

Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Liberia CONF 399 Section 004– Spring 2010

Class Time: Wednesday, 1:30 pm to 4:10 pm

Location: Robinson Hall, B222

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Course Description

This course explores ongoing post-conflict peacebuilding dynamics in Liberia through the lenses of history, conflict patterns, culture, and conflict resolution practice. Readings link a review of Liberia's historical trajectory prior to and during the war years with cultural norms, values, and practices over time. Peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts since 2004 will also be similarly explored. The course provides a theoretical overview of conflict and resolution theories and practices with skills training opportunities for students. Students will then be expected to help develop conflict resolution training materials in conjunction with Liberian partner organizations, to be used in-country in June 2010.

The course gives students a unique opportunity to engage directly in peacebuilding practices through developing curricula to be used in the field. In addition, members of the Liberian diaspora, area experts, and peacebuilding specialists will speak to the class, expanding student knowledge significantly. The course can be taken alone or as part of the upcoming Palaver Management and Conflict Resolution Training in Liberia Project.

Objectives

- * Understand the relation of conflict dynamics to peacebuilding approaches
- * Link conflict analysis skills and the ability to think critically about conflict interventions.
- * Explore cultural dynamics and current social practices as they relate to peacebuilding

- * Gain basic conflict resolution training skills and how to teach those skills in training sessions
- * Develop conflict resolution skills training materials for use in Liberia
- * Increase ability to think critically about conflict and resolution methods and practices

Course Expectations

1. Consistent attendance. Barring exceptional circumstances, you will be expected to attend class on a regular basis.
2. Effective preparation. Class involves discussion and activities that depend on advance preparation. All assigned readings should be completed PRIOR to class.
3. Classroom etiquette. Please come to class on time and prepared. Turn off cell phones, pagers, beepers, etc. Remain in class unless you have an emergency. Allow others and yourself to learn by refraining from side conversations, passing notes, playing video games, instant messaging, reading e-mail, browsing websites, etc. Open discussion and dialogue are class goals but please be mindful of the sensitivities of others.
4. Course completion. In keeping with departmental policy, incomplete grades will be given only in cases of illness, either personal or in an immediate family member, and must be requested by the student. Class assignments that are submitted late can be penalized by one point for each day thereafter. If a student has a documented emergency, special arrangements can be made with the instructor as part of the ‘Incomplete Grade’ contract between the student and faculty member.
5. Paper format. Papers should be typed, double-spaced, have 1” margins, and Times New Roman 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 Books:

Greene, Graham. 1961, c1936. *Journey Without Maps*. Second Edition. Viking Press: New York.

Moran, Mary H. 2006. *Liberia: The Violence of Democracy*. University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia.

Shaw, Elma. 2008. *Redemption Road: The Quest for Peace and Justice in Liberia*. Cotton Tree Press: Washington, DC.

Van Tongeren, Paul, Malin Brenk, Marte Hellema, and Juliette Verhoeven, editors. 2005. *People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society*. Lynne Rienner Publishers: Boulder.

Suggested Readings:

Kulah, Arthur F. 1999. *Liberia Will Rise Again: Reflections on the Liberian Civil Crisis*. Abingdon Press: Nashville, TN.

Additional Readings:

Avruch, Kevin. 2002. What Do I Need to Know About Culture? A Researcher Says... In *A Handbook of International Peacebuilding: Into the Eye of the Storm*. Lederach, John Paul and Janice Moomaw Jenner, eds. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco.

Doe, Sam Gbaydee and Emmanuel Habuka Bombande. 2002. A View from West Africa. In *A Handbook of International Peacebuilding: Into the Eye of the Storm*. Lederach, John Paul and Janice Moomaw Jenner, eds. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco.

Warfield, Wallace. 2002. Is This the Right Thing to Do? A Practical Framework for Ethical Decisions. In *A Handbook of International Peacebuilding: Into the Eye of the Storm*. Lederach, John Paul and Janice Moomaw Jenner, eds. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco.

