

**CONF 302**  
**Identity Conflicts and Their Resolution**  
**Professor Leslie Dwyer**  
**Spring 2010**

Class Time: Thursdays 1:30-4:15  
Classroom: Innovation Hall 207

Instructor: Dr. Leslie Dwyer  
Email: ldwyer2@gmu.edu  
Office: TBA  
Office Hours: Thursdays 11:00-12:30

**Course Description:**

The course will examine how identity has become an increasingly important framework used to claim resources, rights and power, and how identity motivates and shapes social conflicts and their resolution. We will examine how people invest identities with meaning and value to create their social worlds, and how they draw upon identities to foster both peace and conflict. Course materials will address how identity, self, and community are constituted, as well as forms of identity such as race, ethnicity, gender, religion, class, and nationalism.

CONF 302 fulfills all of the writing-intensive requirements for the Conflict Analysis and Resolution (CAR) major through the assignments listed in the syllabus. Throughout the semester, we will discuss how to improve writing skills, and we will conduct a number of ungraded, in-class writing exercises. In addition, each class member is strongly encouraged to attend Writing Center workshops for further instruction. See <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>.

**Course Aims:**

During the course class participants will:

- Consider the individual, group, and contextual variables influencing identity construction and salience
- Increase their understanding of the role of identity in analyzing conflicts and proposing resolution strategies
- Appreciate their own and their peers' multiple identities and the roles they play in aspects of their lives
- Develop improved writing skills and produce clear, well-structured and convincingly argued papers
- Enhance critical thinking abilities

## Course Expectations

- Consistent attendance. Barring exceptional circumstances, you will be expected to attend class. I will communicate with the class using your **GMU email address only**. You are responsible to check your GMU account regularly.
- Effective preparation. Class involves discussion and activities that depend on advance preparation. All assigned readings should be completed PRIOR to class.
- Classroom etiquette. Please come to class on time and prepared. Turn off cell phones, and allow others and yourself to learn by refraining from side conversations, passing notes, playing video games, instant messaging, reading e-mail, browsing websites, etc. Use computers ONLY for class-related work. Open discussion and dialogue are class goals but please be mindful of the sensitivities of others.
- Course completion. In keeping with departmental policy, incomplete grades will be given only in cases of illness, either your own or that of an immediate family member. **Late assignments will not be accepted for a grade unless authorized by the instructor before the due date.**
- Paper format. Papers should be typed, double-spaced, have 1" margins, and a 12 point font. The pages should be numbered and stapled together. Make sure that your name, course number, and paper title is on the first page. Edit your papers carefully as spelling and grammatical errors will lower your overall score.

## Course Materials:

### Required Texts:

Ross, Marc Howard. 2007. *Cultural Contestation in Ethnic Conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Volkan, Vamik. 1997. *Blood Lines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Gourevitch, Philip 1999. *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda*. New York: Picador.

Butalia, Urvashi 2000. *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*. Durham: Duke University Press.

All other readings will be available on Blackboard.

## **Academic Policies & Information**

### **Honor Code and Plagiarism:**

All George Mason University students have agreed to abide by the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code. You can find a copy of the Honor Code at [academicintegrity.gmu.edu](http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu). All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee for review. With specific regards to plagiarism, three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. If you have questions about when the contributions of others to your work must be acknowledged and appropriate ways to cite those contributions, please talk with the professor.

ICAR requires that all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit a student's work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. ICAR's policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace or substitute for it.

### **Student Resources:**

#### **English Language Institute:**

The English Language Institute offers free English language tutoring to non-native English speaking students who are referred by a member of the GMU faculty or staff. For more information contact 703-993-3642 or [malle2@gmu.edu](mailto:malle2@gmu.edu).

#### **GMU Writing Center**

“The Writing Center seeks to foster a writing climate on campus and beyond by offering free writing support to George Mason students, faculty, staff and alumni. No matter what your writing abilities are, writing specialists can help you develop the skills you need to become a successful writer. Free services include: One-on-one 45 minute sessions with a writing specialist; online writing lab; one-on-one sessions with an ESL specialist; workshops on such topics as documenting sources, grammar and punctuation; writing handouts on a variety of subjects; a library of handbooks and writing manuals; [and an] online chat with a tutor about papers submitted to the Online Writing Lab” (<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>).

