

**CONF 601 Theories of Conflict and Conflict Resolution
Spring 2008**

Section 003: Richard Rubenstein, Thursday, 1:30-4:10 pm, Truland Building, 333A

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.

Instructors and Office Hours

This section of the course is taught by Richard Rubenstein, who can be reached at 703-993-1307 or richruben@aol.com. In an emergency, call 703-400-7674. 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 (40% of grade) and a final examination or term paper (60%). Students have the option to submit a term paper in lieu of sitting for the final examination, but the topic for the final paper must be approved by the instructor by Week 12 (April 10) at the latest. So start planning early if you prefer to write a term paper.

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. Please familiarize yourself with GMU's Honor Code; it is absolutely binding on all ICAR

students, and it is enforced. (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 placed on GMU's electronic reserves.

To access e-reserve reading, go to: <http://oscr.gmu.edu/cgi-bin/ers/OSCRgen.cgi>

When the page opens, select the course # and section for the course, the faculty name, and the password as listed below:

Rubenstein, Richard – 601.003 – Password: *Theory*

There are two categories of reading materials, required reading and further reading. Required reading materials are mandatory. The instructors will facilitate discussions in class based on the assumption that all students have read and reflected on all the required reading. Further reading materials are optional yet useful for students to deepen their understanding of the particular subjects under study. 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 Structure

In broad outline, three types of social theories will be studied in this course:

1. *Theories of human nature* – viewing each individual as a unit of analysis; accounting for “what is inside you,” with an emphasis on what lies beneath the person’s consciousness;
2. *Theories of structure* – viewing a social institution, typically comprised of sustained, hierarchical, and multi-layered human relationships, as a unit of analysis; accounting for “what you are inside of”.
3. *Theories of culture* – viewing an epistemological system of meaning-making as a unit of analysis; accounting for “what is inside you,” with an emphasis on shared interpretive lenses with which to understand social phenomena.

These three types are loose categories that overlap significantly. Type 1 (human nature) theories include basic human needs (week 3), aggression (week 4), and psychoanalysis (week 5); type 2 (structural) theories include realism and functionalism (week 2), Marxism (week 9), and modernization and globalization (week 10); and type 3 (cultural) theories include meaning-making (week 6) and some

aspects of the session focusing on alternative starting points for theory-building (week 12).

In order to help students appreciate the practical usefulness, or lack thereof, of these theories, we will incorporate two case study sessions and a movie (weeks 5, 8, and 13) in this course. These sessions will enable the students to reflect on the theoretical insights they have learned from the readings and examine the strengths and weaknesses of each theory in the practical context of a current social conflict from a comparative, theoretical perspective.

Course Schedule

Week 1: January 24

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. Read Rubenstein, "Some Thoughts About Conflict Theory" (emailed)

Week 2: January 31

Realism and functionalism

Required reading

Hans J. Morgenthau. 1967. *Politics among Nations*, 3-14, 25-35, and 162-171 (PDF)

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

Wikipedia Encyclopedia 2007. "Factors Leading to War" (E-reserves)

Further reading (available on two-hour reserves at Burton Library):

James E. Dougherty and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr. 2001. *Contending Theories of International Relations: A Comprehensive Survey*, 5th edition, 63-103.

Week 3: February 7

Basic human needs

Required reading.

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

Johan Galtung. 1991. *Conflict: Human Needs Theory*. Ed. John Burton, 301-335 (E-reserves)

Richard E. Rubenstein. 1996. "Basic Human Needs: Steps Toward Further Theory Development." (Available at <http://www.richrubenstein.com/articles.htm>)

Further reading

Coate and Rosati, *The Power of Human Needs in World Society* (Lynn Rienner, 1988)

Jay Rothman, *Resolving Identity-Based Conflicts in Nations, Organizations, and Communities* (Jossey Bass, 1997)

Week 4: February 14

Aggression and relative deprivation

Required reading

James E. Dougherty and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr. 2001. *Contending Theories of International Relations*, 5th ed., 231-263 (E-reserves)

Ted R. Gurr. 1970. *Why Men Rebel*. 22-58 (E-reserves)

Further reading

James C. Davies. 1972. *Anger, Violence and Politics*, Ed. I.K. Feierabend, R.L. Feierabend and T. R. Gurr., 67-84 (E-reserves)

Week 5: February 21

Case analysis (review of weeks 2 to 4)

There is no reading assigned for this week. A case study will be prepared and placed on the e-reserve at least one week prior to this session. Be ready to apply each of the theories learned in weeks 2 to 4 in the analysis and resolution of the conflict described in the scenario. Then ask such questions as: (1) How useful is each theory for explaining why the conflict emerged and grew in a way it did? (2) How helpful is the theory in your attempt to explore possible ways to resolve the conflict? (3) What similarities and differences do you find between alternative theoretical approaches to conflict analysis and resolution? There is no need to submit your answers to these and other questions in writing. But be prepared to present your thoughts in class.

Week 6: February 28

Psychoanalysis

Required reading:

Stephen A. Mitchell and Margaret J. Black. 1995. *Freud and Beyond: A History of Modern Psychoanalytic Thought*, 1-22 (E-reserves)

Sigmund Freud. 1955. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychoanalytical Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XVIII, 235-254 (E-reserves)

Vamik Volkan. 1997. *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*. pp. 19-29, 36-49, and 81-100. (PDF) Also available on Burton Library's two-hour reserves. The whole volume is available on the Arlington library's two-hour reserve.)

