CONF 665: Designing Conflict Programs
Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (ICAR)
George Mason University
Spring 2011

Class Sessions:
In-person sessions:
- *Four weekend day sessions, 9 am to 5 pm:* Saturday, March 26, 2011; Sunday, March 27, 2011; Saturday, April 2, 2011; Sunday, May 1, 2011
- *One evening class session, 7 to 10 pm:* Friday, April 1, 2011

Online sessions:
- *Three online modules:* Weeks of April 4, April 11, and April 18, 2011

Location: In-person class sessions meet at ICAR, Arlington Campus **(ARLFH 478);** Online session modules will be available through https://courses.gmu.edu/webct/logon/1838643840011.

Instructor: Mary Mulvihill, M.A.; *Email:* mmulvihi@gmu.edu

Office Hours: By appointment before or after the in-person class sessions; Online office hours will also be announced.

I.   COURSE SUMMARY

This practice weighted course covers key steps, important considerations, and skills involved in designing conflict programs for submission to potential funding organizations. Two main types of "conflict programming" are covered in the course: (1) "stand alone" conflict programs that have all the program objectives focused on a conflict situation/ topic, and (2) multi-faceted programs that have one or more program objectives focused on a conflict situation/ topic and the other program objectives concentrated on development sector topics (e.g., Democracy and Governance; Youth Development).   Through a mix of individual and small group assignments, in-class exercises, readings, and online discussion/reflection forums, students in the course will develop, expand, and apply conflict program design knowledge and skills that are in high demand in the conflict and development fields. The course's objectives are organized around those knowledge and skill areas. Overall, the course covers various technical, ethical, and creative (artistic) aspects of conflict program design, and gives students the experience of reviewing and responding to actual requests for conflict program proposals from funding organizations.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students will have:
- Analyzed funding organization requests for conflict program proposals to distill key issues and tasks for program design work
- Designed a rapid conflict/situation assessment for a new conflict program design
- Identified concrete ways to increase local actor participation in program design and implementation
- Applied "strategic," "artistic," "ethical," and "positive" peacebuilding perspectives to conflict program design

- Crafted a new conflict program's core strategy/theory of change in line with assessment findings and conflict field applied theory and lessons learned
- Built a new conflict program's Results Framework and specified its underlying, micro-level theories of change
- Developed program activities that will drive a conflict program's achievement of intended results/changes and a corresponding program budget
- Infused a new conflict program design with conflict, gender, and safety sensitivity
- Designed a Year One activity plan for a new conflict program, showing attention to issues such as a strong program start-up phase, sequencing, scalability, and local capacity development
- Collaborated in a team to prepare a conflict program proposal for a potential funding organization and summarized the proposal in an oral presentation
- Vetted draft conflict program proposals against the course's key criteria of effectiveness and recommended program design improvements

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Note: The due dates for assignments listed in this syllabus assume the assignment will be delivered by 11:59 pm on the date specified. Students are responsible for completing individual and group assignments on time. Late assignment submissions will be penalized.

Participation: 10% of overall grade
For the course's in-person class sessions, active, informed participation for the fully scheduled time is expected. During the course's online component, students are expected to offer reflective, informed responses on each module's discussion topic, and to comment on the postings of at least two classmates to generate a discussion thread that advances learning. Commenting in a quality manner on more than two discussion postings is encouraged and will be considered in the grading of student participation on a scale of did not participate (0), needs improvement (1), satisfactory (2), or excellent (3).

Individual Application Assignments: 20% of overall grade
Four short assignments (each worth 5%) will focus on applying key topic(s) from the week's material. These assignments will be graded on the scale of needs improvement (1), satisfactory (2), or excellent (3). Non-submitted assignments will receive a "0" grade**.**
- Assignment issued during Weekend #1: *Due Thursday, March 31, 2011*
- Assignment issued during Weekend #2: *Due Thursday, April 7, 2011*
- Online Module A: No individual application assignment this week.
- Online Module B Assignment: *Due Sunday, April 17, 2011*
- Online Module C Assignment: *Due Sunday, April 24, 2011*

Program Design Team Assignment: 35% of overall grade
During the first in-class session, teams will be formed to design a new conflict program and write a full proposal in response to an actual USAID/DCHA/CMM Annual Program Statement. Team members will work under "real world" conflict program design challenges such as handling time constraints, defining team member roles, brainstorming program ideas, critiquing draft program proposals in "red team" review sessions, etc. To keep each team's work on track, the course's Program Design Team Assignment is broken into the following pieces (the assignment's grading rubric will be discussed in class):

a) **Team's Proposal Production Calendar**: *Due Sunday, April 3, 2011.*
b) **Team's Program Strategy Concept Note** (about 3 pages): *Sunday, April 10, 2011.* The concept note should summarize the topics mentioned in the "Approach and Methodology" section of the USAID/CMM APS (see pp.23-24 of the APS document).