#### **Disability Support Services**

Any student with documented learning disabilities or other conditions that may affect academic performance should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with the Office of Disability Support Services (993-2474) to determine the possible accommodations you might need; and 2)

contact her or his instructor to discuss reasonable accommodations. “George Mason University is committed to providing appropriate services and accommodations that allow self-identified students with disabilities to access programs and activities at the university as stated in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. To achieve this goal, the university maintains and supports the Disability Resource Center Office, which is responsible for assuring that students receive the services and accommodations to which they are entitled. The professional staff of the Disability Resource Center Office coordinate services for students with disabilities, determine reasonable services and accommodations on the basis of disability, and act as a liaison between students and faculty/ administration on concerns relating to services and accommodations.” (<http://www.gmu.edu/departments/advising/dss.html>).

## **Library Services**

The ICAR library liaison is Melissa Johnson (703.993.2212). Do not hesitate to contact her with specific questions about holdings and research in these areas or whom to contact for materials still in the Fenwick Library on the Fairfax Campus.

## **Assignments**

### **Participation 10%**

You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings. Active participation based on thoughtful consideration of the reading materials is expected. If you do not attend you cannot participate.

### **Assignment 1. Identity and the Self: A Reflective Personal Essay 10%**

This paper examines your own social identity system. Consider the groups to which you belong. Then list and describe your social identities. Determine what are your most salient identities NOW and explore the reasons why these choices were made. Also explore contextual factors at play. Bring in applicable course materials covered to this point as you analyze the processes at work in the construction of your own personal and social identity. The paper should be 2 – 3 pages in length, double spaced, 12-point font. **Due date is February 18.**

### **Assignment 2. Writing an Op-Ed 10%**

Write a short opinion piece or letter to the editor (750 words or less). Chose a timely issue/article related to the theme of identity that lends itself to critique and further exploration. Extra points if your Op-Ed is published. Submit both your Op-Ed and the related article. **Due date is March 18.**

### **Assignment 3. Expository Paper: Analysis and Argument 20%**

Write a short paper analyzing a theory or theory cluster as found in the readings and class discussions as they apply to a particular aspect of identity. Your paper should present a clear argument of why / how / when / if the theory / theories work to increase / decrease understanding of the aspect of identity chosen. The idea of a theory is to increase the analysts ability, using the theory, to make sense of a conflict phenomenon and to develop strategies to address resolution. The paper should be 4–5 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font. **Due date is April 15.**



#### **Assignment 4. Research Paper 40%**

As your final project, you will write a 10-page paper analyzing an identity conflict based on course theories. From your analysis, you will then propose at least 2 potential resolution strategies. **Paper topics are due April 1 in the form of a 2 paragraph overview of what you wish to write about and some of the materials you plan to use.** The final paper must be dropped off in Robinson B365 by **5:00 pm Monday, May 10. Papers submitted earlier can be sent via email.**

#### **Assignment 5. Revision of Previous Assignment**

Rewrite one assignment (1–3 only) in a timely manner, incorporating the comments made on your assignment and your own further thinking, **no later than April 29.**

#### **Course Agenda**

##### **Week 1: Thursday, January 21: Introduction to Course Themes**

Class Introductions  
Course Overview

##### **Week 2: Thursday, January 28: Social Identity Theories**

Huddy, Leonie. 2001. From Social to Political Identity: A Critical Examination of Social Identity Theory. In *Political Psychology*. Volume 22, No. 1: 127–156.

Reicher, Stephen. 2004. The Context of Social identity: Domination, Resistance, and Change. In *Political Psychology*. Volume 25, No. 6: 921–945.

##### **Week 3: Thursday, February 4: The Contextual Construction of the Self**

Kondo, Dorinne, 1990. *Crafting Selves: Power, Gender, and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, pp. 11-48.

Lazarre, Jane, 1996. *Beyond the Whiteness of Whiteness: Memoir of a White Mother of Black Sons*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 21-97.

##### **Week 4: Thursday, February 11: Identity and Violence**

David Maybury-Lewis, “Genocide Against Indigenous Peoples,” in *Annihilating Difference: The Anthropology of Genocide*, ed. A. Hinton, 2002, University of California Press, pp. 43-53.

Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish To Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda*, pp. 47-100.

