

Cultivating Parker Palmer's Habits of the Heart in an Integrative Course on Israel/Palestine

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In Healing the Heart of Democracy, Quaker author Parker J. Palmer presents five "Habits of the Heart" that "help make democracy possible."

*An understanding that we are all in this together.
An appreciation of the value of "otherness."
An ability to hold tension in life-giving ways.
A sense of personal voice and agency.
A capacity to create community.*

In the spring of 2015, I used these Habits to frame an integrative undergraduate seminar with a justice theme on the topic of Israel/Palestine. The course was structured to cultivate these Habits and establish interfaith dialogue and community in the class and across campus.

Introduction

Recent years have seen college campuses across the United States as the flashpoint for angry, violent, and counterproductive public discourse around the many issues related to Israel/Palestine. My own campus had a significant flare-up of such contentious discourse during the conflict in Gaza in 2009, prior to my arrival. Since that time our campus has mostly shied away from public discussion of this and other difficult issues like it. In proposing and developing this integrative and interdisciplinary seminar for upper-level undergraduate students, I had in mind one overarching goal: to foster the creation of a community (within the class and more broadly on campus) that could thoughtfully, carefully, and compassionately engage with each other about deeply important, complex, and difficult topics. The urgency of this goal with respect to Israel/Palestine was reinforced by the war in Gaza that was happening during the summer of 2014 while I was developing the course. My hope was that the class would help each of us develop the skills and commitment to engage in productive interfaith dialogue around the two main, intersecting and integrating themes of the course: Justice and the Common Good, and Israel/Palestine. The course description reads as follows: What does "Justice and the Common Good" mean in the context of the situation in the land we call Israel/Palestine? Who are the people who live there? What are their stories? What is our responsibility?

In what follows, I discuss how the work of Quaker author Parker J. Palmer deeply informed my approach to the course, to its structure, and to its assignments. Palmer's work on authority and authenticity in teaching, and the principles and practices he developed for establishing Circles of Trust®, have transformed my understanding of the classroom as an important civic space that can

either support or discourage productive dialogue. This justice-themed course on Israel/Palestine provided an important opportunity to foster interfaith dialogue both inside and outside the classroom. Beyond dialogue, I hoped that the course would also provide opportunities for action, for students to do something to create community around the issues of Israel/Palestine. Informed by the Jesuit, Catholic liberal arts college in which I teach, this paper presents my journey with this course following the principles of Ignatian Pedagogy: Context, Experience, Reflection, Action, Evaluation.

Context—What We Brought to the Class

Regis University has a strong commitment to its Jesuit, Catholic mission, which focuses on education of the whole person for a life of intentional and reflective service with and for others. This commitment has led to the development of an Integrative Core requirement in which all students take upper-division integrative courses in each of the following theme areas: Diversity, Search for Meaning, Global Environmental Awareness, and Justice and the Common Good. To develop our faculty's pedagogical ability to design and carry out these integrative courses successfully, the University received a generous grant from the Keck Foundation to offer a two-week Integrative Teaching Institute (ITI) for about 20 faculty each year for 5 years (2009–2013). I participated in the last year of the grant with the goal of developing this course on Israel/Palestine for the Justice and the Common Good theme.

The course was offered in spring semester 2014, and included 22 students, mostly juniors and seniors. Among the students, about half of them were humanities or social science majors (religious studies, communication, peace and justice studies, and history) and half were natural science majors (neuroscience, biology, and environmental studies). Very few of the students came into the class with a strong, direct connection with Israel/Palestine or the peoples involved. I was the only Jewish person in the class and there were no Muslim students. All of the students identified as Catholic, Christian, or nonreligious. One of the Catholic students was from Iraq and had also spent time in Jordan, and one other student had traveled in Egypt, but no one (besides myself) had been to Israel/Palestine.

While Regis has a strong commitment to active engagement on a number of social justice issues, there had been very little public discussion of Israel/Palestine on campus in recent years. The most recent major "conversation" arose in January 2009, when a group identifying themselves as "Faculty for Gaza" published an open letter in the school newspaper criticizing both Israel and Hamas, and calling on the US to remove support for Israel's war policy. Other members of the faculty wrote a letter in response challenging the perceived singling out of Israel and US policy toward Israel for critique. In preparation for this course, I spoke with the major players involved in these letters, and it seemed clear that they did not lead to constructive or productive dialogue between the parties on campus. In particular, I heard that some members of the small Jewish community on campus remained concerned that the Catholic-majority community could be too easily swayed toward anti-Israel sentiments.

