

Happy Fall from the Middlebury CT Collaborative!



Carlos Velez, Khuram Hussain, Netta Avineri, and Sebnem Gumuscu
at the CT Collaborative offices, August 2023
Photo credit: [Erin Anderson](#)

It has been a busy summer at Middlebury's Conflict Transformation (CT) Collaborative, and we are excited for the academic year ahead. In this fall newsletter, you'll have a chance to learn about a few of the amazing projects from this summer and learn about ways to get involved in the coming year. Our work extends across Middlebury's schools and programs, and it has been an honor to develop this work with local, national, and global partners.

Whether you are on or off campus, there are a few great opportunities to engage in the next few months:

- We are launching a new podcast, **Opening Up**. Our first two episodes feature global CT experts and the leaders of the CT Collaborative. [Visit the show page here.](#)

- **September 13 at 3:30 pm ET/ 12:30 pm PT:** the faculty in the inaugural class of CT grant recipients will discuss how their research offers new insights into conflict analysis and transformation. Join in-person or online - [details here](#).
- **September 27 at 7 pm ET / 4 pm PT:** attorney, restorative justice leader, and MacArthur Fellow sujatha baliga will [join a panel discussion at MIIS](#) on hope, justice, and social change. sujatha is also teaching a Winter 2024 course on restorative justice at the College.
- **October 9 at 4:30 ET/ 1:30 pm:** Joshua Kalla (Yale) [will present research](#) on how perspective-taking and storytelling can shift exclusionary attitudes, even in an era of high political polarization.

To hear about our latest programs and events, please follow us on Instagram or check out our [updated website](#). You can also see a full catalog of our activities in January-June 2023 in our [mid-year report](#).

As always, please reach out with your ideas, hopes, and requests! Tell us about the conflicts in your communities and the possibilities for constructive engagement and transformation. You can reach me at sstroup@middlebury.edu or reach our team at conflictransformation@middlebury.edu.

With hope and best wishes for the year ahead,

Sarah Stroup

A Growing Program for K-12 Teachers at Bread Loaf



This past summer, the Bread Loaf School of English (BLSE) offered four courses in its conflict transformation curriculum, "[Teaching, Writing, and Acting for Change](#)." These offerings built on the three courses offered in 2022 at the outset of CT programming at Bread Loaf. Beginning in June, the 28 K-12 teachers in these four courses learned about oral and community histories, disability narratives in conflict, creative practices, and transcultural literacies. On Wednesdays, the students met collectively to explore shared themes and learn from outside experts. Overall, the "Change" curriculum helped BLSE students develop strategies for managing classroom dynamics and worked to adapt the CT-approach to humanities-based teaching and community action.



Participants of "Students in the Teaching, Writing and Acting for Change courses" Photo credit: Tom Mckenna

Some of these students have joined the [Bread Loaf Teacher Network](#) (BLTN). In the coming year, with support from BLSE's "Change Action Grants," these teachers will build a collaborative social action project from their coursework, with the support of BLTN peers and mentors. One such current project is a collaboration between Fallon Abel, a teacher at the Sharon Academy in Vermont, and Maria Virokannas, a teacher at Sibelius Upper Secondary School in Finland. [Fallon \(MA '19\)](#), recipient of a Fulbright Distinguished Award in Teaching Research, describes the collaborative project:

“My rural region of Vermont has seen a dramatic rise in suicidality, self-harm, and substance use over the last decade, which I believe to be tied to two major factors: 1) individuals’ sense of alienation from their community and 2) a pervasive sense of hopelessness in the face of global challenges, like climate change, racial injustice, and poverty. This project will fund a yearlong academic course and international collaboration between Vermont and Finnish high school students as they research and implement action projects that address problems in their respective communities. In doing so, youth will be empowered to make meaningful change in their communities, which will help remedy their sense of powerlessness and alienation – and thus, decrease rates of suicidality, self-harm, and substance use.”

