

Loser-Savkar Fellowship Application  
Cover Page

Proposal Title: Nonviolent Communication in College Composition

Applicant's Name: Cheri Lemieux Spiegel, PhD

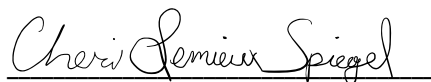
Division: LASS

Dean's Name: Jennifer Daniels

Campus: Annandale

Applicant's Email Address: cspiegel@nvcc.edu

Applicant's Phone Numbers: 703-323-4212

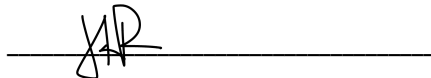


Applicant's Signature

1/31/2021

Date

I support this application, and I verify that the applicant is a full-time teaching faculty member in my division.



Dean's Signature

1.31.21

Date

# Loser-Savkar Fellowship Application

## Proposal

### **Abstract** (Maximum 100 words)

*Summarize how and what you propose to learn about teaching effectiveness during your project, and how you expect to apply what you learn to your teaching.*

I plan to study how Non-Violent Communication might be integrated into the College Composition curriculum, particularly English 112. In light of recent events, I have found myself returning to Mary Rose O'Reilley's 1993 question: "is it possible to teach English so that people stop killing each other?" I believe some progress on this subject might be possible by re-seeing argument and persuasion through the lens of Nonviolent Communication, which I have not yet formally studied. I would like to use the fellowship to do so and then determine how to synthesize these practices with the English 111 and 112 course outcomes.

### **Project** (Maximum 500 words)

Please refer to the Reviewer Guide on the fellowship web site for an explanation of how proposals will be evaluated.

*What aspects of your teaching effectiveness do you wish to develop further and why? What independent study, course, workshop, or other method will you use to learn more about these aspects of teaching effectively?*

*How do you expect to use this new knowledge of effective teaching to enhance learning by your students? What results do you hope to see when you implement what you have learned? What other professional development have you done related to this project or teaching effectiveness?*

Effective teaching sometimes requires noticing where your field's traditions and your students' and society's, needs diverge. I have reached one of those moments in my teaching career and would like to use the resources of this fellowship to attend to this disconnect.

Traditionally, the composition sequence has been intimately tied to rhetorical strategies for teaching argument. Textbooks in the field of writing studies emphasize the concept of "argument" so much so that titles like *Everything is an Argument* have become commonplace. However, it is time we ask: is a class that is driven by traditional notions of argument the most culturally responsive way to teach writing in 2021?

Scholars such as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) have pointed out that too often our language for argument is steeped in metaphors of war. Indeed, my own dissertation research explored the ways that guerrilla warfare principles might be removed from the battlefield and used as a foundation for theorizing about how disenfranchised groups might use guerrilla communication tactics to address the needs of their communities. The field of writing studies has long approached

communication from a place of assumed antagonism – where there are causes to fight for and wars to wage.

The prevalence of war and conflict-oriented lenses in first-year writing contexts prompted Mary Rose O'Reilley to ask, in 1993: "is it possible to teach English so that people stop killing each other?" Outside the first-year writing classroom, war and violence are understood to be last resorts – as strategies to be taken when civil communication falls short. Yet inside our classrooms these metaphors still drive discussion and course design. Indeed, the events of January 6, 2021, reminded me that we in English studies have yet to fully answer O'Reilley's question. What would a college composition classroom built on the priority of community good, equity, and inclusion really look like?

While I do not yet have the answer to this question, I believe the answers lie in the domain of Non-violent Communication (NVC). As such, I will use the resources of this fellowship to formally study the teaching of NVC, the principles of what O'Reilley coined "the peaceable classroom" and peacebuilding theory more generally. I will then examine my syllabi, course materials, and class activities with an openness to better understanding how metaphors of war manifest and how Non-violent Communication principles might be used to re-see argument instruction and my approach to the learning outcomes of NOVA's College Composition sequence.

This formal inquiry will require multiple phases. First, I will participate in NVC training offered by The Center for Nonviolent Communication. I will supplement this training with micro-courses from the National Institute for Peace, which emphasize conflict negotiation, community dialogue, and peacebuilding. Additionally, I will conduct self-study of peace-oriented pedagogy. I will then bring those materials into dialogue with my own expertise and training in writing, rhetoric, discourse, and pedagogy to re-imagine my courses to emphasize values of non-violence and peace-building, while still addressing the rhetorical tools necessary to support strong, effective academic writers.

**Schedule** (Maximum 150 words)

*Tell us when you intend to complete each activity in your proposal. Please note that all activities, including a final report, must be completed within one calendar year of the award.*

I intend to attend three training sessions from the Center for Nonviolent Communication. I will enroll in a six-week introductory course in March 2021, followed by supplementary sessions in April and May. I will then participate in (free) self-study micro-courses from the Institute of Peace during June. In July and August of 2021, I will focus on self-study from the library of resources I'll curate as a result of this fellowship. I will then use Fall 2021 to re-envision my courses for implementation during 2022.

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### Budget

#### Expenses

*For each expense item in your budget, tell us the expected amount of the expense and how you derived that figure.*

<b>Expense</b>	<b>Expected Amount</b>	<b>Derivation</b>
Foundations of NVC Introduction Course, or similar	\$120	Cost on Center for NVC Website
Fundamentals of Compassionate Communication Course, or similar	\$230	Cost on Center for NVC Website
Skills of Facilitated Communication Course, or similar	\$240	Cost on Center for NVC Website
Supplementary Books	\$160	10 items valued at \$16 on average.
Modest compensation for time and labor synthesizing	\$250	Comparable cost to intermediate-level formal NVC training
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1000</b>	

#### Additional Funding (Maximum 50 words)

*Tell us of any other sources of funding for your learning project that you have obtained or that you are seeking, including any contributions of your own.*

I do not have additional funding sources for this learning project though I have purchased and studied one book, *Say What You Mean*, as a means of confirming that NVC is the appropriate path for addressing the pedagogical need I have identified.