

CONF 720: ETHNIC AND CULTURAL FACTORS IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Spring 2008 (Section 001)

Wednesday 7:20-10:00 p.m., ARLTB 666B/647

Professor Kevin Avruch, *tel. & voicemail*: 703-993-3607;

e-mail: kavruch@gmu.edu

Office Hours: By appointment (Truland Rm. 604)

Course Description

This course explores the role of culture in the genesis, structuring, and resolution of processes of conflict within and between groups. We will pay special attention to ethnicity and other subcultural (or metacultural) markers of identity in complex social systems as both generators and outcomes of conflict. Analysis will proceed through consideration of case-studies drawn from a variety of cultural and social settings. We will also discuss some critiques of the culture concept with special reference to conflict analysis and resolution.

Course Requirements

Required Readings (available at the GMU Arlington Bookstore or through E-reserve):*

*Kevin Avruch, "Type I and Type II Errors in Culturally Sensitive Conflict Resolution Practice," Conflict Resolution Quarterly 20(3):351-371, 2003 (*on E-reserve*)

*Kevin Avruch, "Culture, Relativism, and Human Rights" in Human Rights and Conflict, (J. Mertus & J. Helsing, eds.) USIP Press, 2006 (*on E-reserve*)

Raymond Cohen, Negotiating Across Cultures, Revised Edition

John Conley & William O'Barr, Just Words: Law, Language and Power, 2nd ed.

Harold Isaacs, Idols of the Tribe: Group Identity and Political Change

Thomas Kochman, Black and White Styles in Conflict

Liisa Malkki, Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology Among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania

Lawrence Rosen, Bargaining for Reality: The Construction of Social Relations in a Muslim Community

Marc Howard Ross, Cultural Contestation in Ethnic Conflict

The following two books, also available at the Bookstore, are optional:

Kevin Avruch, Culture and Conflict Resolution

Kevin Avruch, Peter W. Black & Joseph A. Scimecca, eds., Conflict Resolution: Cross-Cultural Perspectives (paperback)

The first requirement of this class is that you come prepared to discuss the readings. Also required is a term paper, on a topic of your choice, relevant to the (broad!) concerns of the class. This is due in my ICAR mailbox by 4:00 pm, Wednesday, May 7, 2007. I'll have more to say on this in a hand-out later, but you might start thinking about possible topics; and you will need to talk with me when you decide on one.

Course Program

Part I: Culture

Week 1 (1/23): Course Orientation: What Is Culture? Why Study It?

Week 2 (1/30): How Study Culture? Ethnography etc.:
Person, Society, and Conflict: A Moroccan
Case-Study
Read: Rosen, pp. 1-92

Week 3 (2/6): Negotiating Reality (Morocco continued)
Read: Rosen, pp. 93-192

Part II: Ethnicity & Other Identities

Week 4 (2/13): Basic Group Identity-I: Towards
Understanding Ethnicity-I
Read: Isaacs, pp. 1-114

Week 5 (2/20): Basic Group Identity-II: Beyond Ethnicity
Read: Isaacs, pp. 115-219

Week 6 (2/27): Interpersonal Conflict, Culture, and "Sub-Culture":
American "Racial Styles"
Read: Kochman, all

Week 7 (3/5): "Metacultures": Class, Institutional, Gender, and

Legal Cultures (Understanding Discourse)
Read: Conley & O'Barr, pp. 1-97, 129-160

Week 8 (3/12): Mid-Semester Recess: No Class

Week 9 (3/19): Ethnicity, the State, and Nationalism
Read: Malkki, pp. 1-152

Week 10 (3/26): Memory, History, and Genocide: Making Conflict
and its Costs
Read: Malkki, pp. 153-297

Part III: The Uses of Culture in Ethnic & Identity Conflicts

Week 11 (4/2): Narratives, Performance, and Psychocultural Dramas
Read: Ross, pp.1-126

Week 12 (4/9): Case Studies in Cultural Contestation
Read: Ross, pp. 127-328

Part IV: Using the Culture Concept in Conflict Resolution

Week 13 (4/16): International Conflict Resolution, Diplomacy, and
Negotiation
Read: Cohen, pp. 3-106

Week 14 (4/23): Culture and Conflict Resolution
Read: Cohen, pp. 107-226

Part V: Cautions and Critiques

Week 15 (4/30): The Problem of Power: Misusing Culture in Conflict
Resolution: Culture, Ethnicity, and Identity
Reconsidered
Read: Avruch, "Type and Type II Errors..." and
"Culture, Relativism, and Human Rights," (*E-reserve*)

Term paper due May 7