

Oral History: The Peace Studies Program: From Mundelein to Loyola

Memoir Interview Number 3: Dr. William French

Interviewed by Kathleen Ermitage March 3, 2015  
Chicago, Illinois

Edited Draft

*Context: This interview was conducted at Professor French's office on Loyola University's Lake Shore Campus. His point of view provides insight into the process at Loyola and his close work with Sister Carol Frances Jegen at Mundelein College to get the committee working together.*

**Part 1**  
**00:00**

Kathleen Ermitage: This is Kathleen Ermitage. I'm the researcher for the Oral History Project: Peace Studies, From Mundelein to Loyola. It is March 3, 2015. And I'm with Professor William French. I'm going to begin by asking a broad question about how the Peace Studies program was brought over here from Mundelein to Loyola. As I understand it from our previous conversations, it was a very multi-layered process. Not only bringing the two institutions together but the faculty and then the multiple disciplines that were represented on the committee. I'm wondering if you would mind describing how that came together.

Dr. French: Certainly. Part of it was a time of sadness for Mundelein College ... had a long wonderful history, as a Catholic women's college. And, really doing great innovative programs. They partnered a lot with the Kroc Center for International Peace over at Notre Dame. Groups would come into Notre Dame from around the world and they would get two or three days of focusing on international peace and then they would put them on a bus and they would come up to little Mundelein where the sisters and people in the Peace Studies program would take them to a soup kitchen in Uptown and they would get to see some of the urban challenges of American inequity. And, so Mundelein was a very special institution. And it was sad that it was not able to continue. But, happily Loyola had a contiguous campus and it was certainly an opportunity for Loyola to incorporate the Mundelein buildings, but also the Mundelein communities, the students, and energy of the faculty. And, so Dean Kathleen McCourt saw this as a wonderful opportunity to ... you have a new group of faculty coming into Loyola. They have had a distinctive Peace Studies program there. They know what they're doing with it ... that excite the students. And we don't have that. But we could take those faculty and add to them some of the strengths Loyola has in other disciplines. And, it was noted at the time ... a distinctive feature of Mundelein College was the education of Catholic women. Well, Loyola is a much bigger institution and actually we educate more Catholic women, and more women, in our student body than Mundelein ever did. So, the education of women is not something that is foreign to Loyola. It just wasn't the distinctive emphasis of Loyola. And so Kathleen McCourt saw this as an opportunity. Also, structurally it's an opportunity as well. Interdisciplinary studies allow the university to integrate the teaching and research of a network of faculty plucked from different departments ... to a subject area and it allows Loyola to say we have an additional interdisciplinary minor and Loyola doesn't have to hire any new faculty at all. It's a very inexpensive way program to run. You need a coordinator and to give them a modest stipend. And that's it. And faculty are typically quite supportive because faculty in different departments have not many other people to talk to about this area of interest of theirs. So it's real a win-win situation ... institutionally for the university, it can advertise it as a Peace Studies program ... for the faculty networking element its very significant and it offers students an interdisciplinary program. They may be majoring in Women's

Studies or Political Science or Philosophy, in addition they can take an interdisciplinary minor.

Kathleen: Very good. Thank you for pointing out some of the historical context of that period. And then, I'm wondering if you can speak, just even briefly, about the group of people that you helped bring together to form the initial committee.

Dr. French: Sure. On the Loyola side, some of the years before the committee was formed to plan Peace Studies program, [5:00] the Catholic bishops in 1983 wrote a tremendously important pastoral letter. It was at the height of the Cold War. And the fear of nuclear ... expansion of nuclear arsenals ... and the global threat that this posed to the two peoples and to the people of the rest of the planet was tangible and the Catholic bishops wrote in this pastoral letter ... they gave a qualified endorsement for nuclear deterrence to provide stability and hopefully peace but they were more deeply worried, as we all should be ... continue to be ... that it's not the ultimate foundation for true peace ... namely, threat ... peace founded on massive threat. And so the bishop's pastoral letter included a call for all Catholic colleges and universities to have in their curriculum courses focusing on war and peace issues. And so, Dean McCourt helped generate a group of faculty who expressed an interest in combining their strengths into a course ... a team-taught course on war and peace issues. And I was given the opportunity to coordinate that course. So I happily drew on the service of a number of very generous faculty who agreed to give different lectures. And, at the time I also invited the commandant of our ROTC program to see if he would be interested in giving a lecture or two on also for this jointly taught course. And, he was most happy to. And that proved to be very helpful because it sent a signal to some faculty in the Political Science Department that this was not just going to be simply a pacifist ideological, narrow agenda, but we were going to respectfully engage the pacifist heritage. We also respectfully were going to engage the just war tradition. And, both traditions are discussed at length in the bishop's pastoral letter. And we were also going to engage the sadness of really aggressive holy war or crusader-type war ... and crusader war when ... totalizes the conflict or sort of justifies a totalization of our understanding of who the enemy is. And you don't ... we don't have just have crusader war when we have people calling out the word of God to mobilize the carnage ... we can mobilize great carnage when we feel our enemy is utterly evil and we are utterly good. And so that was some of the context of the Loyola faculty that were interested in partnering with the interested Mundelein faculty on this project of ... in addition to having this jointly offered course we now had the opportunity to really ramp it up and have a full interdisciplinary program. And, so I was asked by Dean McCourt to join with Sister Carol Frances Jegen of Mundelein (who had directed their program) to Co-Chair a committee (appointed by Dean McCourt) and on the committee there were a number of wonderful generous faculty members from both programs. Mary Sparks and Prudence Moylan (of the, respectively, Sociology Department and the History Department) , Paul Messbarger of the English Department, Peter Schraeder of the Political Science Department, Tom Carson of the