Setup/Structure

Given this context, I wanted to design the course to give students access to some basic information about the land, peoples, histories, etc. as well as skills necessary to go beyond and beneath the media portrayals of the politics of the conflict. It was also important to me that we find ways for personal connection, so that we could avoid talking about the “conflict” as a theoretical problem. In order to achieve these goals, as well as the goal of creating community, I structured the course around Parker J. Palmer’s “Five Habits of the Heart that Help Make Democracy Possible” from *Healing the Heart of Democracy*.¹ Palmer employs Alexis de Tocqueville’s phrase “Habits of the Heart” to refer to deeply ingrained ways of seeing, being, and responding to life that involve our minds, our emotions, our self-images, and our concepts of meaning and purpose. The five habits Palmer describes are as follows:

1. An understanding that we are all in this together.
2. An appreciation of the value of “otherness.”
3. An ability to hold tension in life-giving ways.
4. A sense of personal voice and agency.
5. A capacity to create community.

The course was structured to focus on one or two of these habits at a time, and at each stage the students were asked to reflect on the subject material covered in relation to the habit under discussion. The syllabus that was given to students on the first day is included as Appendix 1. It shows the course description and rationale, an explanation of the Habits of the Heart, a list of some of the activities and assignments, and a list of possible topics we might cover. I purposely chose not to set out the schedule of readings and assignments at the outset, but rather gave the students opportunities to participate in making these decisions. At the end of the semester, the class engaged in a consensus-building conversation to assign the percentage of the final grade allotted to each assignment.

Experience – What We Did Together **Setting the Container (Weeks 1–2)**

My approach to setting up the class dynamics is heavily influenced by Parker Palmer’s work on setting and holding a container for deep listening and honest engagement. For the last three years I have had the privilege to work with Palmer and the leadership team from the Center for Courage & Renewal® completing the training to become a certified facilitator of the Circle of Trust® approach developed by the Center based on Palmer’s work.² One of the hallmarks of this approach is the practice of sitting in circle together, guided by a set of touchstones that create and hold the space for deep, compassionate listening, and provide opportunities for each person to listen and share the truth that arises within them (what Quakers call the inner light or inner teacher). This process of connecting with our inner teacher is facilitated by reading aloud and sharing into the circle our reactions to what Palmer calls a “Third Thing,” which is often a poem that allows us to approach some important truth about ourselves at a slant.³

¹ Parker J. Palmer, *Healing the Heart of Democracy: The Courage to Create a Politics Worthy of the Human Spirit* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011).

² For more information, visit the website of the Center for Courage & Renewal® at www.couragerenewal.org.

³ For a more detailed description of the use of Third Things, see Parker J. Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 90–111.

Committed to the idea that one of the primary goals of this course was to develop our own deeper understanding of justice, and our sense of our responsibility in contributing to the common good, we began the first class period sitting in such a circle with a poem by Yehuda Amichai, “The Place Where We Are Right.”⁴

From the place where we are right
flowers will never grow
in the spring.

The place where we are right
is hard and trampled
like a yard.

But doubts and loves
dig up the world
like a mole, a plow.
And a whisper will be heard in the place
where the ruined
house once stood.

This poem not only introduced us to an important Israeli poet, but also began our conversations together with thoughtfulness and self-reflection about how to enter into a conversation within which claims to be right abound.

Two other activities right at the beginning of the class contributed to setting a container for dialogue that encouraged authentic, safe, and brave participation. First, as a class we decided upon the touchstones that would guide our interactions throughout the course (see Appendix 2 for a copy of the touchstones). The central principles were as follows:

1. Speak your truth in ways that respect the truths of others.
2. Learn to ask honest, open questions.
3. When the going gets rough, turn to wonder.
4. Make space for silence and reflection.
5. Listen carefully.
6. Observe confidentiality.
7. Take risks.

Second, each of us completed a short written reflection on our associations with the concepts of “home” and “homeland” with the following questions as prompts:

What does “home” mean for you?
Where is “home” for you? Where is your homeland?
What does it look like?

⁴ Yehuda Amichai, “The Place Where We Are Right,” in *The Selected Poetry of Yehuda Amichai*, ed. and trans. Chana Bloch and Stephen Mitchell (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 34.

What does it feel like? What is the atmosphere like?
What qualities does it have? What makes it feel like “home”?
What are its limits or boundaries?
Who is present to make it “home”? Who are my “people”?
When is it most “home”? What times of day or what seasons of the year?

