

# Research & Inquiry in Conflict Resolution

## CONF 301 Section 002 – Spring 2011

Class Time: Thursday, 10:30 – 1:15 pm

Location: Robinson Hall A, Room 245

Instructor: Patricia Maulden, Ph.D.  
Northeast Module II, Room 106  
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Office Hours: By appointment

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### Course Description & Objectives

Welcome! This course introduces students to methods of research and inquiry that can begin to answer questions such as how conflicts occur, how conflict dynamics change over time, how individuals and groups engage directly and indirectly with conflict, and how resolution approaches might best be structured. This course examines the kind of activities, procedures, tasks, and goals that are needed for sound research in conflict and resolution. The class centers on skills of research that can be used to analyze many types of conflicts. Throughout the semester, students develop their critical understanding of the research process as they struggle with case studies of empirical research that raise central questions about contemporary conflict, conflict resolution, and methodology. Students will also develop their own comprehensive research proposal on an individually identified research problem situated within the conflict analysis and resolution literature.

### Course Objectives

- \* Engage in critical reflection of the goals of research and inquiry and the production of knowledge in conflict analysis and resolution
- \* Integrate research with theory and practice
- \* Examine strengths, limitations, and theoretical underpinnings of quantitative, qualitative, and comparative research analysis
- \* Learn how to frame a topic for research and to develop a research proposal

# Course Expectations

1. Consistent attendance. Barring exceptional circumstances, you will be expected to attend class.
2. Effective preparation. *You are expected to come to class having read all of the week's reading assignments*. Class involves discussion and activities that depend on advance preparation. In addition, each student must keep a reading journal, entries to be collected during the course of the semester.
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. Class assignments that are submitted late will be penalized. If a student has a documented emergency, special arrangements may be made with the instructor.
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 Texts

- Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 2008. *The Craft of Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Robson, Colin. 2007. *How to do a Research Project: A Guide for Undergraduate Students*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

### Additional Required Readings (Available on Blackboard)

- Bronéus, Karen. 2008. Analyzing Reconciliation: A Structured Method for Measuring National Reconciliation Initiatives. In *Peace and Conflict*, 14: 291-313.
- Dyrness, Andrea. 2008. Research for Change versus Research as Change: Lessons from a *Mujerista* Participatory Research Team. In *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, Volume 39, Issue 1, pp. 23-44.
- Florez-Morris, Mauricio. 2007. Joining Guerilla Groups in Colombia: Individual Motivations and Processes for Entering a Violent Organization. In *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 30:615-634.

- Francis, Diana. 2004. *Culture, Power Asymmetries and Gender in Conflict Transformation*. Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management. <http://www.berghof-handbook.net>.
- Lillie, Christine and Ronnie Janoff-Bulman. 2007. Macro versus Micro Justice and Perceived Fairness of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions. *In Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, Volume 13, No. 2, pp. 221-236.
- Parlevliet, Michelle. 2010. *Rethinking Conflict Transformation from a Human Rights Perspective*. Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management. <http://www.berghof-handbook.net>.
- Ross, Marc Howard. 2001. Psychocultural Interpretations and Dramas: Identity Dynamics in Ethnic Conflict. *In Political Psychology*. Volume 22, No. 1, pp. 157-178.
- Utas, Mats and Magnus Jörgel. 2008. The West Side Boys: Military Navigation in the Sierra Leone Civil War. *In Journal of Modern African Studies*. Volume 46, No. 3, pp. 487-511.
- Supplemental Readings (Available on Blackboard)**
- Black, Leanne. 2003. Critical Review of the Capacity-Building Literature and Discourse. *In Development in Practice*. Volume 13, No. 1, pp. 116-120.
- Cammarota, Julio. 2008. The Cultural Organizing of Youth Ethnographers: Formalizing a Praxis-Based Pedagogy. *In Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, Volume 39, Issue 1, pp. 45-58>
- Carpenter, Ami. Beyond Drug Wars: Transforming Factional Conflict in Mexico. *In Conflict Resolution Quarterly*. Volume 27, No. 4, pp. 401-421.
- Höglund, Anna T. 2003. War on Terrorism: Feminist and Ethnical Perspectives. *In Security Dialogue*, 34:242-245.
- Hoffman, Danny. 2005. Violent Events as Narrative Blocs: The Disarmament at Bo, Sierra Leone. *In Anthropological Quarterly*, Volume 78, No. 2, pp. 329-353.
- Muldoon, Orla T., Katrina Mclaughlin, Nathalie Rougier, and Karen Trew. 2008. Adolescents' Explanations for Paramilitary Involvement. *In Journal of Peace Research*. Volume 45, No. 5, pp. 681-695.
- Ragin, Charles C. 1994. *Constructing Social Research, Chapter 2*. Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press.
- Reason, Peter. 2004. Critical Design Ethnography as Action Research. *In Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, Volume 35, Issue 2, pp. 269-276.
- Richards, Paul. 2005. War as Smoke and Mirrors: Sierra Leone 1991-2, 1994-5, 1995-6. *In Anthropological Quarterly*. Volume 78, No. 2, pp. 377-402.

