

**Conflict and Our World: Introduction to Conflict Analysis and Resolution
Conf 101, Section 01, Spring 2011**

Instructor: Lori Stephensen, lstephea@gmu.edu

Class Schedule and Location: MWF from 9:30 – 10:20 am; Robinson A, 105

Office Hours: By appointment

TA:

We live in a world fraught with conflict between husbands and wives, parents and children, community and political leaders, ethnic and religious groups and nations. Sometimes these conflicts are constructive—leading to important change, sometimes they are a simple annoyance, and sometimes they are much more serious involving violence and the disruption of lives. This course is designed to help us maximize our ability to analyze and understand the world in which we live, and to consider how we can influence it—beginning with the conflict in our own lives then moving to international conflict. Reflective learning and practice will be emphasized.

The goal of this course is to provide an introduction to the interdisciplinary field of conflict analysis and resolution, as well as to develop basic analysis and intervention skills. Conflict 101 fulfills the University General Education Requirement for Social and Behavioral Sciences.

The course is broken into three parts. The first unit is an introduction to basic theories and principles of conflict with an emphasis on analyzing conflict as you have experienced it and then expanding that analysis to social and international conflict. The second unit is experiential and introduces social conflict and basic facilitation and dialog skills through the analysis of specific case studies and a series of dialogs—with class members representing each side of the conflict as well as third party facilitators. The final unit considers the orientation of the field toward conflict in terms intervention and approaches to peacebuilding.

Required Texts:

Arbinger Institute. (2006). *The Anatomy of Peace*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Lederach, John Paul (2005). *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*. Oxford University Press.

Pruitt, D.G & S. Kim. (2004) *Social Conflict: Escalation, Stalemate, and Settlement*. New Hork: McGraw-Hill.

Readings on Blackboard:

Abu-Nimer, Mohammed. 2003. "Toward the Theory and Practice of Positive Approaches to Peacebuilding." In *Positive Approaches to Peacebuilding: A Resource for Innovators*. Taos Institute, 13-23.

Burton, John. 1997. "Needs Theory." In *Violence Explained*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 32-40.

Lederach, John Paul. 1995. "The Elicitive Model" and "Language and Metaphor as Natural Resources in Conflict Training." In *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures*. Syracuse University Press, 55-62, 73-83.

Leibler, Claudia and Cynthia Sampson. 2003. "Appreciative Inquiry in Peacebuilding: Imagining the Possible." In *Positive Approaches to Peacebuilding: A Resource for Innovators*. Taos Institute, 55-72.

Volkan, Vamik. 1997. "Ethnic Tents: Descriptions of Large-Group Identities," and "Chosen Trauma: Unresolved Mourning." In *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 19-28, 36-49.

Other readings as assigned.

Note: It is highly recommended for this course, and for your undergraduate career, that you seek out information about current events in your community and in the world generally. Please make your readings a central part of our discussions in class and do not be afraid to bring in views that stir up conversation.

Assignments and Grading:

Grading for the course will be determined on a simple point scale, with 100 points possible, based on the following criteria:

Class Participation: (25 points) The design of this class does not lend itself to excessive absence or sitting in the corner in the back row. You will be expected to participate in three ways:

(1) Attendance. You are expected to come to class on time and stay for the entire class. Absences will only be excused in the case of a serious illness or family emergency and must be cleared with the instructor in advance. Two unexcused absences are allowed before your grade is affected.

(2) Reading and Interaction in class. There will be lots of opportunities for discussion and practical participation in class. This will be easier if you have completed the readings and can contribute in an informed way.

(3) Two Saturday Workshops. Two eight-hour workshops will be presented, one on Saturday, Feb. 19th, and one on Saturday, April 30th (these dates may be renegotiated during the first week of class depending on class members'

schedules). Because we will be meeting for a total of 16 hours on these weekends, all Friday classes will be dismissed. Participation in both workshops is required.

Writing Assignments:

All writing assignments will be submitted electronically. Once I have received your submission I will confirm receipt. Careful attention should be paid to organizational structure, grammar, and spelling and should reflect university level quality.