Sharing these reflections with each other helped us develop a deeper understanding of our backgrounds and also a sense of what makes each of us comfortable.

Cultivating the Habits

Having worked at the outset to establish some boundaries for the space, we spent the rest of the semester engaging the two content areas of the course (Justice and Israel/Palestine) with an eye to cultivating the Habits of the Heart that Help Make Democracy Possible. We began with some open discussion of the Habits of the Heart themselves as Palmer presents them. The handout we used as an explanation of the Habits is attached as Appendix 3. Each of the Habits provided an important context for self-reflection, encouraging honesty with ourselves and with one another. In the end, we created a community of hospitality, in which each student—whatever their religious, political, or personal context—could bring and share their truth in dialogue with others. In what follows I will highlight some of the readings, activities, and assignments that tied each section of the course content with the Habit to be cultivated.

An Understanding that We Are All In This Together (Weeks 2–3)

This section of the course focused on readings about Justice and the Common Good. We read both philosophical explorations of justice and solidarity (e.g., chapters from Michael J. Sandel’s *Justice: What’s the Right Thing to Do?* on “Justice and the Common Good” and “Dilemmas of Loyalty”),⁵ as well as a variety of religious perspectives from within the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim traditions (e.g., Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Beyond Vietnam” speech; Elliot Dorff, “The Covenant: The Transcendent Thrust in Jewish Law”; Rabbi Jane Kanarek, “What Does *Tikkun Olam* Actually Mean”; Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid and Shaik Abdullah Hassan Mydin, “The Prophet (Peace Be On Him) As A Model for Universal Peace and Justice”; and the chapter on “Justice” from Michael Birkel’s *Qur’an in Conversation*).⁶ Our discussions on these readings allowed us access to some of the diverse resources for understanding the concept of justice across different religious traditions, and helped us begin to develop our own language about how we understand our interconnectedness and our responsibilities for others.

⁵ Michael J. Sandel, *Justice: What’s the Right Thing to Do?* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010).

⁶ Martin Luther King, Jr., “Beyond Vietnam,” April 4, 1967, available at http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documentsentry/doc_beyond_vietnam/; Elliot N. Dorff, “The Covenant: The Transcendent Thrust in Jewish Law,” in *Contemporary Jewish Ethics and Morality: A Reader*, ed. Elliott N. Dorff and Louise E. Newman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 59–78; Jane Kanarek, “What Does *Tikkun Olam* Actually Mean?” in *Righteous Indignation: A Jewish Call for Justice*, ed. Or N. Rose, Jo Ellen Green Kaiser, and Margie Klein (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2008), 15–22; Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid and Shaik Abdullah Hassan Mydin, “The Prophet (Peace Be On Him) As A Model for Universal Peace and Justice,” *Insights* 2 (2009–2010):153–178; Michael Birkel, *Qur’an in Conversation* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 191–206.

We concluded this exploration with an assignment to write a short essay exploring our understanding that we are all in this together, drawing on some of the readings. Part of the writing prompt was as follows:

In your response, articulate your own understanding of the meaning and significance of “we are all in this together.” (You may discuss in what ways you agree or disagree with Palmer or discuss it on your own.) What does, or ought, living based on this understanding look like for you? What are the real challenges to acting according to this understanding for you? If possible, try to provide some specific, personal stories that reflect your own solidarities and connections, as well as the obstacles to living out a sense of interconnectedness.

I found that the students were able to draw effectively on the different religious perspectives from the readings (generally seeing them as complementary), but more could have been done in the discussion and assignment to draw out their own voices, especially as they relate to encounters across lines of religious difference. The majority of students seemed to reflect a general, humanistic view similar to the perennial question, “Why can’t we all just get along?” The few who wrote about specific personal experiences did not discuss the ways faith or religious identity was implicated in the experience.

An Appreciation of the Value of Otherness (Weeks 3–4)

This Habit of the Heart is centered on the recognition that “us” and “them” does not need to mean “us” versus “them.” We anchored our quest to greater openness to the “other” in two powerful pieces: “Returning to Haifa” and “The Danger of the Single Story.”

“Returning to Haifa,” a novella by Ghassan Kanafani, tells the story of a Palestinian couple who return, in the days after the 1967 war, to the home they were forced to flee in 1948 and their conversation with the Israeli woman who, after fleeing Europe with her husband, settled in that home. This piece served as a great link between our discussions of interconnectedness and the need to hear the story of the “other” on its own terms. The compelling encounter between Jew and Arab also challenged us to wrestle with the limitations in our ability to reconcile with the other even if we achieve some understanding.

