

STRUCTURAL SOURCES OF CONFLICT
CONF 730

Monday 7:20-10:00 pm

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<http://classweb.gmu.edu/hwjeong/conf730/>

Course Description

This course is designed to build theories on structural sources of conflict based on the examination of various social science paradigms. Issues to be discussed in class include, but are not limited to, the relationships between types of systems and conflict, and the impact of structural conditions on perceptions and culture. We will investigate such questions as in what ways a hierarchical social structure can generate conflict; what kinds of structural conditions are needed for the resolution of conflict which stems from social and economic inequity; what types of conflict emerge in the modern political economy; how conflict can be conceptualized in the post-modern world.

The struggle against dominant social relations and oppressive cultural norms has existed throughout human history. The large question for research on conflict resolution is, then, how we can identify sources of the dominant structure which generates conflict. This course takes an approach that the deep causes of environmental conflict, labor disputes, problems in urban communities, and violent culture should be understood in terms of the structural conditions of the modern society.

The maintenance of social order is often reinforced by cultural domination and instrumental rationality. One dimensional thinking destroys the very conditions needed for emancipation. Identity construction and politics of discourse are important in understanding transformative possibilities of an unequal power relationship. The course will end with the synthesis of theories on conflict and social structure and exploring strategies for conflict resolution.

Requirements

Students are asked to read the assignment before each class session. Since this course follows a seminar format, student participation in class discussion is critical. There will be a few class presentations based on the reading assignments. There will be one mid-term essay, and a final concept paper which discusses relevance of various theories to conflict analysis. The final term paper is assigned to help students deepen or widen their analytical skills by applying conceptual understanding to specific issues of student interest.

Grading

The research paper contributes to 45 percent of the course grade. The conceptual essay will count for 30 percent of the final grade. The late submission of papers will be subject to a penalty. 10 percent of the grade comes from a short mid-term essay. Class participation (including class presentations based on the summaries of reading materials) constitutes 15 percent of the grade. No grade will be given if a class presentation is missed.

Reading Materials

Freire, Paulo, 1998, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York: The Continuum Publishing.

Coser, Lewis, *The Functions of Social Conflict*, The Free Press, 1956

The following book chapters are available on the e-reserve and also included in the course binder.

Weber, Max. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. New York: The Free Press, A Division of MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc. Edited and Introduced by Talcott Parsons.

Bourdieu, Pierre, *Language and Symbolic Power*, Polity, Cambridge, 1992

Joe Scimecca, *Society & Freedom*, Chicago, Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1995

Rose, Fred, *Coalitions across the Class Divide: Lessons from the Labor, Peace and Environmental Movements*, Cornell University Press, 2000

Burton, John, *Violence Explained*, University of Manchester Press, 1997

Bookchin, Murray. *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy*. Palo Alto, CA: Cheshire Books, 1982.

Schedule

Week 1 (1/23)
Introduction and overview

Week 2 (1/30)
Structure and social theories

Week 3 (2/6)

Structural Violence and Institutions

Burton, Violence Explained

Week 4 (2/13)

Organizational Principles and Rationality

Weber, The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, pp. 124-151; pp. 115-123

Week 5 (2/20)

Social Functions of Conflict

Coser, Lewis, The Functions of Social Conflict, pp. 33-66, 67-86

Week 6 (2/27)

Organizational Conditions

Coser, Lewis, The Functions of Social Conflict, pp. 87-110, 111-158

Week 7 (3/6)

Structure/Agency and Consensus Building

Vivienne Jabri, Discourse on Violence, Manchester University Press, 1996, pp. 54-89

Week 8 (3/20)

Mid-Term Essay

Week 9 (3/27)

Institutions and Power

Joe Scimecca, Society & Freedom, pp. 75-98, 99-122, 123-145, 146-186. Recommended, pp. 1-28

Week 10 (4/3)

Coalition Politics

Rose, Coalitions across the Class Divide

Week 11 (4/10)

Cultural Politics and Symbolic Power

Bourdieu, Pierre, Language and Symbolic Power, pp. 163-202. Recommended, pp. 1-31.

Week 12 (4/17)

Transforming Relations

Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, pp. 25-67, 68-164

Week 13 (4/24)

Structure and Identity: Transformative Perspectives

Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy*, Chapters 1, 2, 12.

A concept essay due at the end of the week

Week 14 (5/1)

Communicative Action

Outhwaite, William, Habermas, pp. 5-37, 38-79.

A Term Paper Due

Week 15 (5/8)

Integration