Sher, Gila. 2010. Epistemic Friction: Reflections on Knowledge, Truth, and Logic. *In Erkenn*, Volume 72, pp. 151-176.

## 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/>.

For individual class assignments, you may discuss your ideas with others or ask for feedback; however, you are responsible for making certain that there is no question that the work you hand in is your own. You may not submit papers or presentations from other courses to fulfill assignments for this class.

For group class assignments, the names of all participants should appear on the work. While it is fine for groups to divide project work among team members, the final product submitted should represent a single, conceptually linked piece of work. With rare exception, each student working in a group is given the same grade for an assignment. *If a group is having trouble with a member not fulfilling their work obligation, then the group needs to bring the problem to the instructor’s attention immediately.*

## 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](mailto: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 still in the Fenwick Library on the Fairfax Campus.

## Assignments

### Participation 20%

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

### Reading Journal 20%

The reading journal includes summaries of each assigned reading, at least one double-spaced page for each chapter or article. What I am looking for is engagement with the topics, critical reflection, and independent analysis. Journal entries will be collected four times during the semester.

### In-Class Quantitative Group Project 15%

Develop a quantitative research plan, data gather techniques, and data analysis methodologies for a specific conflict issue. The project may require some outside of class work – also part of your grade.

### In-Class Qualitative Group Project 15%

Develop a qualitative research plan, data gathering techniques, and data analysis methodologies for a specific conflict issue. The project may require some outside of class work - also part of your grade.

Final Individual Research Proposal 30%

Each student will develop a research proposal that could be submitted to a grant funding agency. Additional information will be given later in the course.

## Course Agenda

### Part I. Beginning Research

Week 1 Introduction to Research & Inquiry  
January 27 – Overview of course; exploring research in theory and practice

Week 2 Beginnings  
February 3 – Booth Chapters 1 & 2; Robson Chapter 2

Week 3 Ideas, Problems, Questions  
February 10 – Booth Chapters 3 & 4; Robson Chapter 3

Week 4 Sources  
February 17 – Booth Chapters 5 & 6

***Journal Assignment #1 Due***

### Part II. Conducting Research

Week 5 Data Collection I  
February 24 – Robson Chapter 4, Ross article

Week 6 Data Collection II  
March 3 – Robson Chapter 5 & 6

Week 7 Building An Argument  
March 10 – Booth Chapters 7, 8, 9

***Journal Assignment #2 Due***

Week 8 March 17 - SPRING BREAK

Week 9 Testing Your Argument  
March 24 – Booth Chapters 10 & 11

***Quantitative Group Projects Due***

### Part III. Practicing Research

Week 10 Reconciliation  
March 31 – Lillie & Janoff-Bulman article; Bronéus article

Week 11 Youth & Conflict  
April 7 – Florez-Morris; Utas article

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

Week 12 Conflict Transformation  
April 14 – Parlevliet article; Francis article

#### ***Undergraduate Research Conference***

Week 13 Research & Change  
April 21 – Dyrness article

Week 14 Integration

#### ***Qualitative Group Projects Due***

Week 15 Course Review / Synthesis  
May 5 – Review and evaluation

#### ***Journal Assignment #4 Due***

**Individual Research Proposal Due – Friday 5:00 pm, May 13**  
**Email to pmaulden@gmu.edu**

### 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