“The Danger of a Single Story,” a TED talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, challenges us to take the responsibility to reject every attempt to present a single story about any person, people, or group. Adichie brings to our awareness how easy it is to rest in our own simple understanding of another and miss out on the beauty and complexity of others’ lives. We tried to break apart our single stories about Israel and Palestine, Israelis and Palestinians, by researching and sharing with each other news stories or articles relating to a wide range of the demographic diversity across the land we call Israel/Palestine. In this way, we began to see the rich religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity that is ignored and violated when this story is told as an eternal, intractable conflict between Jews and Muslims.

An Ability to Hold Tension in Life-Giving Ways (Weeks 5–9)

The open encounter with the “other” leads naturally into developing the skill of holding tension in ways that allow for new opportunities and insights rather than collapsing tension in order

to move on to something else. Once we began to recognize the fallacy of the single story, we were faced with the difficult task of making sense of the history of the land and its peoples over the last century. We did this by reading *Side by Side* by Sami Adwan, Dan Bar-On, Eyal Naveh, and the Peace Research Institute in the Middle East (PRIME).⁷ This fascinating book presents an Israeli (Jewish) narrative and a Palestinian narrative of each decade of the twentieth century on facing pages. The narratives were written independently by a collection of school teachers in each community and shared with each other with the expectation that each of them would begin teaching both narratives. Logistically we found it difficult to read the two narratives simultaneously. (Do you read the whole chapter of one narrative and then the other, or switch page by page, or section by section?) Even more significantly, we were confronted with holding the tensions between the quite different explanations and interpretations of events, as well as recognizing the significant differences in approach, tone, and level of detail in the narrative. For example, in the chapter relating the war in 1948, the Israeli narrative chronicled the events of the war, the significant battles, and the conflicts internal and external. In contrast, the Palestinian narrative contained almost exclusively stories, poems, and songs of loss and devastation.

In an effort to hear these stories honestly and also wrestle with our own sense of story we broke into groups to articulate the core interests, concerns, and goals of each of the parties. Each group had the opportunity to do this for both the Israeli and Palestinian “side.” We also each wrote an in-class reflection on what tensions we had found ourselves holding in relationship to these narratives. I personally found this section of the course to be the most challenging. Having been raised in a Jewish home with the Israeli narrative as the accepted history, I found myself struggling to hold the tension of my own positionality and my own desire for a better understanding. I was, for my own benefit, trying to hear more deeply the Palestinian narrative and, at the same time, I felt compelled to challenge the students to take more seriously the realities of anti-Semitism and the logic of Zionism. On a few occasions, I confessed to the students my own struggle to hold the tension between challenging my biases and speaking from the perspective of my own religious belonging. I believe the students responded well to my transparency in sharing my struggles with them, helping them to commit to holding their own tensions.

A Sense of Personal Voice and Agency (Weeks 10–13)

Articulating the tensions we were each holding led us to move into reflection on how we want to act in ways that honor the tension, yet begin to find our own voice and integrity of action. We began this exploration by investigating the approaches of a wide range of US-based NGOs and activist groups focused on Israel/Palestine. We talked about how each group told the story, what their goals were, and how they carried out their work. We were particularly interested in the intersections between the story each told about the nature of the situation and the degree to which they emphasized either justice, security, or peace.

During this section of the course we also heard from guest speakers who shared their experiences and talked about what they are doing with those experiences. We heard from Erin Breeze, the former director of Building Bridges, an NGO that has brought young Israeli and Palestinian women (Jews, Christians, and Muslims) to Colorado for engaged intercultural dialogue and that works to cultivate continued relationships between the participants after they return to their

⁷ Sāmī ‘Abd Al-Razzāq ‘Adwān, Dan Bar-On, Eyal J. Naveh, and the Peace Research Institute in the Middle East (PRIME), eds., *Side by Side: Parallel Histories of Israel/Palestine* (New York: New Press, 2012).

home environments. We also heard from Rabbi Tirzah Firestone about her research on the psychological and physiological effects of transgenerational trauma, focusing especially on the qualities that lead such survivors of trauma to lives of flourishing and compassion. Finally we had the opportunity to hear stories from a few Palestinian and Jewish Americans about our connections to the land and its peoples, and how these experiences inform our advocacy and engagement with the discourse about Israel/Palestine in our own communities. Each of these guests brought their own personal stories as well as a wealth of experience engaging in productive conversations about these difficult issues. I was profoundly grateful for these opportunities and the students clearly valued them as well.