Woodrow, Peter and Christopher Moore. 2002. What Do I need to Know About Culture? Practitioners Suggest... In *A Handbook of International Peacebuilding: Into the Eye of the Storm*. Lederach, John Paul and Janice Moomaw Jenner, eds. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco.

Academic Policies & Information

Academic Honesty and Collaboration

George Mason University has an Honor Code with guidelines regarding academic integrity and which is designed, “to promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community” (www.gmu.edu/catalog/policies). The Honor Code lays out strict penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

Plagiarism is a serious offense, and all written work for this course should include proper citations in a standard citation format (MLA, APA, etc.). *If you are unsure about how to cite a direct quotation or concept from course or outside readings, then ask for help.* “I wasn’t sure how to cite a source, so I left out the reference,” is not an acceptable defense for plagiarism. Copies of common style manuals are available at the GMU library reference desk or online at <http://library.duke.edu/research/citing/workscited/>.

GMU Email Accounts

Students must activate their GMU email accounts to receive important University information, including messages related to this class.

University Policies

The University Catalog, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university affairs.

Student Resources

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>).

Assignments

Participation 15 Points

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.

Journal 15 Points

Students will keep a weekly journal throughout the course, totaling about 15 pages.

Reflection 1 10 Points

Essay prompt will be handed out February 17 covering History section course materials. **Due: February 24.**

Reflection 2 10 Points

Essay prompt will be handed out March 31 covering Peacebuilding/Intervention section course materials. **Due: April 7.**

Reflection 3 20 Points

Essay prompt will be handed out May 5 integrating History, Peacebuilding/Intervention, and Curriculum Development sections. **Due: May 12.**

Mapping Presentations 10 Points

Students will be assigned to working groups and each group will present their mapping of the Liberian conflict.

Curriculum Development 20 Points

Student working groups will develop curricula for peacebuilding in Liberia.

Course Agenda

Part I. History of Liberia, War, and Peace

Week 1 January 20 Introduction to Course Themes

Class Introductions

Readings: Moran, Introduction & Chapter 1
 Greene, Introduction and Part One, section 1

Week 2 January 27 Beginnings

Readings: Moran, Chapters 2 & 3
 Greene, Part One, section 2

Week 3 February 3 Foundations
Readings: Moran, Chapters 4 &
 Greene, Part One, section 3

Week 4 February 10 Linkages
Readings: Greene, Part Two, all
 Kulah, pages 11 – 56 (optional)

Week 5 February 17 Synthesis
Readings: Greene, Part Three, all
 Kulah, pages 57 – 112 (optional)
Reflection Paper 1 Handout

Part 2: Peacebuilding & Intervention

Week 6 February 24 Peacebuilding I
Readings: Moran, Chapter 6
 Shaw, pages 1 – 50

Reflection Paper 1 Due

Week 7 March 3 Peacebuilding II
Readings: Shaw, pages 51 – 104
 van Tongeren, Part 1 (1, 2, & 6)

Week 8 March 10 Spring Break

Week 9 March 17 Culture & Gender
Readings: Shaw, pages 105 – 147
 van Tongeren, Part 2 (7 & 7.5)
 Avruch & Woodrow chapters

Week 10 March 24 Intervention I
Readings: Shaw, pages 148 – 185
 van Tongeren, Part 8 (all)
 Doe chapter

Week 11 March 31 Intervention II
Readings: Shaw, pages 186 – 220
 Van Tongeren, Part 9.2; Part 10 (all)
 Warfield chapter
Reflection Paper 2 Handout

Part 3: Training & Curriculum Development

Week 12 April 7 Conflict Resolution Training

Readings: Training Booklet

Reflection Paper 2 Due

Week 13 April 14 Curriculum Development I

Week 14 April 21 Curriculum Development II

Week 15 April 28 Facilitation

Course Wrap Up
Evaluations
Reflection Paper 3 Handout

Reflection Paper 3 Due: May 5

Grading Scale

Points Accumulated	Letter Grade
94-100	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-
77-79	C+
74-76	C
70-73	C-
60-69	D
0-59	F