

CONF 101 – 002
Conflict and Our World: Introduction to Conflict Analysis and Resolution
Fall 2009
TR 1:30-2:45

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Across all human societies, conflict is part of daily life. Sometimes it may be an annoyance, such as arguing with a sibling over the last cookie; sometimes it is more serious, such as the debate over human cloning; and sometimes it is tragic, as in the events in the Middle East in recent months. Conflict can be destructive, for example, when it damages relationships among neighbors or relatives or destroys homes and livelihoods. Conflict can also be constructive, as shown by the effects of civil rights demonstrations in the U.S. in the 1950s and 1960s. Our increased interconnection as a global society, as well as the upsurge in certain forms of violence, have heightened the need for more attention to determining how humanity can deal with conflict productively.

This course introduces the interdisciplinary study of conflict analysis and resolution. We will examine how and why conflict occurs in human society, and what we can do to mitigate its destructive aspects. The course includes an overview of the field, covering the central approaches to analyzing conflict using ongoing dialogues as the entry point to understanding. Together, through the conflicts you select for examination, we will highlight the societal, structural, and cultural factors that play a part in conflict and its resolution. At the end of the course, you should be able to analyze a conflict, to appreciate the contextual factors that influence conflict, to know the major conflict resolution techniques, and to understand the complexities of the most pressing contemporary conflicts.

Attendance in class is not only mandatory but also crucial if you would like to succeed in this course. Most of the material will be discussed only in class and not in the readings. You should plan to complete the assigned readings prior to each class. Be sure to look up words that are unfamiliar to you but realize that some terms have specialized meanings in the field of conflict resolution. Ask in class if you have not understood a term or idea. It should be stated forcefully at the outset that this is not a normal 101 class. It has been designed for engaged self-starters who would like to receive the benefit of the focused attention that comes with small class size and direct familiarity with the instructor. If you need a more traditional style of classroom interaction, you may consider enrolling in one of the other sections.

Classroom etiquette: Come to class on time and prepared. Turn off cell phones, pagers, beepers, etc. Do not leave the room during class unless you have an emergency. Do not disturb others by talking, passing notes, playing video games, etc. Be mindful of the sensitivities of others in your comments in class; however, open discussion and dialogue are our goals.

Conflict 101 fulfills the University General Education requirement for Social and Behavioral Sciences.

Assignments, Percentages of Grade, Due Dates

Attendance and Dialogue Participation	50%
7 Conflict Narratives (1-2 pages)	50%

Conflict narratives are short statements that describe each individual's story about what is going on in the conflict. It should be written from the perspective of an inside party to the conflict and should explain at a minimum why the conflict exists, who is involved in it, what keeps it going and what can be done to resolve it. Make sure to highlight key events and polarizing moments that give the narrative emotional power and feel free to develop a role playing personality in the drama.

Extensions of time for assignments will be arranged ONLY for documented personal illness or family emergency.

You are expected to abide by George Mason University's Honor Code in preparing all work for this class. If you have any questions about Honor Code issues (e.g., whether you are permitted to discuss an assignment with a fellow student) or are uncertain about how to cite a source, or if you have observed Honor Code violations, please contact Professor Simmons.

Required Readings

- (1) SC Pruitt, D.G. & S. Kim. 2004. *Social Conflict: Escalation Stalemate, and Settlement*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- (2) WC Strauss, Steven D. *Complete Idiot's Guide to World Conflicts* Second Edition Alpha Books.

A key part of this class will involve learning about conflicts to which we have no direct access. This will require that we use news sources like the *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Economist* or by listening to the BBC news or National Public Radio news among others. Many of our historical analyses will require that you rely on the *lexis/nexis* news archive as well. Please make your readings a central part of our discussions in class and don't be afraid to bring in views that stir up conversation, but keep in mind that real respect for the other is an ideal that is often more difficult to achieve than it is to intend.

Dialog Modules:

The basic structure of the class is organized around seven four class modules that culminate in a group dialogue between the two parties to the conflict. Each Module is oriented around a conflict film.

- Day 1) An orienting film that presents some contextual material that should help to think about the conflict.
- Day 2) Follow with a class discussion on readings on conflict theory and present our reactions to the film (or finish the film in the case of long films).
- Day 3) Follow with a day of planning your group's story about the conflict. To do this you will divide into either party side or other side and develop a conflict narrative that explains why the conflict exists, who is involved in it, what keeps it going and what can be done to resolve it. Groups will form anew with each module.
- Day 4) Finish with a dialogue between the groups on steps to resolve the conflict in which we simulate a coming together of groups who share elements of a conflict narrative.

Class Schedule:

Tuesday September 1	Introduction
Thursday September 3 WC 1 – 3 & 9, SC 1	Models of Conflict

The Battle of Algiers

Tuesday September 8	Day 1
Thursday September 10 WC 6 & 7, SC 3	Day 2
Tuesday September 15	Day 3
Thursday September 17 WC 4 & 5, SC 2	Day 4

Frontline: The Bombing of West Philly

Tuesday September 22	Day 1
Thursday September 24 WC 8, SC 4	Day 2
Tuesday September 29	Day 3

Thursday October 1 Day 4
WC 10 & 11, SC 5

Waltz with Bashir

Tuesday October 6 Day 1

Thursday October 8 Day 2
WC 12 & 13, SC 6

Tuesday October 13 No Class – Columbus Day Break

Thursday October 15 Day 3

Tuesday October 20 Day 4
WC 14 & 15, SC 7

Thursday October 22 Mid-term Reflections on conflict (peer review)

American Experience: Chicago 1968

Tuesday October 27 Day 1

Thursday October 29 Day 2
WC 16 & 17, SC 8

Tuesday November 3 Day 3

Thursday November 5 Day 4
WC 18 & 19, SC 9

Life and Debt

Tuesday November 10 Day 1

Thursday November 12 Day 2
WC 20 & 21, SC 10

Tuesday November 17 Day 3

Thursday November 19 Day 4

WC 22 & 23 SC 11

Farmingville

Tuesday November 24 Day 1

Thursday November 26 No Class - Thanksgiving

Tuesday December 1 Day 2
WC 22 & 23 SC 11

Thursday December 3 Day 3

Tuesday December 8 Day 4
WC 24 & 25

Thursday December 10 Wrap up Roundtable Discussion
WC 26 - 28