The students were then asked to write an essay whose purpose was for them to find their own voice and begin to recognize what they would like to do in response to what they have learned. The prompt was as follows:

This assignment is designed to give you a chance to find your own voice, to articulate your understanding at this point of the central issues at stake in Israel/Palestine. Here are some ideas that I invite you to write about (you don't have to answer all these questions):

1. How would you define each of these terms: justice, peace, and security? What do each of these terms mean for you? (You may use some of the readings from our earlier section on justice in the different religions or other texts from the Contents section of the course website.) It may be helpful for you to consider differences between positive and negative peace, and military, economic, and human security.
2. Which of these interests (justice, peace, and security) do you think is most important to work toward at this point regarding Israel/Palestine? How do you see the relationship between these three interests? In what ways are they compatible; in what ways might they work against each other?
3. What would justice look like? What would peace look like? What would security look like? What would working toward whichever of these you see as most important look like? What could you do? What are some other people doing that you think is the right way to go?

A Capacity to Create Community (Weeks 14–15)

The last of the Habits of the Heart takes our own awakening sense of agency and directs it toward building community for the purpose of social cohesion and social change. Although we ran out of time at the end of the semester for the students to put this into practice in a fully developed way, the following assignment gave us the opportunity to have an intentional conversation whose goal was to contribute to a deepening of community:

For this project, I ask each of us, either by yourself or perhaps with one or two other members of your small group, or the class, to first consider a context, group of people, or relationship within which you would like to build or strengthen community. It could

be here at Regis, or in your local community, or in your family. Then, set up a conversation within your chosen context that relates to some of the issues you have encountered regarding Israel/Palestine. The key point is that the purpose of this conversation ought to be about creating and strengthening community through the process. After the conversation write a short two-page reflection on what you hoped to happen in your conversation and what you think did come from it.

Some students had a deeper conversation with a family member, others gathered a few friends to talk about complex cultural identity, and another hosted a Palestinian music group on campus.

Reflection—What the Students Learned

Throughout the course, in class and in assignments, we were regularly invited to reflect on our own thinking and feeling about the materials, experiences, and conversations from the class. The final project for the course entailed the creation of an ePortfolio that would bring together as artifacts our own writings throughout the semester as well as those readings, news items, and videos that we found influential in our thinking about the Habits, justice, and Israel/Palestine. On each artifact, we wrote a short reflection on the significance of that artifact on our understanding and its connection to the Habits and to other artifacts. The goal of the portfolio was to tell our own story of the course. The complete rubric for this assignment is included as Appendix 4. It was evident from the portfolios that the students found profound ways to bring themselves to the work of the class and that they were leaving the class with important insights into how they want to engage their responsibilities in working for justice and the common good going forward.

At the end of the semester, I also asked the students to reflect on their experience using the Habits of the Heart as the frame for this course. It was clear from their comments that they found the Habits to be very helpful. These are some of the phrases that the students used to describe the Habits:

- a mindful way of creating understanding
- keep us grounded in a very enriching way on ideas of community and respect
- a platform “homebase” to discuss the things we were grappling with
- a lifeline
- Habits seem perfect for this course
- I will be continually referring back to them
- helped to withhold judgment
- very intentional path
- encouraged me to reflect on my learnings in a new and positive way
- helped to keep me away from forming a single story or from choosing a side that was “more right”
- broke down the intensity and immensity of the topic into pieces that could be dealt with

These comments, as well as the very positive responses on the course evaluations (the highest I have received for any class), indicate that we were able to create and hold a container for our conversations that truly fostered democracy, engagement, and community. The students were deeply engaged and

were able to bring themselves fully to our discussions in a way that welcomed different perspectives and encouraged each of us to seek deeper understanding.

