

# **CONF 601, Theories of Conflict and Conflict Resolution, Fall 2008 Section 1, Tuesday 7:20-10:00, Truland Building 647**

## **Objectives**

Welcome to CONF 601! This course is designed to explore a wide range of conceptual frameworks for analyzing and resolving social conflict. Our objectives include:

1. Examining and critiquing social theories that may prove useful in analyzing various types of social conflict;
2. Evaluating the usefulness of these social theories by applying them to specific conflict situations;
3. Assisting students to become better critics of conflict-related theories and more acute conflict analysts; and
4. Enabling them to develop their own abilities to construct useful theories of conflict and conflict resolution.

## **Instructor and Office Hours**

This section of the course is taught by Solon Simmons, who can be reached at 703-993-3781 or [ssimmon5@gmu.edu](mailto:ssimmon5@gmu.edu). The instructor is available to talk about the course or other matters of interest by appointment.

## **Graded Exercises and Related Matters**

Grades in this course will be based on two exercises: a take-home examination given at midterm (30% of grade) and a final examination or term paper (50%). The remainder of the grade (20%) will be based on active participation in class discussion.

In order to receive a passing grade, it is necessary to attend classes prepared to discuss the week's reading. Late examinations or papers will be graded down one full grade for each day or part of a day that the paper is late, unless the student furnishes written documentation of the medical or family emergency which made timely completion of the work impossible. Please note that it is ICAR policy to refuse to grant grades of Incomplete for reasons other than documented medical or family emergencies. (For more information about grading, please look at the statement on academic standards in the ICAR Handbook and GMU's Honor Code.)

## **Course Materials**

Most of the articles and book chapters will be available online or will be placed on ICAR's ning network. Instructions will be given in class about access to these materials. Required reading materials are mandatory. The instructor will facilitate discussions in class based on the assumption that all students have read and reflected on all the required reading. These readings are meant to present the core arguments that define the field of conflict analysis and resolution and many may support arguments that you disagree with. That is intentional in the class design. In addition, students are encouraged to follow and critically examine daily news reports on current events related to social conflict, for they will be discussed in class to supplement the assigned reading materials.

## Course Schedule

### **Week 1: August 26**

#### ***Introduction to the course***

This session will offer an overview of the course and explore why we need to study social theory for conflict analysis and resolution. No reading is assigned.

### **THE PROBLEM**

We begin with classic discussion of justice and political power, keeping in mind that what makes the discipline of conflict resolution distinctive is its attention to the role that justice plays in effective plans to resolve intractable conflicts. We see the conceptual stakes already at work in these readings and should come to remember that our conversation is as old as philosophy itself.

### **Week 2: September 2**

#### ***The Prince and the Polis***

Required reading

**Plato.** *The Republic* Book 1

**Machiavelli.** *The Prince* Chapters XIV-XV, XVII- XVIII, XXV

### **THE ANATOMY OF COMMON SENSE**

Of the theories that have grabbed our attention and developed such rhetorical power that they work on us at the level of common sense are realism and functionalism. We spend two weeks getting to know these ideas in all of their subtle manifestations in an attempt to first discover ourselves so that we might theorize freely.

### **Week 3: September 9**

#### ***Realism***

Required reading

**Thucydides.** “The Melian Dialogue.”

**Hobbes.** *Leviathan*. Chapter XIII “Of the Natural Condition of Mankind”.

**Kenneth Waltz.** 2000. “Structural Realism after the Cold War” *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 1, pp. 5–41.

**Paul Collier et.al.** 2003. *Breaking the Conflict Trap* “What Makes a Country Prone to Civil War” 53-79

## **Week 4: September 16**

### ***Functionalism***

Required reading

**Plato.** *The Republic*. "The myth of the metals"

**Adam Smith.** *The Wealth of Nations* pp.7-17, 62-71.

**Kingsley Davis and Wilbert E. Moore.** 1944. Some Principles of Stratification  
*American Sociological Review*, Vol. 10, No. 2

**Lewis A. Coser.** 1956. *The Functions of Social Conflict*, 33-65.

## **POINTS OF DEPARTURE**

There are many things that make conflict resolution theory distinctive. Among those things are its conceptual foci. Here we explore three sets of ideas that have been central to the emerging paradigm, basic human needs, relative deprivation and culture.