c) **Draft Conflict Program Proposal**: *Due Friday, April 29, 2011.* The proposal should carefully address all the evaluative criteria listed on pp. 23-25 of the USAID/DCHA/CMM APS, with the exception of "Past Performance" (not required in this course). For this course, the proposal document will comprise:
  - 1 page cover sheet
  - 1 page Executive Summary
  - 10 page maximum technical proposal
  - Annex 1: Illustrative First Year Activity Plan
  - Annex 2: Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
  - Annex 3: Capacity Building Plan
  - Annex 4: Summary Budget and Budget Notes

d) **Oral Presentation on the Draft Conflict Program Technical Proposal** and receiving class feedback comments: *Due in class on Sunday, May 1, 2011*
e) **Provision of constructive feedback as the lead "red team" reviewers of another team's conflict proposal** (that proposal will be identified in advance): *Due in class on Sunday, May 1, 2011*
f) **Revised/Final Conflict Program Technical Proposal** that takes into account class and instructor's feedback on draft program design: *Due Sunday, May 8, 2008.*

Individual Final Exam: 35% of overall grade: *Due Saturday, May 14, 2011*
A take-home final exam will be issued in class on May 1st. The exam will test the level of mastery of key applied conflict program design/writing topics examined in the course (in readings, discussion, in-class sessions, and online modules). Grading criteria and expectations for excellent exam responses will be reviewed in class on May 1.

IV. READINGS
Required Books (available at the GMU Bookstore or online book vendors):
Schirch, Lisa. 2004. *Little Book on Strategic Peacebuilding.*
Lederach, John Paul. 2005. *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace.*

All Other Required Readings Will Be Available through the Course's Webpage:
Please see *each* course unit's description below for other required readings, with the webpage URL noted. Such readings will also available through the course's webpage for each unit.

V. ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES
Please see the "Web Links" section of the course webpage for recommended websites, optional readings, and other online resources related to this course's topics.

<p style="text-align: center;">**VI. CLASS PLANS AND ASSIGNMENTS**</p>

WEEKEND #1

<p style="text-align: center;">**In-Class Session: Saturday, March 26, 2011, 9 am to 5 pm (UNIT 1)**</p>

Introductions
- Class members and instructor
- Course objectives
- Syllabus review

Big Picture I: Overview of Conflict Program Funding Landscape
- Types of Conflict programs
- Funders and annual grant/funding opportunities for conflict programming
- Conflict program funding terminology
- Key steps, timeline issues, and team member roles in preparing conflict program proposals
- "Front of the book" and "back of the book" parts of the program proposal
- Necessary ingredients for an excellent conflict program funding proposal
- Proposal writing tips

Conflict Program Design Key Step 1: Summarize and analyze the funder's Request for Proposals
- Navigating and summarizing the funder's request for proposals
- Review the Course's Team Assignment: Respond to the USAID/DCHA/CMM "Annual Program Statement (APS): FY 2011 for Conflict Mitigation and Reconciliation Programs and Activities" (issued Jan. 25, 2011) with a full conflict program proposal and a summary oral presentation
- Profile of USAID/DCHA/CMM, the unit that issued the above-mentioned APS
- Form Program Design Teams and meet to discuss your country selection for the team assignment

Big Picture II: Conflict field's lessons learned and effectiveness criteria for conflict programs
- Do No Harm
- Conflict Sensitivity
- Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) findings
- Theory of Change-based program design (will cover this topic more in depth on April 1st)
- Criteria of effectiveness: program effectiveness, "Peace Writ Large" effectiveness
- Voice and role of local partners and beneficiaries: feedback from CDA's Listening Project

Required Session 1 Readings:
Note: Readings marked with an * will be actively used during in-class learning exercises and should please be brought to class. The first reading below is the course's Program Team assignment.

- o *USAID/DCHA/CMM "Annual Program Statement FY 11 Conflict Mitigation and Reconciliation Programs and Activities" (issued Jan. 25, 2011): pp. 1-38 only
  http://www.usaid.gov/ba/workwithus/fy11cmma.pdf
  - o *After reading above document, please also skim "Amendment 1 to USAID/DCHA/CMM "Annual Program Statement: FY 11 for Conflict Mitigation and Reconciliation Programs and Activities" (issued Feb. 17, 2011) – we will walk through this 9-page document and the reading above in class
- o *People-to-People Peacebuilding: A Program Guide*, USAID/DCHA/CMM, Jan. 2011, pp. 4-26

http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/crosscutting_programs/conflict/publications/docs/CMMP2PGuidelines2010-0203.pdf