Action and Evaluation—What I Learned

Without question, this was the hardest and the most rewarding course I have had the opportunity to design and facilitate. The difficulty of the course was centered around my own concerns about how to engage such a complex and controversial topic, about which I am deeply passionate, with fairness and integrity. I owed it to the students to allow passion and disagreement while fostering respect and listening for understanding. I was committed to helping create a space that could be both welcoming and charged (one of the paradoxes Palmer describes as central to the Circle of Trust® approach). By relying on the deep wisdom about group process and individual soul growth reflected in Palmer's work, I felt that I was able to balance my involvement as both facilitator and participant. As facilitator, I could hold and protect the container we had established and introduce us to a variety of informative and challenging voices and perspectives through readings, activities, and guest speakers. As a participant, I was able to complete and share with the students each of the written reflections as well as my own final portfolio. I openly recognized the limitations of my perspective and apologized to the class on a few occasions when I felt my own biases overly influenced the direction of our conversation. At the same time, I took the opportunity to participate as a guest speaker together with my brother, Rabbi Jamie Arnold, as we recounted our shared and very different experiences visiting Israel and Palestine, living there for short periods, and leading groups of students and congregants there over the years. I am confident that the framework of the Habits of the Heart made it possible for me to truly bring my whole self to the class with integrity while inviting each of the students to do the same. The students' sincerity and integrity also challenged me to read more widely and open myself up to perspectives I have ignored in the past. For example, during the semester, I read Ari Shavit's *My Promised Land*, Pamela Olson's *Fast Times in Palestine*, and Alan Dershowitz's *The Case for Israel*.⁸ The next time I teach the course I hope to find more ways to bring more voices into the discussion. First, I will bring in more guests who represent different perspectives to supplement the narratives of *Side by Side*. Second, I will add Yossi Klein Halevi's *At the Entrance to the Garden of Eden* to the reading list in order to make interreligious encounter a more explicit part of the course discussion.⁹ In the end, I am looking forward to making this course, and this approach, a regular part of my teaching schedule.

⁸ Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2013); Pamela J. Olson, *Fast Times in Palestine: A Love Affair with a Homeless Homeland* (Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2013); Alan Dershowitz, *The Case for Israel* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2003).

⁹ Yossi Klein Halevi, *At the Entrance to the Garden of Eden: A Jew's Search for Hope with Christians and Muslims in the Holy Land* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002).

Appendix 1: The Syllabus

Course Description:

What does “Justice and the Common Good” mean in the context of the situation in the land we call Israel/Palestine? Who are the people who live there? What are their stories? What is our responsibility?

I have conceived of this course as an opportunity to foster the creation of a community (within the class and more broadly at Regis) that can thoughtfully, carefully, and compassionately engage with each other about deeply important, complex, and difficult topics. This is an act of hospitality that calls on each of us to work at creating a space for open conversation, for speaking our truths in ways that respect other people’s truths, for listening to different ideas and hearing each other’s stories. In my opinion this kind of community is the central aim of education, and of democracy.

Five Habits of the Heart that Help Make Democracy Possible

The phrase “Habits of the Heart,” coined by Alexis de Tocqueville, refers to deeply ingrained ways of seeing, being, and responding to life that involve our minds, our emotions, our self-images, and our concepts of meaning and purpose. The following 5 habits of the heart will serve as a framework and benchmark for our engagement with each other and with the learning we will undertake together.

1. An understanding that we are all in this together.
2. An appreciation of the value of “otherness.”
3. An ability to hold tension in life-giving ways.
4. A sense of personal voice and agency.
5. A capacity to create community.

Adapted from Parker J. Palmer, *Healing the Heart of Democracy* (2011)

Some of the Ways We Will Develop these Habits:

Regular Attendance and Active Participation

Engaging Media and Social Media through Facebook Group

Reading and Hearing from Multiple Voices representing a Diversity of Perspectives

Regular Short Writing Assignments

Small Group Class Discussion

Community Event

Final Portfolio

We will be using Pathbrite to create electronic portfolios that allow us to represent our learning and our considered determinations about what is essential for understanding and engaging the myriad, complex issues involved with Israel/Palestine. The portfolio will gather your work from throughout the semester and through critical reflection, bring it together into a coherent package.

Topics and Issues to be Covered:

We as a class will be working together to determine both what we will need to learn about and what we want to learn about, and what voices and perspectives we want to hear. We will begin the semester with discussions of how we understand the concepts of justice and the common good. We will also gain an understanding of the land (geography, resources, etc.), the peoples (demographics, migration patterns, etc.), and the narratives of history of the twentieth century. Other topics might include political structures, media, international relations, peacemaking efforts, military conflict, political negotiations, NGOs, US policy, psychological effects of generational trauma, art, music, and film, etc.

It is my goal that, while the course will engage the issues related to the ongoing conflict known as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we will begin to see a much larger, richer, and more textured picture of the region.

