

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE INDIVIDUALIZED MAJOR PEACE STUDIES: FOCUS IN SOCIAL JUSTICE

My individualized major of Peace Studies with a Social Justice focus will explore the social constructions of race, class, and gender and the resulting inequalities. I will study how these groups have been affected in various parts of the world, what methods of resistance they have used, and how successful they have been in establishing social change. My other areas of academic concentration lend focus and specificity to the Peace Studies major. In addition to Peace Studies, I have an Italian major and a minor in Women's Studies. My major in Italian will complement a major in Peace Studies because it increases my cultural sensitivity. By opening myself to Italian culture, I am able to better understand and accept other ways of living; I am learning to be a global citizen. I believe that opening oneself up to other cultures leads to proactive global communication. Before entering the University of Connecticut I spent a year in Italy and two weeks in the Netherlands as part of a cultural exchange program, which expanded my awareness of cultural communication and understanding. A minor in Women's Studies offers me a global perspective on gender, which in turn allows me to better understand the intersections of oppressions.

The different departments that are included in my proposed plan of study are Anthropology, Sociology, Women's Studies, and Political Science. Each department adds a unique perspective about struggles for social justice. For example, the course titled Latin American Minorities in the United States, offered through the Anthropology Department, helps one understand how Mexican Americans have come from a long history of oppression from colonial rulers- an oppression that affects their struggles as second class citizens in America. Another course, International Human Rights of Women, offered through Women's Studies has allowed me to understand how women, regardless of their cultural practices, fight for their rights and social justice all over the world. Global Militarism and Human Survival, an interdepartmental course, has allowed me to analyze how the United States' military agenda denies indigenous rights and crushes people's hopes for social justice all over the world.

This interdisciplinary approach is both necessary and more beneficial than a traditional major because it provides a knowledgeable base regarding various groups of people. It also allows me to do a comparative analysis of social injustices in the world and then provides me with an understanding of resistance to oppression and resulting activism and methods of conflict resolution.

I have a great deal of experience in social justice work outside the traditional classroom that strengthens my abilities as a Peace Studies major. In high school I was the main organizer for a group called Youth Peace. This group is a subgroup of the War Resisters League, which is one of the oldest grassroots antiwar organizations in the country. I continue to be active in the organization as a workshop facilitator for nonviolence trainings offered to high school students. Additionally, my first year on campus, I established a chapter of the War Resisters League here at the university. I am now a part of Food Not Bombs, which is a community service organization that provides free vegan food to the underprivileged community in Willimantic. I

currently work at both the Women's Center and the Rainbow Center here at the University of Connecticut. At the Rainbow Center, I program educational workshops about the LGBTQ community, which are offered to the University of Connecticut community. At the Women's Center I volunteer my time and work as well as a programming coordinator. These activities continue to provide opportunities to apply my increasing academic knowledge to practical experience while using my grassroots organizing to expand my intellectual curiosity.

In the future, I would like to continue striving for social justice by working for a non-governmental organization that promotes nonviolence and equity for all beings. I would like to combine both my language skills and knowledge of social justice to become a translator for an organization of this type. I believe that a major in Peace Studies with a focus in Social Justice allows me to study what I am committed to and what I am passionate about while preparing me for a future career in social justice.