

CONF 302

IDENTITY CONFLICTS AND THEIR RESOLUTION

Conflict Analysis and Resolution Program, George Mason University

Section 001

Fall 2011

Prof. Kevin Avruch

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Class: **Enterprise Hall 275**, Thursday 1.30-4.10

Office: **Robinson B365**, x 3-3607

Office hours: **Thursday 11.00-12.00**

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course explores the role played by identity in serious social conflicts. Highlighting major theorists who have examined identity and conflict, we will examine how identity dynamics may influence the development and intensification of conflict and, more hopefully, how identity can be channeled in aid of resolving, mitigating, or transforming serious social conflict. Course materials will address the question of how identity/self/subjectivity are constituted, as well as aspects of identity such as race, ethnicity, gender, religion, class, and nationalism. Special emphasis will be placed on the relationship of identity to violence. Readings, films, class discussions, and assignments are designed to help students: 1) become better conflict analysts and resolvers; 2) gain awareness of the role played by their own identities in analyzing conflicts; and 3) write clear and cogent papers.

CONF 302 fulfills all or in part the writing-intensive requirements for the Conflict Analysis and Resolution (CAR) major through the assignments listed on this syllabus. Details on each assignment will be handed out in class. Students are encouraged to visit the Writing Workshop for additional assistance.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance in class is crucial to success in this course. Some material relevant for completing assignments will be discussed only in class, not in the readings. You should complete the assigned readings prior to each class. Ask in class if you have not understood a term or idea. Come prepared to participation in classroom discussion.

Classroom etiquette: Come to class on time and prepared. Turn off cell phones, pagers, beepers, iPods, etc. Use laptops, if you use them, only for class-related work.

You are expected to abide by George Mason University's **Honor Code** in preparing all work for this class. If you have questions about Honor Code issues or are uncertain about how to cite a source, or if you have observed Honor Code violations, please contact me.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

Class Participation: 15%

Written Assignments: 85%

Assignment # 1: Your Self: A Reflective Personal Essay

750 words, 15%

Assignment #2 : Short Paper: Analysis and Argument

1,000 words., 25%

Assignment #3: Identity Conflict Case Study

2,250 words, 40%

Assignment #5: Rewrite: You must rewrite one assignment (1-3 only) in a timely way

(no later than 4/28/11), 5%

READINGS

The following required books are available in the GMU Bookstore:

Ishmael Beah, *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*

Harold Isaacs, *Idols of the Tribe: Group Identity and Political Change*

Marc Howard Ross, *Cultural Contestation in Ethnic Conflict*

Vamik Volkan, *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*

The following additional readings are available through E-Reserves:

Kevin Avruch, "Culture Theory, Culture Clash, and the Practice of Conflict Resolution"

Peter W. Black, "Identities"

Samuel R. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations"

Howon Jeong, "Sources of Social Conflict"

Daniel Rothbart and Karina Korostelina, "Moral Denigration of the Other"

COURSE PROGRAM

Wk 1 1/27: Course Orientation. The Concept of Identity: An Introduction
Assignment #1 handout

Wk 2 2/3: Theories of Identity, Self, and Subjectivity
Read: Isaacs, pp. 1-45; Volkan, pp. 19-35, Black (E-reserve)

Assignment #1 Due

- Wk 3 2/10:** “Basic Group Identities”-I: The Body, Names, and Language
Read: Isaacs, pp. 46-114
- Wk 4 2/17:** “Basic Group Identities”-II: History, Religion, Nationality
Read: Isaacs, pp. 115-219
Assignment #2 handout
- Wk 5 2/24:** Identity and Social Conflict: Selves and Others
Read: Ross, pp. 1-29; Jeong (E-reserve)
Assignment #2 due
- Wk 6 3/3:** Identity: Temperament, Personality or Situation?
Rothbart & Korostelina (E-reserve), Film (TBA)
Assignment #3 handout
- Wk 7 3/10:** A Special Case? “The Clash of Civilizations”
Read: Huntington (first; E-reserve); Avruch (E-reserve)
- Wk 8 3/17:** **Mid-Semester Recess: No Class**
- Wk 9 3/24:** Narrating Collective Identities-I, Cultural Performances and Parades in Northern Ireland
Read: Ross, pp. 30-126
- Wk 10 3/31:** Narrating Collective Identities-II, Case Studies in Nationalism, Memory, Flags and Dress
Read: Ross, pp. 127-223, 280-328
- Wk 11 4/7:** Narrating the Self (In Times of Trouble)
Read: Beah, pp. 5-125
- Wk 12 4/14:** Traumatized Identities-I, Enemy Images and Chosen Traumas
Read: Volkan, pp. 3-18, 36-115
Assignment #3 due
- Wk 13 4/21:** Traumatized Identities-II, Trauma, Victimhood, and Violence
Read: Volkan, pp. 116-201
- Wk 14 4/28:** Trauma Recovery and Reconstructing Identities
Read: Beah, pp. 126-218; Ross, pp. 224-279
Assignment rewrite due on or before today, 4/28
- Wk 15 5/5:** Identity Conflict and Conflict Resolution
Read: Volkan, pp. 202-227; Minow (E-reserve)