Department of Philosophy, and some others gathered for our first planning meeting. And, Carol Frances and I had decided to jump start discussion by identifying a list of courses that we thought deserved to be discussed for possible into the Peace Studies program. And so we called our first meeting and for discussion purposes looked at a list of courses that some of us had identified as being likely candidates for a Peace Studies program. We didn't want a program that required us generating ... going through the labor of generating lots of whole new courses. Faculty are busy so the best idea is to look at what you've got offered already and if you can house those together [10:00] into the program ... well that would be the ideal. And it was at the first meeting ... that I realized that I realized that I had been naïve in my expectation that this was going to be an easy task to come to consensus about the shape and structure of the Peace Studies interdisciplinary program ... because at the table it seemed to some members of the committee (especially, I'd say, some of the faculty from Mundelein) who felt that ... to ... for a course to be accepted into the Peace Studies program that course ... a significant portion of each of those courses should involve an examination of Peace Studies methodology ... through, research and writing in the last 40 years or so ... not with just the greats of the pacifist tradition like Gandhi or Martin Luther King, but ongoing sociological and psychological and communications theorists on, sort of, the best practices of peace-making and conflict reduction. And, that was a bit of a shock to me because they very quickly concluded that they thought it wasn't appropriate to accept a course on Viet Nam or accept a history course on World War II or accept a History course focusing on the Holocaust. And so, partly my reaction was one of surprise but also a bit of trepidation as I watched the list of courses that I thought were very likely subjects for Peace Studies suddenly get chopped and diminished, especially on the History courses and the Political Science courses ... courses on American foreign policy or national security concerns. So that led to some vigorous discussion and it was a bit heated ... and was a real eye opener. Everyone was very respectful, but it was obvious that you had really two divergent models of what Peace Studies ... a Peace Studies minor would look like. And there was a divergence at our second and third meeting ... a divergence of schools of thinking about what we should call the program. That some of us looked at the Peace Studies Association list and that's the ... gave a listing of all the titles of the interdisciplinary programs of the colleges and universities that are members of the Peace Studies Association. And Mundelein, to its credit, was like seventh ... it was right there in the founding of the Peace Studies Association. Carol Frances Jegen's sister also was a Catholic nun who helped found Pax Christi. So, Carol Frances Jegen had many years of close involvement with the Peace Studies Association. And a number of people wanted to continue the title that Mundelein had used, namely, Peace Studies would be the name of the program. Others of us looked at the listing of the other titles being used by many colleges and universities and thought we would have an advantage (of signaling to our student body and also to our faculty) that this is a big tent program. We're going to certainly look at pacifism and appreciate it and we're going to look at stratagems of conflict resolution. And we're going to look at sociological and gender analyses of violence in the United States and economic inequity. But in addition, we thought it might be in our interests to go with a title ... some faculty