(1) 10 Weekly Reflection Assignments, 1-2 pages each. (2 points each, 20 points possible)

There will be a total of 12 opportunities to submit a Weekly Reflection. You will be required to submit 10. These reflections should integrate understanding gained that week from readings and activities. This will help me to gauge whether or not you are keeping up with the readings. Reflection Assignments are to be uploaded to Blackboard by 5pm each Friday.

(2) Anatomy of Peace Reflection Paper, 5-7 pages. (10 points)

This paper will be a reflection on what you learned in the Anatomy of Peace readings and training. It is not meant to be a recounting of the diagrams or of the model although you should feel free to critique it. Rather this paper should be self-reflexive considering your own influence/role in conflict as you have experienced it personally. This paper should be submitted electronically to my email by **5pm on Friday, March 4th**.

(2) Social Conflict Analysis Paper, 5-7 pages. (10 points)

This paper will have two essential themes: First, it will analyze the case study in which you were the third party facilitating the dialog: Who are the parties to the conflict? What is the conflict about? What is driving it? What intervention would you recommend? The second is a reflection on your experience facilitating the dialog: What was that like for you? What did you/your team do well? What could you have done better? This paper should be submitted electronically to my email by **5pm on Friday, April 22nd**.

Final Exam: Be the Change Project

Your final exam in this course will be to take the knowledge that you have gained and do something with it. You and/or a small group of classmates will identify a conflict at home, school, or in the community. You will analyze it, develop a conflict resolution strategy, and then begin to implement it. I am asking you to spend a minimum of 2 hours per week on the project. Your group will make a 10-15 minute presentation on the project in class at the end of the semester. Each individual will also be required to turn in a 7-10 page paper that integrates what

they learned about conflict analysis and peacebuilding from class, the readings, and the Be the Change project.

- (1) Be the Change Proposal, 1 page.**
- (2) Be The Change Project Paper 7-10 pages. (25 points)**
- (3) In Class Presentation. (10 points)**

Grades: Final grades will be based on the following point system:

A	A-	B	B+	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
100-94	93-90	89-87	86-84	83-80	79-77	76-74	73-70	69-67	66-64	63-60	59 - 0

Classroom Etiquette

Laptops will not be used for note taking in class. It is too easy to be distracted by Facebook and email—and loud typing detracts from class discussion. There may be times—for research purposes when the use of laptops will be allowed. Phones must be silenced and no text messaging will be permitted during class. You cannot fully be in two places at the same time.

Honor Code and Plagiarism

A reminder: Plagiarism or other violations of the **honor code** are not acceptable in this or any other GMU class. In addition to the following, please see the ICAR handbook:

[http://www.gmu.edu/departments/ICAR/newstudent/Appendix L.pdf](http://www.gmu.edu/departments/ICAR/newstudent/Appendix_L.pdf).)

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. 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's Policy: Faculty require that all written work must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared to electronic databases. Faculty may at any time compare a student's written work against electronic databases/plagiarism detection software without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require work to be submitted in print and electronic form. Faculty are encouraged

to require students to submit work through Blackboards SafeAssign program. Faculty may also directly submit work using the same system.

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>).

Library Services

The ICAR library liaison is Gretchen Reynolds (greynol3@gmu.edu). Do not hesitate to contact her with specific questions about holdings and research in these areas or whom to contact for materials in the Fenwick Library on the Fairfax Campus.

