The doctoral student came to UNCG from South Korea to study restorative justice practices and restorative justice's values could be taught in any class, but Hemphill, an associate professor of kinesiology, realized a golden opportunity in the PE elective. “To graduate from high school in NC, you have to take health and PE, and our state’s essential curriculum standards prioritize teaching conflict-resolution skills,” he says. “Students typically take PE in the 9th grade, so over the course of a few years, you can impact an entire high school.”

The three-part class meets twice a week. After circle time, students work with Yongsun “Sim” Lee, a doctoral student and taekwondo instructor, to practice the restorative values they’ve learned while they learn taekwondo fundamentals. “I emphasize bowing to partners before and after drills as a way to show respect in school, home, or community – and in physical education.”

Lee points out that, while many Westerners think of martial arts as the art of fighting, the Chinese character “wu,” which is often translated into the word “martial,” means to put down weapons. “The true meaning of martial arts practice is to work peace by knowing how opposite forces, like peace and conflict, can be interrelated.”

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