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FEBRUARY 2025: FEATURING
Uddipana Goswami, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Conflict Management



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Uddipana Goswami, Ph.D. is not just the instructor, she is the lesson.

It has been said that if you have more than one person in a room, a conflict will arise because people will never agree on absolutely everything. Whether deciding between pizza or burgers for takeout, or sending soldiers into an international war zone, there will always be conflict. The question is one of recognizing the severity of the conflict, then accessing the available skills with which to manage it constructively and positively. This is where Uddipana Goswami, Ph.D. comes in.



Photo credit: Orai Goswami

Assistant Professor of Conflict Management, Goswami teaches at the School of Conflict Management, Peacebuilding and Development. What she brings to her role is an intricately woven tool bag crafted from lived experience, professional expertise in the fields of journalism and sociology, and a lifelong practice of creative writing. She is not only the instructor, she is also the lesson.

"I grew up in a conflict zone which is Northeast India. Many people, even in India, are not aware of. And if they are aware of it, they don't know its entire history of conflict with mainland India ... There have been conflicts for over 75 years now. I grew up during the peak of the conflict years. And so, naturally, that had its impact and I started writing as a way of sense-making."

Her early years of creative writing focused on conflict and violence as it pertained to women's daily lives. After 10 years as a journalist covering issues around conflict, Goswami decided to better understand the structures of violence and find ways out of violence, which led her to earn a Ph.D. in sociology focusing on conflict studies. She also experienced intimate partner violence in what she described as "awful, terrible years," during which time she began to see how intertwined and interconnected personal and political violence could be. Goswami is a living example of life after violence. Life after despair. An example she bravely shares with her students.

Her journey has taken her through consistently negative, deeply challenging territory. Yet, she emerged with one academic book published, two books of poetry, a short fiction, and a new focus on gender studies. In 2023, her second academic book on the theme of gendered power and masculine agency was published, a work she undertook while at the University of Pennsylvania on a Fulbright Post Doctoral Fellowship. Her life-long study of, and personal experience with, conflict and violence had the potential to calcify in her a negative outlook. Instead, it serves as fodder to inspire her classroom instructor because in the next breath you'll hear her say, "There's so much violence around that, at some point, you have to stop and just laugh about it, you know? You know what's happening. So, accept it. And now, *what do you do with it?*"



And so, the intricately woven tool bag opens up, and from it, Goswami presents instruction that drives toward the goal: to make positive, peaceful change in the world. The whole discipline of conflict management is to make real change for real people. Although she has seen her students stressed with the wars that have broken out around the world in recent years, she empowers them to refocus on the task at hand. She says, "It's almost like you have to stoically observe. That's our job as academics: we strive to observe, analyze, and try to find ways out of this. And that's the most we can do in the classroom. But I think that's a great thing because the classroom is where we begin creating the knowledge that goes out into the world."

Her grit and determination also inspire her creative writing, which has turned away from violence and towards a celebration of survival after violence. One creative outlet was the launch of Mukoli: The Magazine for Peace in 2023, for which she serves as editor-in-chief. Last year, her second collection of short fiction, *The Women Who Would Not Die*, was released.

Teaching her graduate students a range of skills including public speaking, public-facing writing, how to share research results to a broad audience, not just the academic community, and honing research methods, are cornerstones of her approach. It is all designed to prepare them for life after graduation, regardless of the professional path they choose. Equally important is the expectation that her students model the behaviors they are training to cultivate in the world. Goswami says, "The academic and professional part of it is all meaningless if they don't learn to be good human beings, if they are not empathetic to each other to begin with." Describing how this manifest is in the classroom, she says, "... in the classroom, it's not just learning theories of peace, but also practicing peacemaking as we go. So, the activities and the readings, as well as the course content and pace, all of it focuses on peacemaking."

