

CONF 490: INTEGRATION COURSE

FALL 2008

Instructor: Prof. Richard Rubenstein

Mondays 1:30-4:15, Krug 242

CONF 490 is the capstone course for CAR students completing their work in Fall Term 2008. It is taught on Mondays from 1:30-4:10 pm in Krug Hall 242. Prof. Rubenstein can be reached via telephone at 703-993-1307 or 703-400-7674 (cell) or via email at rrubens@gmu.edu. His office in Arlington is Room 646 of the Truland Building. His office hours in Arlington or at the CAR office on the Fairfax campus are by appointment, and he is available to discuss either course matters or other matters of interest to students.

The **overall purpose** of this course is to help integrate students' their knowledge of conflict analysis and resolution in the context of general education by focusing on the topic of *conflict and peace narratives* – the stories that people tell about conflict, and the role these stories play in generating, escalating, and resolving violent or potentially violent social struggles. We study these narratives by looking at novels, films, histories, and media accounts of intergroup conflicts; by writing conflict stories of our own; and by writing about current social conflicts from the point of view of two or more parties; and by practicing third-party facilitation with an emphasis on the narrative-related aspects of the conflict. Aside from integrating knowledge, this course aims to develop students' skills at narrative analysis, expository writing, oral presentation, and third-party facilitation.

An **overview** of the course is as follows: The **method** of teaching/learning is based on the model of an interactive seminar. Each class will begin with a brief lecture by the instructor, followed by class discussion. In most classes, students will make oral presentations or will present short papers to the group. All students are required to come to class thoroughly prepared to discuss the assigned readings and their research for the week.

The **structure** of the course is as follows: After introducing and discussion the topic of conflict and peace narratives, we will spend the first 6 weeks of the course developing our narrative analysis skills by reading novels, and plays, watching films, and writing two short papers about how literature frames and tells conflict stories. (Students will also present their papers in class.) During weeks 7-10, we will apply these skills to the analysis of news media stories about conflicts and peace efforts, and will write and present papers describing and analyzing how the media cover a particular conflict chosen by the student. In weeks 11-14, we will do the final project of the term by studying conflict narratives produced by the parties to a contemporary social conflict, practicing narrative facilitation of this conflict, and evaluating the results of this facilitation. During this final phase of the course, students will also write conflict stories of their own.

Grades in this course are based on the following formula: class participation: 10%; book/film reviews: 20%; media review: 20%; conflict story: 10%; final project 40%. Incompletes will not be granted except for documented medical reasons or personal emergencies. *All students are required to familiarize themselves and comply with the University Honor Code provisions regarding plagiarism and copying. Any questions about these matters should be discussed with the instructor.*

Required readings are as follows:

Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*

Anchor; 1st Anchor Books edition (March 16, 1998)

ISBN-10: 038549081X

Sara Cobb, "Empowerment and Mediation."

www.beyondintractability.org/articlesummary/10119

Nik Gowing, "Media Coverage: Help or Hindrance in Conflict Prevention?"

<http://www.wilsoncenter.org/subsites/ccpdc/pubs/media/medfr.htm>

Graham Greene, *The Quiet American*

Publisher: Penguin Classics (September 28, 2004)

ISBN-10: 0143039024

"Narratives and Storytelling. www.beyondintractability.org/essay/narratives

Monk and Winslade, "Narrative Mediation: What Is It?"

www.mediate.com/articles/monk1.cfm

Richard Rubenstein, et al., *Interpreting Violent Conflict: A Handbook for Journalists* (ICAR 1993), available on e-reserves

(Additional articles will be placed on e-reserves and a list of recommended readings will be distributed in class)

A schedule of classes and assignments follows:

Aug. 25: Introduction to class. Read "Narratives and Storytelling" either before or after class

Sep. 1: Labor Day Holiday. For Sep. 8 please read *The Handmaid's Tale* and think about the questions about it sent to you via email or posted on Electronic Blackboard.

Sep. 8: See film of *The Handmaid's Tale* and discuss major themes and techniques of the film and the book. For Sep. 15, write a 4-6 page draft paper responding to questions about *The Handmaid's Tale*

Sep. 15: Continue discussion of the book. Group A presents draft papers orally. For Sep. 23, put papers in final form and begin reading *The Quiet American*. Option: you may also screen the film.

Sep. 23: Discuss *The Quiet American*. Optional: during For Sep. 30 begin writing 4-6 page paper on either the book, the film, or both

Sep. 30: Submit papers on *The Quiet American*. Group B presents papers orally. Guest lecture on terrorism and conflict narratives. For Oct. 7 read material posted on Electronic Blackboard on the Algerian Revolution

Oct. 7: See film, *The Battle of Algiers*. For Oct. 14, read "Interpreting Violent Conflict: A Handbook for Journalists"

Oct. 15 (NOTE CHANGE OF DATE TO ACCOMMODATE MID-TERM HOLIDAY): Discuss *The Battle of Algiers* and begin discussing "Interpreting Violent Conflict." For Oct. 21, select contemporary conflict, read about it in multi-media, take notes, and prepare to discuss in class

Oct. 21: Complete discussion of "Interpreting Violent Conflict." Group A presents orally on media coverage of chosen conflict. For Oct. 28, read "Media Coverage: Help or Hindrance..." and other assigned articles on media coverage and conflict resolution processes

Oct. 28: Discuss "Media Coverage" and assigned articles. Group B presents orally on media coverage of chosen conflict. For Nov. 4 write 6-8 page papers on media coverage of chosen conflict

Nov 4: Submit papers on media coverage of conflict. Guest lecture on narratives of parties to Palestine/Israel conflict. For Nov. 11, read materials posted on Electronic Blackboard on narratives of parties to violent conflicts and write short paper (length is your choice) about a conflict in which you were a party

Nov. 11: Discuss conflict narratives and short papers. For Nov. 18, read "Narrative Mediation" What Is It?", "Empowerment and Mediation," and other assigned articles

Nov. 18: Guest lecture and demonstration of narrative facilitation. Group A participates in simulated mediation session.

Nov. 25: Group B participates in simulated mediation session. Discussion evaluating the experiences of both groups. For Dec. 1, write draft papers describing the parties' conflict and peace narratives and evaluating the results of the facilitation

Dec. 1: Oral presentations of draft papers. Discussion and course wrap-up

Dec. 12: Final papers due in instructor's mailbox by 5:00 p.m.