Summer Skill-Building at the College



Talking piece used in restorative practices at Middlebury College

At the undergraduate college, the CT Collaborative is focusing on building new skills for students, faculty, and staff in understanding and addressing conflicts. This work is happening in the classroom, in student life, and in professional development for faculty and staff.

The summer has been a productive time for skill-building among faculty and staff. In June, 35 participants joined a three-day restorative practices (RP) workshop, introducing ways in which RP principles can support efforts to work through conflicts in the workplace and in the community. We led a late August workshop on “CT in the Classroom” [at a retreat](#) hosted by the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Research. Finally, the new cohorts of the [Engaged Listening Project](#) (ELP) – a total of 25 faculty and staff – came together in early September for a two-day session on dialogic practices, exploring ways to structure challenging conversations. These cohorts are being led by Lida Winfield (Dance), Will Nash (American Studies), Michole Biancosino (Theater), and Sebnem Gumuscu (Political Science). Sebnem has just completed a 10-week summer intensive with [Essential Partners](#), expanding our in-house expertise in dialogue facilitation.

Classrooms are a key area in which to expand our conflict analysis and transformation skills. Last year, we piloted a new “CT Skills” course, and were fortunate to have President Laurie Patton co-teaching the spring section. This year, we are launching another new course, “[Theories and Fundamentals of Conflict Transformation](#).” Sociology professor Chong-suk Han has volunteered to pilot this course in Spring 2024. This fall, a faculty advisory group will work with Prof. Han to explore the role of history, psychology, physiology, power dynamics, and storytelling at all levels of conflict.

Experiential Learning and CT: Inaugural Convening



Joseph Kaifala, Betsy Vegso, Kailee Brickner-McDonald, and Sarah Stroup

In July 2023, participants from over 15 Conflict Transformation-funded programs and 100+ institutions – a total of 280 invited students - came together to deepen their understanding and practice of conflict transformation, united by their commitment to experiential learning. Over four days of [our first-ever convening](#), participants explored CT as a framework for relationship

building and social change. The convening built connections amongst students, educators, and community partners, and explored mindfulness as a skill for connecting across difference and transforming society.

The Projects for Peace Alumni Award winner [Joseph Kaifala](#) and mindfulness scholar [Beth Berila](#) hosted two educational sessions, with remote options to include our global audiences. In Vermont, Beth and Joseph engaged with our community partners and educational practitioners who support our students' learning to discuss quality practices, challenges, and build community. You can see recordings of their sessions [here](#) and [here](#). Many thanks to Kailee Brickner-McDonald, director of the Center for Community Engagement, and Betsy Vegso, director of Projects for Peace, for all their hard work!



Projects for Peace Alumni Award, Joseph Kaifala talking with student participants. Photo credit (for above photos): Finn Ellingwood

As the fall semester begins, students will be invited to reflect on their CT-funded internships and experiences at the Center for Community Engagement. Students can also apply for more CT experiences, including MAlt (Middlebury Alternative Break) trips ([see here](#)) and the Cross-Cultural Community Engagement grant (rolling deadlines, [see here](#)).

New Cohort of CT Graduate Fellows Joining MIIS

For a second year, MIIS welcomes a cohort of Conflict Transformation Fellows to the Institute. This fall, 36 new fellows will meet regularly with Dr. Netta Avineri, guest speakers, and peers to dive into conflict transformation approaches and develop interdisciplinary projects that complement their coursework and degree programs. Building on the innovative Fellowship program launched in 2022, this year's Cohort Fellows will work with a select group of Mentor Fellows who successfully completed the Cohort Fellowship last academic year. Learn more about past and current fellows [here](#).

Raina Carroll was a Cohort Fellow last year while pursuing her masters in Translation and Localization Management. She also has been helping with the development of our new podcast. When asked what draws her to conflict transformation, Raina writes: "The emphasis CT places on getting to know the history of a conflict and the backgrounds of those involved adds so much perspective and space for healthy communication that I really appreciate. It's so important to express care for everybody, and, with these tools, transformation is that much more effective."

