

**CONF 330:  
Community, Group, and Organizational  
Conflict Analysis and Resolution  
Fall 2009**

Thursdays, 1:30 – 4:15 p.m.  
Engineering Building, Room 1110

Instructor: Gina Cerasani  
gcerasa1@gmu.edu  
Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution  
Office hours by appointment

**Course Overview**

This course examines conflict within social structures at the group, organizational and community levels, including governmental, cultural, religious, social and civic groups. The course emphasizes theories of conflict, provides frameworks to analyze conflict, and explores methods for resolving conflict within social organizations.

Groups, organizations and communities are powerful entities that shape the ways we think about ourselves, the ways we see others, and others see us, especially under conditions of interdependency. In this course we will consider the intersection and dynamics between human conflict and group, organizational and community behavior.

Through class discussions, films, case studies, and a simulation of a real-world conflict, you will develop the ability to analyze social group conflicts and consider possible intervention designs.

**Course Requirements**

**Participation (20%)**

Regular attendance and consistent participation in class discussions is expected. It is critical to complete the assigned readings prior to each class in order to learn the subject matter and to be prepared to fully engage in discussions.

In the final three sessions of this course, we will conduct a simulation of a community/group/organizational conflict in which each member of the class will assume a role. **Full participation in the simulation is central to the participation grade.**

## **Case Study Reflection Papers (20%)**

To gain experience applying your theoretical and practical skills to real-life conflicts, you will select a community, group, or organization to study throughout the semester. The purpose of this assignment is to identify conflict and/or conflict prevention within the entity you've selected, and to engage in analysis and critical thinking, applying concepts, theories, and models from class readings. You will write four reflection papers throughout the semester (due dates are noted on the syllabus), and each paper is worth 5 % of your grade. A detailed description of this assignment is available on Blackboard.

There are two options for selecting a group, community, or organization to study for this assignment:

- 1) Join a group to study during the semester, or observe a group or organization to which you already belong. This may be any type of special-interest group (e.g. book or film club, study group), organization (e.g. your workplace), or community-based group (e.g. neighborhood association). Whatever you select, **it must be a group with which you will have weekly contact.**
- 2) Study a current community conflict. While it is not necessary that the conflict is one in which you are involved, you will need to follow it closely throughout the semester; thus, it will be important to keep in mind the ease with which you can do that.

## **Mid-Term Exam (25%)**

This will be a take-home essay examination. **You will receive the exam in class on Mar. 18 and will have one week to complete it. It is due no later than Mar. 25 at 5:00 p.m.** The exam will consist of four essay questions, from which you will select two questions and write a 2-3 page response for each.

## **Final Exam (35%)**

The final exam will also be a take-home essay examination. **You will receive the exam in class on Apr. 29 and will have one week to complete it. It is due no later than May 6 at 5:00 p.m.** The final exam will consist of five essay questions, and you will select three of the five and write a 2-3 page response for each.

## **Honor Code**

All students are bound by the George Mason University Honor System and Code. Please review the code and become familiar with it:

<http://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/plagiarism.htm>

## **Blackboard**

This course will utilize Blackboard to both house documents pertinent to the course, to submit assignments, and to provide a space for discussion and collaboration. Students are expected to check the site regularly. Instructions for access will be provided the first day of class.

## **E-reserves**

All readings for this course are available through the university's electronic reserves system.

To access e-reserves:

1. Go to <http://oscr.gmu.edu>
2. Click on the green box "e-reserves"
3. Using the drop-down boxes, select the course (CONF 330-001) and instructor (Cerasani)
4. Enter the password (**group**) and click "submit" to view items. It is case sensitive.

## **Required Reading (all on e-reserves)**

Baron, Robert S and Norbert L. Kerr, (2003) "Introduction" chapter 1 in *Group Process, Group Decision and Group Action*. Open University Press, p. 1-19

Baron, Robert S and Norbert L. Kerr, (2003) "Intergroup Conflict and Aggression" chapter 9 in *Group Process, Group Decision and Group Action*. Open University Press, p. 155-174

Carter, Gregg Lee and Joseph F. Byrnes (1994) "Conflict in Organizations" chapter 1 in *How to Manage Conflict in the Organization*. Watertown, MA: American Management Association, p 1-24

Cheldelin, Sandra I. and Ann L. Lucas, (2004) "A Framework for Conflict Analysis" chapter 2 in *Conflict Resolution*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, p 13-24

Cloke, Kenneth and Joan Goldsmith, (2000) "Stories That Hold Organizations Hostage" chapter 5 in *Resolving Personal and Organizational Conflict*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, p 124-129

Constantino, Cathy and C. Merchant, (1996) "Design Architecture: Constructing Conflict Management Models" chapter 7 in *Designing Conflict Management Systems: A Guide to Creating Productive and Healthy Organizations* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, p 117-133

D'Estree, Tamra Pearson (2003) "Dynamics" chapter 5 in *Conflict: From Analysis to Intervention*, Cheldelin, Sandra, Daniel Druckman and Larissa Fast (eds.), pages 68-87, London and New York: Continuum

Dugan, Maire, (2001) "Imaging the Future: A Tool for Conflict Resolution" in *Peacebuilding: A Field Guide*, Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Reiner Publishing p 365-372

Dukes, Frank (1990) "Understanding Community Dispute Resolution" in *Mediation Quarterly* vol 8 no. 1 Fall 1990, San Francisco: Jossey Bass

Dukes, Frank, Marina Pischolish and John Stephens (2001) "Beyond Boundaries: Bringing Higher Ground to Whole Communities" chapter 9 in *Reaching for Higher Ground in Conflict Resolution*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, p 191-215

Harre, Rom and Nikki Slocum (2003) "Disputes as Complex Social Events: On the Uses of Positioning Theory" in *Common Knowledge* vol. 9 no. 1 Winter 2003, Duke University Press.

