

UCP: Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping/Protection

Early draft syllabus for a Cours Spécialisé at IEPG (2024-2025)

Lecturer: Mayeul Kauffmann

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Course focus

This course is about the study of **UCP**, that is, **a coordinated set of actions by unarmed professionals aiming at keeping or building peace and/or protecting civilians**. UCP is generally seen as the acronym for Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping or Unarmed Civilian Protection, sometimes for Unarmed Civilian Peacebuilding¹. "UCP" is used in the course title to refer to the three concepts, given that they have close ties in theory and in field practice.

UCP refers to actions carried out by unarmed professionals², working in organized teams within a local community, which requested it. UCP missions (also named Third Party Non-violent Intervention - TPNI) include protection, international observation, reporting, security advice, ceasefire monitoring, rumour control, Early Warning Early Response, relationship building...

The diversity of **Institutional UCP actors** will be described in the course. While being largely done by international **NGOs**, UCP is also carried out by **IGOs**. Many UN agencies carry out UCP activities but do not name them "UCP" due to their specific mandates: UN OHCHR, UN-Habitat, UNDP, UNEP, UNICEF, UNITAR, the World Bank, the World Food Programme, ... UCP has also been carried out by national institutions³, and the following regional organizations: African Union, EU, ECOWAS/CEDEAO, OSCE, SADC/CDA. Last not least, unarmed UN peacekeepers in UN PKO (or "blue helmets without weapons") also borrow some methods from UCP professionals.

There are more than 70 NGOs active in about 40 countries; among the most established ones are:

- Balkan Peace Teams
- Christian Peacemaker Teams
- Cure Violence
- Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI)
- Meta Peace Team
- Nonviolent Peaceforce
- Operation Dove
- Peace Brigades International
- Peace Watch Switzerland
- Swedish Fellowship of Reconciliation
- Witness for Peace

The course will focus on the **core methods** shared by the above 11 NGOs, namely:

- Protective presence
- Protective Accompaniment (PA), especially of human rights defenders or other activists
- Multi-track dialogue, shuttle diplomacy, field mediation
- Interpositioning
- Enhancing local self-protection capacities and infrastructures
- Monitoring, security assessment

1 Used by a Nonviolent Peaceforce volunteer (Amy Storbakken, *Finding Peace - in Activism*, p. 8, Minnesota Women's Press, St. Paul, March 2010, <https://www.womenspress.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/march-2010.pdf>); by a former EAPPI staff (<https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/contributor/charlotte-secco/>)

2 Many missions have long-term staff, but some include trained, short-term (paid or unpaid) "volunteers".

3 E.g. UK's DFID, some French Municipalities...

- Capacity enhancement, training and educating
- Confidence building
- Nonviolent Communication
- Advocacy

The **evolution of UCP** over the past 100 years will also be briefly studied in the course. UCP can take place in high intensity armed conflicts, in less intense (armed) conflicts or in "peacefull but tense" situations. Historically, it mainly took place in developing countries of the "Global South"; still, failures of law enforcement and police practices in Western, developed countries encouraged NGOs and/or municipalities to develop UCP, for instance in Northern Ireland, United States, Canada, Germany, France... In some cases, lessons learned in intense armed conflicts (say: South Sudan or Yemen) have been successfully used to protect citizens (e.g. during riots) in the US or in France. The course will also **compare armed and unarmed peacekeeping**, in terms of history⁴, principles, achievements, risks and failures.

Course outline

Introduction to UCP

- Definition of terms
- The spectrum of UCP
- UCP, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and nonviolence
- UCP actors: NGOs, IGOs, other actors

UCP objectives and principles

- Key objectives of UCP
- Key principles of UCP
- Strategies and tactics of UCP
- Key sources of guidance for UCP

Key UCP methods

- Proactive engagement
- Monitoring
- Relationship building
- Capacity enhancement
- Advocacy

Main UCP competences needed in the field

- Legal analysis
- Conflict analysis
- Analysis of threats to human right defenders and activists
- Populations, individuals and groups particularly impacted by violence
- Nonviolent Communication

Living in and exiting the community

- Context analysis
- Security management
- Exit strategies
- Development of a comprehensive UCP strategy
- Dilemmas

⁴ The idea of international armed peacekeeping started to gain momentum with the creation of the League of Nations in 1920, while similar unarmed peacekeeping started at the same time, with Gandhi's experiment of a Shanti Sena in the early 1920s.

Scientific fields covered

The course will draw from field experience and from various fields of the social sciences (international relations, political science, sociology, anthropology, economics, law, human rights, philosophy...).

Other tools covered

In addition to the theoretical backgrounds and methodologies mentioned above, a few additional tools will be introduced:

- Open source intelligence (OSint)
- Mapping and Geographical Information Systems (GIS)
- Data management, data privacy, cybersecurity
- Nonviolent Communication

Prerequisites

Having some background knowledge in at least one social science will help, but is not a prerequisite.

Evaluation

Evaluation will consist of two parts:

- a written test (in class), based on materials covered during the course
- an applied research work. Students are welcome to come with a research topic if they wish (this could be related to another IEP course, in agreement with the other instructor). Applied research topics will be proposed to the other students.

Language

The course will be given in English.

Students will have the possibility to do the research work and part of the evaluation in English, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese or French (as they prefer).

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