Further reading:

Herbert Marcuse. 1966. *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*. (Especially Chapters 1 to 4, pp. 11-105, available at Burton Library. The whole volume is available on the Arlington library's two-hour reserve.)

Vamik Volkan. 2004. *Blind Trust: Large Groups and Their Leaders in Times of Crisis and Terror*, 23-55

Week 7: March 6

MIDTERM EXAM DISTRIBUTED IN CLASS.

Mid-term course evaluation.

Meaning-making (including culture, worldview, and civilization)

Required reading:

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

Mary Clark. 1989. Chapter 8: On Acquiring a Worldview. *Adriadne's Thread: The Search for New Modes of Thinking*. pp. 213-242 (E-reserves)

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

Rubenstein and Crocker. 1994. "Challenging Huntington." *Foreign Policy*. Autumn, vol 96

Further reading:

Johan Galtung. 1996. *Peace By Peaceful Means* (PDF)

Ann L. Stoler. 1989. Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in Twentieth-Century Colonial Cultures. *American Ethnologist*, 16 (4): 634-660.

Spring Break (March 13) – No class

Week 8: March 20

MIDTERM EXAM DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS SESSION

Film – Battle of Algiers (in lieu of a case study)

See the instructions for Week 5. Be prepared to discuss how the theories studied so far, particularly in Weeks 6 and 7, may apply in the analysis and resolution of the conflict(s) described in the film.

Week 9: March 27

Marx and class struggle

Required reading:

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. 1994. *The German Ideology, Part I* (selections). *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*. Edited by L. H. Simon, 102-156 (E-reserves)

Roger Simon. 1992. *The Maintenance of Hegemony* (on Gramsci), 37-41 (E-reserves)

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

Further reading

David McLellan. 1975. *Karl Marx* (Available at Burton Library)

Week 10: April 3

Modernization and globalization

Required reading:

C.E. Black. 1966. *The Dynamics of Modernization: A Study in Comparative History*, 1-34 (E-reserves)

William Outhwaite. 1995. *Habermas: A Critical Introduction*, 109-120. (E-reserves) (Whole book available at Burton Library)

Paul Collier, 2006. "Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and Their Implications for Policy," 1-25 (E-reserves)

Further reading:

Harry Magdoff. 1978. *Imperialism: From the Colonial Age to the Present*. Especially Chapter 3: Imperialism: A Historical Survey and Chapter 6: The Multinational Corporation and Development – A Contradiction?, in pp. 94-113, 165-197. These selected chapters are available at Burton Library.)

Thomas L. Friedman. 2005. *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century*. pp. 3-47, 414-438. (E-reserves)

Jan A. Scholte. 2000. *Globalization: A Critical Introduction*. (Available at the Arlington library.)

Week 11: April 10

Postmodernism

Required reading:

Andrew Edgar and Peter Sedgewick. 1999. Postmodernism. *Key Concepts in Cultural Theory*. pp. 294-298 (E-reserves)

Michel Foucault. 1979. Chapters titled "The Body of the Condemned" and "Illegality and Delinquency". *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. pp. 3-31, 257-292 (PDF)

Week 12: April 17

In search of alternative starting points for theory-building

Most reading materials for this course are derived from contemporary Western epistemological traditions. In this session, we will explore alternative epistemological starting points for theory-building, asking questions like: What if CONF 601 were to be taught in a completely different epistemological and geographic context?; What would this syllabus look like if ICAR had emerged as an epistemic community based in Baghdad, Hanoi, Durban, or elsewhere? The point of asking these counterfactual questions is to critically reflect on the underlying assumptions from which the theoretical knowledge learned in this course has historically evolved. Through this exercise, we will explore alternative approaches to conceptualizing social conflict and conflict resolution.

Required reading:

Mohammed Abu-Nimer. 2000-2001. A Framework for Noviolence and Peacebuilding in Islam. *The Journal of Law and Religion*. vol. 15, no. 1 & 2. 217-265 (E-reserves)

Nomonde Masina. 2000. Xhosa Practices of *Ubuntu* for South Africa. *Traditional Cures for Modern Conflicts*. Edited by I.W. Zartman. pp. 169-181 (E-reserves)

Additional Reading

Johan Galtung. 1988. Peace and Buddhism: An Evaluation of Strong and Weak Points. *Transarmament and the Cold War: Peace Research and the Peace Movement*, 369-380 (E-reserves)

None of these essays was written for articulating a well-integrated theory of conflict or conflict resolution. Therefore they should not be read as social theories per se, unlike the other readings assigned for this course. Instead use each of these essays as a source of inspiration and explore (and speculate, if necessary) how people born and raised in these traditions may account for possible sources of social conflict, as well as for ways in which social conflict should be resolved.

Week 13: April 24

Case analysis (review of weeks 9 to 12)

See the instructions for Week 5

Week 14: May 1

Conclusion: What have we learned about conflict theory? What more do we need to discover?

This session will provide 360-degree reflections on the course. Exercises include: (1) mapping the theories of conflict from a bird's eye perspective and identifying different types of theories, (2) offering a brief overview of important theories left out of this course, (3) understanding similarities and differences between theories of conflict analysis and theories of conflict resolution, and (4) envisioning what new theories are needed and what they might look like. Bring your questions to the class for discussion.

FINAL EXAM DISTRIBUTED IN CLASS (WEEK 14). DUE AT THE INSTRUCTOR'S MAILBOX AT ICAR BY 4:30 PM ON MAY 10 (THURSDAY)