Herman, David (2009) "Positioning Theory" and "Narrative Told during Face-to-Face Communication: *UFO or the Devil*" in *Basic Elements of Narrative*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, p 55-59 and 166-72

McIntosh, Peggy (1988) "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" in *Staff, Family and Community*, p 79-82

Mor-Barak, Michalle (2005). "Defining Diversity in a Global Context: Prejudice and Discrimination" chapter 6 in *Managing Diversity: Toward a Globally Inclusive Workplace*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publication, p 121-145

Rubenstein, Richard E. (2003) "Sources" chapter 4 in *Conflict: From Analysis to Intervention*, Cheldelin, Sandra, Daniel Druckman and Larissa Fast (eds.), London and New York: Continuum, p 55-67

Schirch, Lisa and David Campt (2007) "Defining Dialogue" chapter 1 and "How Does Dialogue Work?" chapter 2 in *The Little Book of Dialogue for Difficult Subjects*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books, p 5-22

Warfield, Wallace (1992) "Triggering Incidents for Racial Conflict: Miami, Florida Riots of 1980 and 1982" chapter 13 in *Community Disorders and Policing*, Tony F. Marshall (ed), London: Whiting and Birch, p 169-174

Watkins, Jane Magruder and Bernard J. Mohr (2001) "Appreciative Inquiry: History, Theory, and Research" chapter 2 and "Appreciative Inquiry As a Process" chapter 3 in *Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey – Bass/Pfeiffer, p 13-51

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **January 21: Introduction to the course**

- Welcome and introductions
- Review syllabus
- Develop discussion guidelines and other class protocol

### **January 28: Frameworks for Conflict Analysis**

- Identify group or organization for case study
- Introduction to frameworks for conflict analysis
- Small group exercise: Find themes in lifelines

Readings to be completed for class:

- Cheldelin and Lucas, pages 13-24

Assignments to be completed for class:

- Select a group, organization or community for case study reflection papers
- Complete a brief “lifeline” of important groups, organizations, and communities in your life.

## **GROUP CONFLICT**

### **February 4: Dynamics of group conflict**

- Overview of group formation and group dynamics
- Analysis of group dynamics in student reports of case study reflections
- Discussion of initial observations and reflections from case studies

Readings to be completed for class:

- D’Estree, pages 68-87
- Baron and Kerr, pages 1-19

Assignment to be completed for class:

- First case study reflection paper due

### **February 11: Sources of group conflict**

- Intergroup conflict
- The role of culture in social conflicts

- Film: “Postville: When Cultures Collide”

Readings to be completed for class:

- Baron and Kerr, pages 155-174
- Rubenstein, pages 55-67
- [http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/culture\\_conflict/?nid=1186](http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/culture_conflict/?nid=1186)

### **February 18: Group conflict intervention models**

- Nested Model of Conflict/Envisioning Process
- Exercise: Application of Nested Model to student cases
- Discussion of observations and reflections from case studies

Readings to be completed for class:

- Dugan, pages 365-372

## **ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT**

### **February 25: Dynamics of organizational conflict**

- Models and stories of organizational conflict
- Guest speaker: Samantha Levine-Finley, ICAR MS, Associate Ombudsman, National Institutes of Health Center for Cooperative Resolution/Office of the Ombudsman

Readings to be completed for class:

- Cloke and Goldsmith, pages 124-129
- Carter and Byrnes, pages 1-19

Assignment to be completed for class:

- Second case study reflection paper due

### **March 4: Sources of organizational conflict**

- Issues of difference: gender, race, sexual orientation, etc.
- Diversity and multiculturalism in organizations
- Class exercises: Silently Standing in the Face of Oppression and Privilege Matrix
- Discussion of observations and reflections from case studies

Readings to be completed for class:

- Mor-Barak, pages 121-145
- McIntosh, pages 79-82

**March 11: NO CLASS – Enjoy your Spring Break!**

**March 18: Organizational conflict intervention models**

- Systems approaches: Conflict Management Systems, Appreciative Inquiry
- Principled Negotiation
- Discussion of observations and reflections from case studies

Readings to be completed for class:

- Carter and Byrnes, pages 19-24
- Constantino and Merchant, pages 117-133
- Watkins and Mohr, pages 13-51

Assignment to be completed for class:

- Third case study reflection paper due

**COMMUNITY CONFLICT**

**March 25: Dynamics of community conflict**

- Narrative analysis and positioning theory
- Film: “The Garden”
- Class exercise: Create a ‘positioning triangle’ from the conflict portrayed in “The Garden”

Readings to be completed for class:

- Harre and Slocum, pages 100-118
- Herman, pages 55-59 and 166-172

Assignment to be completed for class:

- Mid-term exam due by 5:00 p.m.

**April 1: Sources of community conflict**

- Discussion of observations and reflections of case studies

- Triggering incidents in community conflict
- Film: “Crown Heights”

Reading to be completed for class:

- Warfield, pages 169-174

**April 8: Community conflict intervention models**

- Dialogue as intervention
- Discussion of observations and reflections of case studies

Readings to be completed for class:

- Dukes, pages 27-37 and 191-215
- Schirch and Campt, pages 5-22

Assignment to be completed for class:

- Fourth case study reflection paper due

**April 15: Conflict Simulation**

**April 22: Conflict Simulation**

**April 29: Evaluation of simulation, wrap-up and course evaluation**

**May 6: Final exam due by 5:00 p.m.**