For more information on the Graduate Fellowship program, [see here](#).

Expanding CT with Partners Around the Globe

This summer, the Middlebury Schools Abroad directors spent part of their annual retreat in Vermont learning about [existing CT programs](#) and brainstorming ways to expand CT offerings. For example, the School in France is offering two new courses: one exploring the history of the European Union and its role in resolving conflicts, and a second that focused on protest movements in contemporary France. The latter course involved a CT-supported excursion to the Economic, Social and Environmental Council to see how government institutions can promote productive dialogue by engaging directly with citizens.

In these and many other Middlebury Schools Abroad, students are able to work in partnership with local communities to understand their histories and learn about local conflict management systems. Importantly, study abroad itself generates conflict, as new environments, languages, and social norms prompt students to reflect on their own positions, values, and capacities.

We are also piloting an initiative to support new courses, taught by College and Institute faculty and staff, that connect global immersion experiences with deep conflict analysis in the classroom. In 2023-24, we are supporting two new courses: *Land and Society in the Caribbean*, by Middlebury College professor Michael Sheridan, and *Water Conflict and Development in Southeast Asia*, by Professors Wei Liang from MIIS and Jessica Teets from Middlebury College. To learn more about this program click [here](#).

A Year of Conflict Transformation at MIIS: May 2023 Seminar



Students and Community Members discuss this year's CT Project

In our last newsletter, we invited you to join the inaugural annual seminar at MIIS in early May. The event was a resounding success, with an estimated 75-100 participants across two days, both in-person and online. The event is described in a [great recent news story](#) from Sierra Abukins.

At the faculty panel that opened the annual seminar, MIIS faculty who had received Conflict Transformation Mini-Grants explored how the “lens” of the conflict transformation approaches can inform peacebuilding in Costa Rica, mining on indigenous lands in Colombia, and responses to nuclear weapons proliferation. Students had a chance to present their ambitious and wide-ranging CT projects. These included:

- “Ethics of Interrogation: Changing the Way the US Government Investigates Terrorism and Talking with Ex-Law Enforcement” (Cascade Kirst);
- “Transformational Community Work in Costa Rica” (Elisabeth Speece);
- “Coalition of Homeless Service Providers: Evaluation” (Tessa Yumbe, Galen Gibian, Chia Aygoda);
- “Rethinking Police Presence & Visible Power” (Martin Juarez Manzano)

The full recordings of the seminar panels are [available here](#).

“All learning not only includes but requires conflict. This comes in the form of tension between what we know and believe and new ideas or information. Learning happens when we create discomfort, with just the right balance between challenge and support, so that learners can grow.”

David Wick
MIIS Associate Professor of International Education Management and French
2023 CT Faculty Research Grant recipient

That's all... for now!

For continuous updates, check out our [website](#) and Instagram: [@conflictransformationmidd](#)



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Conflict Transformation Collaborative

The CT Collaborative works to embed the practice of conflict transformation in the full continuum of a liberal arts education

www.middlebury.edu/office/conflict-tra...



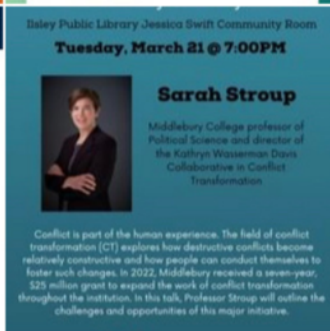
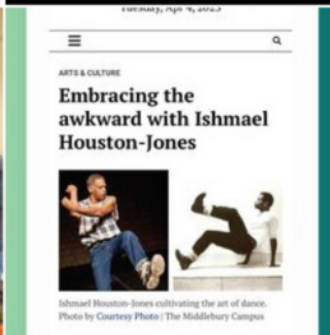
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