Class Schedule

Unit One: Intro to Conflict and Conflict Analysis

Week 1

Mon, 1/24 Course Introduction, Baseline assessment
Wed, 1/26 *Social Conflict*, pp. 3-36; 56-62
Fri, 1/28 No Class **Weekly Reflection due by 5pm**

Week 2

Mon, 1/31 *Social Conflict*, pp. 63-84; Burton, "Needs Theory," pp. 32-40.
Wed, 2/2 *Social Conflict*, pp. 87-100
Fri, 2/4 No Class **Weekly Reflection due by 5pm**

Week 3

Mon, 2/7 *Anatomy of Peace*, Preface, pp. 3-65
Wed, 2/9 *Anatomy of Peace*, pp. 69-138
Fri, 2/11 No Class **Weekly Reflection due by 5pm**

Week 4

Mon, 2/14 *Anatomy of Peace*, pp. 141- 198
Wed, 2/16 *Anatomy of Peace*, pp. 201-224
Be the Change Proposal due before class
Fri, 2/18 No Class **Weekly Reflection due by 5pm**
Sat, 2/19 Anatomy of Peace Training: 9am – 5pm

Unit Two: Social Conflict

Week 5

Mon, 2/21 Volkan, "Ethnic Tents: Descriptions of Large-Group Identities," and "Chosen Trauma: Unresolved Mourning," 19-28, 36-49.
Wed, 2/23 Lederach, "The Elicitive Model" and "Language and Metaphor as Natural Resources in Conflict Training," pp. 55-62, 73-83.
Fri, 2/25 No Class **Weekly Reflection due by 5pm**

Week 6

- Mon, 2/28 Abu-Nimer, "Toward the Theory and Practice of Positive Approaches to Peacebuilding," pp. 13-23; Liebler and Sampson, "Appreciative Inquiry in Peacebuilding," pp.55-72
Wed, 3/2 Conflict Mapping Exercise
Fri, 3/4 No Class **Anatomy of Peace Reflection Paper due by 5pm**

Week 7

- Mon, 3/7 Movie #1: The Fire Next Time
Wed, 3/9 Movie#1 Cont./Prepare for Group Dialog
Fri, 3/11 No Class **Weekly Reflection due by 5pm**

Spring Break

Week 8

- Mon, 3/21 Group Dialog
Wed, 3/23 Debrief Group Dialog
Fri, 3/25 No Class **Weekly Reflection due by 5pm**

Week 9

- Mon, 3/28 Movie#2 Farmingville
Wed, 3/30 Movie #2 cont/prepare for Group Dialog
Fri, 4/1 No Class **Weekly Reflection Due by 5pm**

Week 10

- Mon, 4/4 Group Dialog
Wed, 4/6 Debrief Group Dialog
Fri, 4/8 No Class **Weekly Reflection due by 5pm**

Week 11

- Mon, 4/11 Movie #3: Life and Debt
Wed, 4/13 Movie #3 Cont/Prepare for Group Dialog
Fri, 4/15 No Class **Weekly Reflection due by 5pm**

Week 12

- Mon, 4/18 Group Dialog
Wed, 4/20 Debrief Group Dialog
Fri, 4/22 No Class **Social Conflict Analysis due by 5pm**

Unit 3: Conflict Intervention and Peacebuilding

Week 13

Mon, 4/25 Intervention Exercise - Liberia

Wed, 4/27 *The Moral Imagination*, pp. 3-40

Fri, 4/29 No Class **Weekly Reflection due by 5pm**

Sat, 4/30 Reflective Peacebuilding Workshop: 9am – 5pm

Week 14

Mon, 5/2 *The Moral Imagination*, pp. 41-86

Wed, 5/4 *The Moral Imagination*, pp. 131-178

Fri, 5/6 No Class **Weekly Reflection due by 5pm**

Final Exam

Mon, 5/16 **Be the Change Presentations 8:30- 10:15, papers due before class**

Tips on how to succeed in Conf101

1. Show up, mentally and physically.
2. Read and learn with passion. Seek for new ideas. Wrestle with them. Be willing to reconsider what you “know.”
2. Rediscover yourself. You cannot know what to think if you do not know who you are. Learn to think for yourself. Don’t be afraid to challenge your old ideas or the ideas of your professors.
3. Learn to live with uncertainty. There are no easy answers to the problems that plague our lives and the world. At times contradictory ideas will be presented. Immerse yourself in different viewpoints. Try to sit with contradictory truths.
4. Step out of your comfort zone. We must be the change we wish to see in the world, but change can be scary. Be courageous and creative.