- o Dane F. Smith, Jr. *Foreign Assistance for Peace: The U.S. Agency for International Development*, CSIS, April 2009: pp. 8-28: http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PCAAB888.pdf

- o "Envisioning and Pursuing a Peace Writ Large," A Response from Diana Chigas and Peter Woodrow, *Berghof Handbook Dialogue Series*, No. 7, pp. 47-57 http://www.berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/dialogue7_chigwood_comm.pdf

- o *Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) Training Manual,* 2009 (pp. 1-25) http://www.cdainc.com/cdawww/pdf/manual/rpp_training_participant_manual_rev_20090104_Pdf.pdf

In-Class Session: Sunday, March 27, 2011, 9 am to 5 pm (UNIT 2)

(Continued) Big Picture II: Conflict field's lessons learned & effectiveness criteria for conflict programs

Big Picture III: Selected Perspectives on Conflict Program Design: Strategic, Artistic (Creative), and Positive
- Determining your "Strategic fit"
- Strategic peacebuilding design: Who (esp. key actors and local partners), Where, What, How, When
- Program design as a creative act: an exercise of "moral imagination"
- Bringing a Positive Peacebuilding lens to program design: assets; appreciative inquiry

Program Design Key Step 2: Conduct a Rapid Conflict/Situation Assessment for Program Design
- Conflict Analysis: use funder's Conflict Assessment framework, if one exists
- Stakeholder Analysis
- Assessing potential partner organizations/groups and local Key Personnel
- Other factors to assess for program design: e.g., security situation; other interveners' programs; communications and transportation infrastructure; office location options; cost factors; etc.
- Rapid Assessment desk review research
- Rapid Assessment field trip research tips, including participatory approaches

Required Session 2 Readings:
- o Schirch, Lisa. 2004. *Little Book on Strategic Peacebuilding:* we will discuss mainly Chapters 2, 6, 11 and 12 in class but the entire book should please be read for its framework (very short book).

- o Lederach, John Paul. 2005. *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace.* We will cover mainly chapters 7-10 (pp. 65-112) and the Glossary (pp. 181-183) in class this week.

- o *Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework (ICAF), S/CRS US State Department. http://www.crs.state.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=public.display&shortcut=C6WW

- o CDA, "The Listening Project Issue Paper: The Importance of Listening." March 2010. http://www.cdainc.com/cdawww/pdf/issue/importance_of_listening_Pdf.pdf

END OF WEEKEND #1 ASSIGNMENTS:

1. **Individual Application Assignment (due Thursday, March 31):** Outline the rapid conflict/situation assessment you want to implement for the USAID/CMM proposal (you can focus on your team's selected country or any other country listed in the USAID/CMM document). Your outline (around 2-3 pages) should apply this weekend's course material by covering at least: a) the main topics of the assessment; b) the most critical assessment questions for each topic (i.e., questions you absolutely need answered to craft a strong program design); c) data collection methods you plan to use; and d) what degree of local participation you will bring into the assessment process and how.

2. **Team Assignment:** Contribute to finalizing your Team's "Proposal Production Calendar": **due Sunday, April 3**

WEEKEND #2

Program Design Key Step 3: Move from Assessment Findings to Crafting the Program's Core Theory of Change/Program Hypothesis and a Results Framework
- "The Art of Synthesis": Distilling the Key Assessment Findings
- Theory of Change/Program Hypothesis Development
- Building a Results Frameworks and specifying the underlying micro-level theories of change

Program Design Key Step 4:   Engage in Full Program Design: Activity and Budget Development
- Entry points for elaborating the design
- Engaging Partners in the design and building relationships through the process
- Building the Program's Results Framework/Logframe
- Activity development tips
- Result-based budgeting alongside activity development
- Crafting a small grants or in-kind grants program inside your program design
- Infusing the program design with gender sensitivity and safety sensitivity

Required Session 3 and 4 Readings:

Lederach, John Paul. 2005. *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace.* We will cover mainly chapters 11, 12, and 13 (pp. 113-162) this weekend and the book's Glossary of terms, as needed.

USAID/DCHA/CMM Report. "Theories of Change and Indicator Development in Conflict Management and Mitigation (June 2010):" please read pp. 1-13 and Annex A (Theories of Change Matrix)
http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADS460.pdf

HPG Policy Brief No. 34. "Providing Aid in Insecure Environments: 2009 Update (April 2009)."
http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/download/3250.pdf

Note: **Also, please review the following CONF 660 readings (or please read if you have not taken CONF 660):** Cheyanne Church & Mark Rogers*, Designing for Results,* Chapters 2 & 3
http://www.sfcg.org/Documents/dmechapter2.pdf; http://www.sfcg.org/Documents/dmechapter3.pdf

END OF WEEKEND #2:

Individual Application Assignment (due Thursday, April 7): You will be given a "mini" Request for Proposals (RFP) for a new conflict program. Please prepare the following draft elements of a new conflict program design that responds to that "mini" RFP: (a) a draft program hypothesis/core theory of change statement for the program, (b) a draft Results Framework containing one overall Program Goal and at least three high-level Results that you think are needed to achieve that Program Goal; and (c) for only one of those Results, a summary description of some sample activities (at least 3 or 4 main activities) that will generate progress toward realizing that Result. Length of your submission: about 2 pages.