**Week 5: Thursday, February 18: Identity and Violence**

**Assignment #1 Due**

Daniel Rothbart and Karina Korostelina, "Moral Denigration of the Other" in Rothbart and Korostelina, eds, (2006) *Identity, Morality, and Threat: Studies in Violent Conflict*.

Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish To Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda*, pp. 101-171.

**Week 6: Thursday, February 25: Identity and Conflict: Case Study of Bosnia**

Tone Bringa, *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way: Identity and Community in a Central Bosnian Village*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995. excerpts.

Svetlana Brosz, Laurie Hart, ed., *Good People in an Evil Time: Portraits of Complicity and Resistance in the Bosnian War*, Other Press, 2004, excerpts.

Film: "We Are All Neighbors"

**Week 7: Thursday, March 4: Ethnic Conflict**

Volkan, Vamik. 1997. *Blood Lines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*. Boulder: Westview Press. Chapters 1-5

**March 11: NO CLASS, SPRING BREAK**

**Week 8: Thursday, March 18: Ethnic Conflict**

**Assignment #2 Due**

Volkan, Vamik. 1997. *Blood Lines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*. Boulder: Westview Press. Chapters 6-12

**Week 9: Thursday, March 25: Narrating and Performing Identity in Conflict**

Ross, Marc Howard. 2007. *Cultural Contestation in Ethnic Conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1-4

**Week 10: Thursday, April 1: Gender and Identity**

**Final Research Paper Topic Due**

Lesley Gill, 1997. "Creating Citizens, Making Men: The Military and Masculinity in Bolivia." *Cultural Anthropology* 12(4):527-550.

Butalia, Urvashi 2000. *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*. Durham: Duke University Press. Chapters 1-4.

### **Week 11: Thursday, April 8: Gender and Identity**

Cheldelin, Sandra I. 2006. "Gender and Violence: Redefining the Moral Ground." In *Identity, Morality, and Threat: Studies in Violent Conflict*. Rothbart, Daniel and Karina V. Korostelina, eds. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Butalia, Urvashi 2000. *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*. Durham: Duke University Press. Chapters 5-8.

### **Week 12: Thursday, April 15: Reconsidering Identity/Resolving Conflict**

#### **Assignment #3 Due**

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

Longman, Timothy 2009. "An Assessment of Rwanda's Gacaca Courts." *Peace Review* 21(3):304-312.

Stansell, Christine, 2007. "I Was Sick During the Genocide': Remembering to Forget in Contemporary Rwanda." *Dissent* magazine.

Film: "My Neighbor, My Killer"

### **Week 13: Thursday, April 22: Reconsidering Identity/Resolving Conflict**

Volkan, Chapter 13

Ross, Chapters 8, 10, 11

### **Week 14: Thursday, April 29: Peacebuilding and Identity**

#### **Assignment #5 Due**

Jeong, Ho-Won. 2000. Peace Building in Identity Driven Ethnopolitical Conflicts, in Sean Byrne, et al., eds., *Conflict in Divided Societies: Theory and Applications*, Kumarian Press.

Arthur, Paige 2009. "Identities in Transition: Developing Better Transitional Justice Initiatives in Divided Societies." International Center for Transitional Justice Publications.

**Assignment 4 – Final Research Paper Due Monday, May 10, 5:00 pm. Drop your paper off in Robinson B365.**



## **Grading Scale:**

- A Given for work that meets all expectations, and also goes beyond an analysis of course material to develop new, creative, and unique ideas. An A is rarely given.
- A- Given for work that meets all expectations, and also contains some unique elements of insight and effort. You will have to work very hard to receive an A-.
- B+ Given for very good to excellent work that analyzes material explored in class and is a reasonable attempt to synthesize material. Given for work that meets most expectations, but contains some problems.
- B Given for work that meets some expectations, but contains numerous problems.
- C+ Given for adequate work that satisfies the assignment, but offers a more limited analysis of material explored in class.
- C Given for work that is of average quality.
- C- Given for work that does not meet basic expectations.
- D+ Given for unsatisfactory work; but which nevertheless reflects a high degree of participation and effort.
- D- Given for unsatisfactory work; and reflects a low degree of participation and effort.
- F Given for unsatisfactory work; and reflects unsatisfactory participation and effort.