## **Week 5: September 23**

### ***Basic Human Needs***

Required reading

**W.I. Thomas.** 1923. The Unadjusted Girl. Selections.

**Ruth Shonle.** 1927. "Social Psychologists and the Method of the Instinctivists"  
*Social Forces* 597-600.

**A. H. Maslow.** 1943. "A Theory of Human Motivation" *Psychological Review*, 50,  
370-396.

**John Burton.** 1979. *Deviance, Terrorism, and War: The Process of Solving  
Unresolved Social and Political Problems*, 55-84

## **Week 6: September 30**

### ***Relative Deprivation***

Required reading

**Ted R. Gurr.** 1970. *Why Men Rebel*. 22-58

**Thompson, E. P.** "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the 18th Century".  
*Past & Present*, 50 (1971), 76-136

## **Week 7: October 7 MIDTERM EXAM DISTRIBUTED IN CLASS**

### ***Culture and Context***

Required reading:

**Clifford Geertz.** 1973. "Thick description: toward an interpretive theory of  
culture", in: *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* Basic Books, pp. 3-30

**Kevin Avruch and Peter W. Black.** 1991. The Culture Question and Conflict  
Resolution. *Peace and Change*, 16 (1), 22-45

**Samuel P. Huntington.** 1993. "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs*. Summer, vol. 72

## **EARTHY ROOTS**

The mood of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was often dark and brooding. The kinds of ideas that seemed most real were those that seemed the least human and sentimental. Two radical strands of thought that dominated critical theories of social life were Marxism and Freudianism. We spend some time on these theories and ponder their utility for a citizen of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Week 8: October 21 MIDTERM DUE**

#### ***Marx and class struggle***

Required reading:

**Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.** 1848. *The Communist Manifesto*

**Richard E. Rubenstein.** 1993. *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice: Integration and Application*. Ed. D.J.D Sandole and H. van der Merve, pp.146-157

**Pierre Bourdieu.** 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, in David Grusky, pp.499-525.

### **Week 9: October 28**

#### ***Psychoanalysis***

Required reading:

**Sigmund Freud.** 1955. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychoanalytical Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XVIII, pp. 235-254

**Erik Erikson.** *Childhood and Society*. pp. 247-274

**Vamik Volkan.** 1997. *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*. pp. 19-29, 36-49, and 81-100.

## **UNIVERSALISMS**

One of the great gifts of the enlightenment was its conception of the universal human being. Dating to thinkers like Kant, Rousseau and Voltaire, there was a sense that all human beings shared something in common and could be thought in terms of what Marx called their species being. Here we examine the growth of the great universal system of government, Democracy, and look to what it means to live in world based on universal values.

## **Week 10: November 4**

### ***Democracy and its Discontents***

**James Madison.** 1788. *The Federalist* No. 10 (online)

**Alexis de Toqueville.** 1835. *Democracy in America* pp.163-170, 246-261, 287-305, 503-517

**Karl Polanyi.** 1944. *The Great Transformation* pp.130-162, 249-258B

## **Week 11: November 11**

### ***Modernization and Globalization***

Required reading:

**Talcott Parsons and Edward Shils.** 1951. *Toward a General Theory of Social Action* pp. 76-88.

**Anthony Giddens.** 1994. "Living in a Post-Traditional Society" in *Reflexive Modernization*. pp. 56-109.

**Benjamin Barber.** 1992. "Jihad vs. McWorld" in *The Atlantic Monthly*.

## **INNOVATIONS AND INTERVENTIONS**

Nothing is perfect and that goes for the enlightenment as well. Many theories began to see problems with the society that the enlightenment produced. We close the class with an examination of three major challenges to the modern, rational and material worldview that came with the rise of European and Western power.

## **Week 12: November 18**

### ***Postmodernism – The Philosophy of '68***

Required reading:

**Roland Barthes.** 1974. *S/Z* pp. 3-16.

**Jean Baudrillard.** 1985. "The Precession of Simulacra" in *Simulation and Simulacra* pp. 1-41.

**Michel Foucault.** 1975. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. pp. 3-31, 257-292.

**Jaques Derrida** 1974. *Of Grammatology* pp. 3-26.

## **Week 13: November 25**

### ***Multiculturalism***

**Will Kymlicka.** 1995. *Multicultural Citizenship* pp.1-33, 49-74.

**David Hollinger.** 1996. *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism* pp.19-50.

**Week 14: December 2**

***Recognition Conflicts***

**Charles Taylor.** 1992. "The Politics of Recognition" in *Multiculturalism* edited Amy Gutmann pp.25-73

**Nancy Fraser.** 2000. "Rethinking Recognition" *New Left Review* 107-120.

**Walter Benn Michaels.** 2006. "Who Are We, Why Should We Care?" in *The Trouble with Diversity* pp.141-170.

**FINAL EXAM DISTRIBUTED IN CLASS (WEEK 14). DUE AT THE INSTRUCTOR'S MAILBOX AT ICAR BY 4:30 PM ON DECEMBER 9TH (TUESDAY)**