Appendix 2: Touchstones

Some Principles to Guide our Way of Being Together

- **Speak your truth in ways that respect the truths of others.**

Our views of reality may differ, but speaking one’s truth in this circle does not mean interpreting, correcting, or debating what others say. Speak from your self with “I statements” into the center of the circle, trusting the rest of us to listen with care and do our own sifting and engaging with what you have said.

Avoid trying to win the point or prove you are right.

Speak from what you know.

- **Learn to ask honest, open questions.**

Instead of judging, debating, or trying to correct what people say, or asking leading questions (in which you have a clear answer in mind), ask questions that come from a simple desire to help the speaker explore more deeply what she or he has said. “Is there a story from your life that helps explain why you feel or believe what you do?” is an honest open question. “Do you really think that it is ok to kill innocent people?” is not!

Use questions to encourage self-reflection and to investigate other’s support and background.

- **When the going gets rough, turn to wonder.**

Try to be aware of your own reactivity, your own rising judgment and when you notice it turn your attention to wonder and compassion—for yourself and for others. Say to yourself “I wonder why am I responding in this way” “I wonder what is pushing my buttons in what was just said” “I wonder what she or he really wants to communicate in what she or he just said” “I wonder why she/he feels this way.”

Assume best intent.

- **Make space for silence and reflection.**

Our focus is less about covering all the material or moving quickly from one person to another in discussion. We can learn much from slowing down and listening carefully to each other and especially to ourselves, our own thoughts, our own desires.

Use silence as a way to give a chance for all to participate.

- **Listen carefully.**

Focus attention on what others are saying and what they are meaning.

Focus on listening rather than thinking about what you are going to say.

Ask clarifying questions to check for understanding.

- **Observe confidentiality.**

If sharing stories that come up in class, avoid attributing them to any person.

- **Take risks.**

Try speaking out ideas that may not be fully formed.

Be willing to ask “tough” or “potentially offensive” questions with kindness.

Appendix 3: Habits of the Heart Handout



Five Habits of the Heart that Help Make Democracy Possible

Adapted from Parker J. Palmer, *Healing the Heart of Democracy: The Courage to Create a Politics Worthy of the Human Spirit* (2011)

The human heart is the first home of democracy. It is where we embrace our questions. Can we be equitable? Can we be generous? Can we listen with our whole beings, not just our minds, and offer our attention rather than our opinions? And do we have enough resolve in our hearts to act courageously, relentlessly, without giving up—ever—trusting our fellow citizens to join with us in our determined pursuit of a living democracy? —Terry Tempest Williams¹⁰

“Habits of the Heart” (a phrase coined by Alexis de Tocqueville) are deeply ingrained ways of seeing, being, and responding to life that involve our minds, our emotions, our self-images, our concepts of meaning and purpose. I believe that these five interlocked habits are critical to sustaining a democracy:

1. An understanding that we are all in this together. Biologists, ecologists, economists, ethicists, and leaders of the great wisdom traditions have all given voice to this theme. Despite our illusions of individualism and national superiority, we humans are a profoundly interconnected species—entwined with one another and with all forms of life, as the global economic and ecological crises reveal in vivid and frightening detail. We must embrace the simple fact that we are dependent upon and accountable to one another, and that includes the stranger, the “alien other.” At the same time, we must save the notion of interdependence from the idealistic excesses that make it an impossible dream. Exhorting people to hold a continual awareness of global, national, or even local interconnectedness is a counsel of perfection that is achievable (if at all) only by the rare saint, one that can only result in self-delusion or defeat. Which leads to a second key habit of the heart...

2. An appreciation of the value of “otherness.” It is true that we are all in this together. It is equally true that we spend most of our lives in “tribes” or lifestyle enclaves—and that thinking of the world in terms of “us” and “them” is one of the many limitations of the human mind. The good news is that “us and them” does not have to mean “us versus them.” Instead, it can remind us of the ancient tradition of hospitality to the stranger and give us a chance to translate it into twenty-first century terms. Hospitality rightly understood is premised on the notion that the stranger has much

¹⁰ Terry Tempest Williams, *The Open Space of Democracy* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010), 83–84.

to teach us. It actively invites “otherness” into our lives to make them more expansive, including forms of otherness that seem utterly alien to us. Of course, we will not practice deep hospitality if we do not embrace the creative possibilities inherent in our differences. Which leads to a third key habit of the heart...