proposed “Peace and Conflict” studies or “Peace and Security” studies. And I was of that school. I would have preferred and still would prefer if it were titled “Peace and Conflict” studies. So there were two levels of contestation. And it began to seem ... I still interpreted ... that what we were getting ... there was a gender dimension to the differences ... that the Mundelein faculty had stressed the education of women and so were intentionally feminist and concerned to profile in an important way ... gender issues and the gendered analysis of war talk as macho talk [15:00] and violence ... and the analysis of peacemaking (as both rhetorically and in terms of conflict resolution) about relationship building. And so, during this time, in feminist philosophical circles ... emphasizing relationality as a way of understanding modes of building trust and understanding that can mitigate conflict. And the voices at the table that wanted to include the History courses of “War and peace” and a course in which the head of ROTC might be speaking to our students ... and a course on American national security concerns ... those voices at the table tended to be among the men. And so, I think, to this day I think there was an important growth period across those number of meetings where we did um .. there was a need to grapple with how feminist .... What would be the role of feminism in the course menu? Appropriately, courses must deal with the importance of feminism and the importance of pacifism and the importance of conflict resolution strategies. But a number of the Loyola faculty wanted to preserve a greater number of course options for our students. I think it may be ... I don’t know ... maybe more young men tend to take those Political Science courses or those History courses and the young women students tend to be taking more of the psychology and the sociology courses out of their Women’s Studies program ... so they are attentive to gender issues. And so, finally the committee became somewhat exhausted by going thru and trying to build consensus and finally Sister Carol Frances Jegen and I had a conversation where we proposed trying a compromise that maybe there could be flexing by some and allow a big tent menu of courses to be accepted. And that would be the World War II course and the Holocaust course and American Foreign Policy would be in as an elective. We would have a required overview course that would be filled with Peace Studies methodology and really attentive to that body of Peace Studies Association research. And, on the issue of the name of the program we would not add “Security Studies.” We would not add “Conflict Studies.” If we were going to give one side of the debate the course menu that they had wanted and we were going to give the other side the title of the program. And, by that stage, people seemed to think that that’s a pretty good compromise. And then the modeling of the structuring of the program ... I was impressed by a philosopher ... Michael Walzer wrote a book *Spheres of Justice* ... and it struck me that an advantage to us would be to think in terms of ... well, certainly we want to focus on international violence and peacemaking. We also certainly want to focus on domestic American societal patterns of violence and gender violence and racial inequity and economic inequity. And, we’re in Chicago so that should be a natural because its right in our backyard and it’s within all of American society. But in addition of that, I thought it appropriate to ... that we flag a third sphere of violence and peacemaking ... namely, increasing human practices that seem to be in violent conflict with the Earth’s natural

ordering and the habits of sustainability and the welfare of ecosystems that is increasingly being hammered by humanity's expanding numbers and expanding industrial and agricultural practices of production and consumption. And so the committee finally agreed that ... OK, these components then ... a Peace Studies overview required course and then we could require every Peace Studies student would have to take at least one elective from each of these three spheres of violence and peacemaking. And that seemed to solve the problem.

## **Part 2**

Kathleen: I wanted to take this opportunity to ask you one final question ... and I think you've mentioned some people. I'm wondering if you can suggest to us any other people that should be interviewed for this project.

Dr. French: Excellent excellent question. I think, well certainly Peter Schraeder in his own work ... he does a lot of work in Northern Africa and the horn of Africa and has been supportive of these and he's been a very prolific author on international relations and American foreign policy. And I person I haven't really mentioned is Bob Ludwig who is now an Emeritus faculty member at Loyola. I first met Bob when he was director of University Ministry at DePaul University. And, another institutional element in the background of the Peace Studies program was Loyola's participation, for a few years, in a short-lived project called the Chicago Center for Peace Studies that included representatives from Loyola. I served as our representative. And, DePaul had two representatives and Bob was one of them. And seven other ... five other Catholic colleges and universities around the area. Through that, Bob has had a long-standing commitment to Peace Studies. He is a personal friend of the Berrigan's. He's now working on a book on Daniel Berrigan. And it was my good fortune a few years ago ... 2007 ... following the spirit of the Peace Studies program here. Loyola as continued to host a number of events in the area. For example, just last year ... the strategic plan of Loyola is now committed to the core value of social justice. Well so now things are continuing to move forward. But in 2007, partly in response to the 9/11 attacks and all of the turmoil and sense of threat, Father Garanzini gave the Center for Ethics and the Institute for Pastoral Studies significant funds to host a major conference called "Peacemaking in an Age of Terror." And in that conference, the keynote was by Arun Gandhi (the grandson of the great Mahatma). It included scholars focusing ... a number of Muslim scholars focusing on Mideast concerns, Christian ethicists focusing on pacifism in the Catholic ... Christian just war tradition, James Carroll (Boston Globe journalist), and a filmmaker who did a documentary. Eugene Daricki did a documentary on why we fight. Father Daniel Berrigan was given an honorary degree and read some of his poetry. And, we had Dr. Helen Caldicott who founded Physicians for Social Responsibility and has been a long-standing educator against the danger of nuclear weapons and nuclear energy. So, this was really a major conference. And its those sorts of conference and events that draw attention to the word ... to the language of

peacemaking and put the conflict issues and the international conflict and aggression issues and the resolution issues, the peacemaking approaches or the surgical strikes that are sometimes needed to save pockets of civilians who are being hammered by extremists. Forward ... for the Loyola community and the other communities (the general public of Chicago) ... so Bob Ludwig has a long-standing interest and support of these programs.

Kathleen: Thank you. I want to thank you for your time today.

Dr. French: Not at all. Thank you for doing this project.