."  
Huffington Post. 11 March 2016. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/syrian-children-underground-school-project-amal-ou-salam\\_us\\_56e2eb40e4b0860f99d8c41c](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/syrian-children-underground-school-project-amal-ou-salam_us_56e2eb40e4b0860f99d8c41c)

Hart House Blog guest post by Nousha Kabawat. 11 October 2015.  
<http://harthouseoft.tumblr.com/post/132939837149/guest-blog-post-by-nousha-kabawat-founder-and>

Gelfond, Lauren. "Syria's next Generation." BBC Magazine. 12 March 2015.  
<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-31843501>

Gelfond, Lauren. "Young, Syrian, Female: This Is How You Fight ISIS's Values." ELLE Magazine. 14 September 2015. <http://www.elle.com/culture/career-politics/news/a30448/young-syrian-female-this-is-how-you-fight-isiss-values/>

Gentry, Keith (CRDC student August 2014). "Voices from Syria." Peace & Conflict Monitor. 10 October 2014. [http://www.monitor.upeace.org/innerpg.cfmid\\_article=1067](http://www.monitor.upeace.org/innerpg.cfmid_article=1067)

Overton, Andrew (CRDC student March 2014). "Media Narrative that Syria is a

Hopeless Debacle Ignores Helpful Non-violent Steps US Can Take.” Global Post. 14 April 2014. <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatches/globalpost-blogs/commentary/media-narrative-syria-hopeless-debacle-ignores-helpful-non-vi>

Umminger, April (CRDC student March 2015). “Voices: In midst of war, life goes on for Syrian kids.” 26 March 2015.

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2015/03/26/working-with-children-near-syria-turkey-border/70457570/>

*Required reading ends here; everything below is recommended but not required*

## Videos

Frontline, “Children of Syria.” 19 April 2016.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/children-of-syria/>

Frontline, “Inside Assad’s Syria.” 27 October 2015.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/inside-assads-syria/> (Associate producer Nousha Kabawat)

Frontline, “Children of Aleppo.” 11 February 2014.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/syrias-second-front/#children-of-aleppo>

TIME, “Syria's Lost Generation: The Plight of the Youngest Refugees.” 24 January 2014.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4iaJPafOrqY>

*Return to Homs*, 2013 documentary directed by Talal Derki

Other PBS Frontline documentaries on Syria

**BBC – Use this resource to gain a thorough understanding of the conflict**

“Syria country profile” <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14703856>

“Syria: The story of the conflict” <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26116868>

“Syria: Mapping the conflict” <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-22798391>

“Where key countries stand” <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-23849587>

“Why is there a war in Syria?” <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35806229>

“Guide to armed and political opposition” <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24403003> and <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-15798218>

The Carter Center’s Syria Conflict Mapping Project: <https://www.cartercenter.org/syria-conflict-map/>

Atlantic Council. Syria Source blog. <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/syriasource>



## **Recommended Text**

- Halasa, Malu, Zaher Omareen & Nawara Mahfoud, eds. (2014). *Syria Speaks: Art and Culture from the Frontline*. London: Saqi Books.
- Easwaran, E. (1984). *A Man to Match his Mountains: Badshah Khan, Nonviolent Soldier of Islam*. Berkeley, CA: Blue Mountain Center of Meditation Company.
- Sharp, Gene. *Sharp's Dictionary of Power Struggle: Language of Civil Resistance in Conflicts*. (Oxford University Press. 2012).
- Stephan, Maria and Erica Chenoweth (2011). *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict (Columbia Studies in Terrorism and Irregular Warfare)*. Columbia University Press.
- Zunes, Stephen, Kurtz, Lester R., & Asher Sarah B. (1999). *Nonviolent social movements: A geographical perspective*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

## **Honor Code and Plagiarism**

A reminder: Plagiarism or other violations of the **honor code** are not acceptable in this or any other GMU class. In addition to the following, please see the S-CAR handbook:

<http://www.gmu.edu/departments/ICAR/newstudent/Appendix L.pdf>.

All George Mason University students have agreed to abide by the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code. You can find a copy of the Honor Code at: [academicintegrity.gmu.edu](http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu). All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee for review. With specific regards to plagiarism, three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. If you have questions about when the contributions of others to your work must be acknowledged and appropriate ways to cite those contributions, please talk with the professor.

**S-CAR's Policy:** Faculty require that all written work must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared to electronic databases. Faculty may at any time compare a student's written work against electronic databases/plagiarism detection software without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require work to be submitted in print and electronic form. Faculty are encouraged to require students to submit work through Blackboard's SafeAssign program. Faculty may also directly submit work using the same system.

## University Resources and Assistance

### **English Language Institute**

The English Language Institute offers free English language tutoring to non-native English speaking students who are referred by a member of the GMU faculty or staff. For more information contact 703-993-3642 or [malle2@gmu.edu](mailto:malle2@gmu.edu).

### **The Writing Center**

The Writing Center provides tutors who can help you develop ideas and revise papers at no charge. It can sometimes accommodate walk-ins, but generally it is best to call for an appointment. The services of the Writing Center are also available online.

**Location:** ARL311 **Contact:** 703.993.4491 or <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>. It is a free writing resource that offers individual, group, and online tutoring.

### **Disability Resource Center**

The Disability Resource Center assists students with learning or physical conditions affecting learning. Students with learning differences that require special conditions for exams or other writing assignments should provide documentation provided by the Disability Resource Center. Please see one of the instructors the first week of classes.

**Location:** SUB I, Room 222 **Contact:** 703.993.2474 [www.gmu.edu/student/drc/](http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc/)