3. *An ability to hold tension in life-giving ways.* Our lives are filled with inner and outer contradictions—our own behavior sometimes belies our aspirations, while the world around us sometimes denies what we value and believe to be true. If we fail to hold these contradictions creatively, they will shut us down and take us out of the action. But if we allow their tensions to expand our minds and hearts, they can open us to new understandings of ourselves and our world, enhancing our lives and allowing us to enhance other people’s lives. We are flawed and finite beings whose understanding is always partial and in need of correction. The genius of the human heart lies in its capacity to use the tensions that come with our limitations to generate insight, energy, and new life. Making the most of those gifts requires a fourth key habit of the heart...

4. *A sense of personal voice and agency.* Insight and energy give rise to new life as we speak out and act out our own version of truth, while checking and correcting it against the truths of others. But many of us lack confidence in our own voices and in our power to make a difference. We grow up in educational and religious institutions that treat us as members of an audience instead of actors in a drama, and as a result we become adults who treat politics as a spectator sport. And yet it remains possible for us, young and old alike, to find our voices, learn how to speak them, and know the satisfaction that comes from contributing to positive change—if we have the support of a community. Which leads to a fifth and final habit of the heart...

5. *A capacity to create community.* Without a community, it is nearly impossible to achieve voice: it takes a village to raise a Rosa Parks. Without a community, it is nearly impossible to exercise the “power of one” in a way that allows power to multiply: it took a village to translate Parks’s act of personal integrity into social change. In a mass society like ours, community rarely comes ready-made. But creating community in the places where we live and work does not mean abandoning other parts of our lives to become full-time organizers. The steady companionship of two or three kindred spirits can help us find the courage we need to speak and act as citizens. There are many ways to plant and cultivate the seeds of community in our personal and local lives. We must all become gardeners of community if we want democracy to flourish.

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Appendix 4: Final ePortfolio Rubric

Using Pathbrite, each of us will create a portfolio that does two things: 1) collects and chronicles your journey through the semester through reflection on each of the artifacts you wrote and the key texts you read, and 2) tells the story you want to tell about Israel/Palestine in words and images.

On **Mon April 27th from 1:15-3:15**, during finals week, we will gather to share our portfolios with our groups and with the rest of the class. Final version due **Wed April 29th by midnight**.

Artifacts – Your Writing

15%

Your portfolio should include, as artifacts, multiple examples of your own writing. This includes the written assignments for the class (Home, Justice/Injustice, In this Together, Holding Tension, What Now?, Finding Voice, Community Conversation). You could also include writing you have done on your own (class notes or journal writing) or within the context of another course that you want to relate to the material of this course.

Artifacts – Your Reading

15%

Your portfolio should also include **multiple, varied readings** that have shaped your understanding of the Habits of the Heart, concepts of Justice and the Common Good, and/or Israel/Palestine. You should use a variety of the readings assigned in class, but can also use articles from the Facebook group or other pieces you have read on your own or in other classes. The primary goal is to bring in a range of those readings that have most significantly influenced your own thinking about these topics.

Reflections


45%

For each artifact you include, you should add a reflection in the sidebar. You should reflect on all types of artifacts, your own writing and your reading. To enter the reflection, click on the artifact, then click to edit the artifact, and then input your reflection in the box entitled “Story Behind this Work.” Each reflection should do the following things:

1. Highlight what you consider to be the most significant points from the artifact, that is, the points that had the most impact on your own thinking.
2. Discuss how the artifact affected your thinking; how, and about what, you are learning or thinking differently.
3. Discuss how this artifact fits together with the other artifacts around it. Tell me how this builds on the pieces before it and leads into the pieces after it. To which other artifacts are there important connections?
4. Connect the artifact, whenever possible, to the Habits of the Heart.

Images

15%

Each artifact, or at least most of them, should have the cover page replaced by an image that you think represents or reflects some of the significance of the artifact within the larger portfolio. To change the cover, click to edit the entire portfolio, then hover over the artifact and then click “adjust image,” then either the arrow  or the button “Replace Cover Image.” Once you upload the image you should be able to crop it and move it so that it is framed in the portfolio the way you want it.

Organization – Telling a Story

10%

The goal of the portfolio is to tell a story, either the story of your own journey through the course, or the story of Israel/Palestine as you want to tell it. In order to tell the story well, you will want to consider the order and placement of each artifact. Your reflections should, as clearly as possible, guide the reader through the artifacts in order to follow the story you want to tell.

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