ONLINE SESSIONS

Program Design Key Step 5: Work on the proposal's "back of the book" sections and cross-cutting themes and connect them with the proposal's technical ("front of the book") part

Online Module: Week of April 4, 2011 (UNIT 5)

Topics: Program Sustainability, Partnerships, and Team Capabilities

Assignments:
- o   Review the module's content/reading.
- **Online Discussion: due Saturday, April 9, 2011.** Comment on the Discussion/Reflection topic; Read the comments of other classmates and reply to at least two such comments (discussion thread).
- *There is no Online Module Individual Application Assignment this week.*
- **Team Assignment:** Contribute to your team's discussions and work to **finalize the Team's Program Strategy Concept Note** (about 3 pages): **due Sunday, April 10, 2011.**

Online Module: Week of April 11, 2011 (UNIT 6)

Topic: Program's Implementation Plan (Activity Plan), including attention to Program Start-Up, Sequencing, and Scaling Up

Assignments:
- o   Review the module's content/reading.
- o   **Online Discussion: due Saturday, April 16, 2011**. Comment on the Discussion/Reflection topic; Read the comments of other classmates and reply to at least two such comments (discussion thread).
- **Complete module's Individual Application Assignment: due Sunday, April 17, 2011**. Revisit your submission for the "End of Weekend #2 Individual Application Assignment" (i.e., draft program design response for the mini RFP) and develop a draft First Year Activity Plan that covers (a) the main 1st year activities for two high-level Results in your draft design's Results Framework, with attention to sequencing; and (b) the main cross-cutting and Rapid Start-up activities for the overall program.   Be sure to build in a program "scaling up" strategy (ies) in the Activity Plan, and provide a summary text description (short paragraph) of that strategy.

Online Module: Week of April 18, 2011 (UNIT 7)

Topic: Program Monitoring & Evaluation Plan

Assignments:
- **Review the module's content/reading.
- **Online Discussion: due Saturday, April 23, 2011**. Comment on the Discussion/Reflection topic; Read the comments of other classmates and reply to at least two such comments (discussion thread).
- **Complete module's Individual Application Assignment: due Sunday, April 24, 2011**.   You will be given a Program Monitoring Plan template document. Complete all the information in this template (e.g., indicators, definition, data collection method, frequency, responsibility, baseline/target values) for one of the high-level Results you focused on in your Online Module B "Individual Application Assignment" (draft Activity Plan). In addition, develop some mid-term program evaluation questions that would help you learn to what degree that high-level Result's underlying theory of change is, or is not, being realized.

FINAL TEAM AND INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENTS

Program Teams Work on Team Assignments: Week of April 25, 2011

Program Teams are working this week on the following assignments:

- Finish a full, draft conflict program proposal (**due Friday, April 29**
- Prepare an oral presentation on the draft proposal *(due in class on Sunday, May 1)*
- Get ready to be the lead feedback team *in the May 1st class session* for one draft conflict program proposal (one proposal will be designated in advance of this week)

In-Class Session (Final Session): Sunday, May 1, 2011, 9 am to 5 pm (UNIT 8)

Program Design Key Step 6: "Red Team" Review of Draft Conflict Program Proposal and using feedback comments to improve the final proposal

- Program Design Teams deliver Oral Presentations on their draft conflict program proposal
- For each proposal presentation, the designated feedback team takes the lead in giving class feedback comments on the proposal

Course Synthesis and Reflection Activities

Individual Final Exam (take-home exam) issued in class and discussed

DUE DATES FOR COURSE'S FINAL ASSIGNMENTS:

- Program Design Team's Final Conflict Program Proposal **due Sunday, May 8**

- Individual Final Exam (take-home exam) **due Saturday, May 14**

HONOR CODE AND PLAGIARISM:

All George Mason University students have agreed to abide by the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code. You can find a copy of the Honor Code at academicintegrity.gmu.edu. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee for review. With specific regards to plagiarism, three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. If you have questions about when the contributions of others to your work must be acknowledged and appropriate ways to cite those contributions, please talk with the professor.

ICAR requires that all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit a student's work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. ICAR's policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace or substitute for it.