

CONF 802: Micro Theories of Conflict

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Fall 2012
M 4.30 pm - 7:10 pm
Arlington: Founders Hall 311

Overview

The pre- or co-requisites for this course are CONF 801, and acceptance in the doctoral program.

This course is designed to explore theoretical approaches to psychological processes, personality, ingroup and intergroup dynamics with the emphasis on their role in processes of conflict resolution and transformation. Critical understanding of psychological and socio-psychological phenomena as both generators and outcomes of conflict will be important part of the course.

This course has three main parts: psychological processes, approaches to person, and group processes. Class participants are expected to develop:

- A general awareness of the breadth of approaches to micro theory
- More in-depth understanding of selected micro theories as relevant to conflict and conflict resolution
- Increased skills in original critical analysis of micro theories relevant to conflict and conflict resolution
- Expertise in a range of theories that seek to explain a particular aspect of conflict or conflict resolution

This course is a graduate seminar designed for doctoral students to actively engage in reflecting on the course material interactively. Participants are expected to arrive in class having read and reflected on the week's readings, and prepared to participate in discussion.

Each theoretical perspective studied should be examined with the following key questions in mind:

- QUESTION: What question(s) is the theorist trying to answer? Why? What is the puzzle here?
- THESIS: What are the key elements of the argument presented?
- STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES: What is convincing in the argument? What are the weaknesses of the argument?
- UTILITY: What does this work offer – directly or indirectly—for conflict analysis and resolution theory and practice? Are there some types of conflicts for which this theory has more relevance?

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

GMU is an Honor Code university; please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

GMU EMAIL ACCOUNTS

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

OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. <http://ods.gmu.edu>

OTHER USEFUL CAMPUS RESOURCES:

WRITING CENTER: A114 Robinson Hall; (703) 993-1200; <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES "Ask a Librarian"

<http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS): (703) 993-2380;

<http://caps.gmu.edu>

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.

Assessment of Students:

Class participation (20%) All students are expected to participate actively in discussion in this seminar-style class. Absences will be excused only in exceptional circumstances.

Reflection papers: (40%-- 20% each) Two times (after the end of first and second part of the course), write a reflection paper on 2-3 theoretical approaches to these parts of the course. What approaches have been useful, and what approaches less useful. In what ways do these various approaches complement each other? Contradict each other? As a whole, what guidance do they offer scholar/practitioners of conflict resolution? What additional insights does our field need in this area? What areas require additional research? What do we not understand now that we need to better understand? Papers should be 3-5 pages maximum.

Due are:

September 24 for psychological processes.

October 27 for approaches to person.

Final paper: analysis of conflict of your choice (40%)

The case study can be drawn from the organizational, communal, national, or international level. Be sure to analyze conflict based on theoretical ideas and notions you studied during the course. Show how theoretical analysis can help to understand micro level of conflict. Plan to present your paper for seven minutes during last two classes. The research paper should be 15 pages in length double space, 12. Due date for draft is:

November 26. Due date for final paper is December 10.

Required reading:

Bar-Tal, D. (2011). *Intergroup conflicts and their resolution*. New York: Psychology Press.

Brown, R. (2000). *Group processes*. Malden, MA: Blackwell publishers.

Harre, R. and P. Stearns (1995). *Discursive psychology in practice*. London: Sage.

Korostelina, K. V. (2007) *Social identity and conflict*. Palgrave (available on-line in GMU library)

Nye, R.D. (2000). *Three psychologies*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Volkan, Vamik (1997). *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Weekly Schedule

August 27: Introduction to Course. Morality

Reading: **Rothbart and Korostelina: 1-18, 29-58; Lederach: 31-40.** Review:

<http://www.prisonexp.org/>, <http://www.simplypsychology.org/milgram.html>

and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8o1VHKgIBXc&feature=related>

· Readings in bold are on the blackboard.

- September 3: No classes
- September 10: Cognitive processes (perception, memory, cognition)
Reading: **Lakoff and Johnson: 16-26**; Harre and Stearns: 9-37; Brown: 265-270, 280-309;
Bar-Tal: 61-82; 105-124
- September 17: Emotions and aggression
Reading: Harre and Stearns: 37-55,183-193; **Crisp and Turner: 195-229**; Bar-Tal: 83-104
- September 24: Main approaches to person: Behaviorism, phenomenological and social learning approaches.
Reading: Nye:47-129
- October 1: Main approaches to person: psychodynamic approach
Reading: Nye: 7-44; Volkan: 19-49
- October 22: Main approaches to person: cognitive, discursive and developmental approaches
Reading: Harre and Stearns: 120-136; **Kegan: PDF**
- October 27: Personal and social identity. Individual and group.
Reading: Korostelina: 15-31, 35-46, 59-67; Brown: 2-64, 309-322; Bar-Tal:125-134;
Volkan: 81-100.
- October 29: Group processes: influence, conformism, and polarization
Reading: Brown: 123-165; 201-212:
- November 5: Group processes: leadership and conflict
Reading: Brown: 91-121, 225-262
- November 12: Intergroup conflict
Readings: Volkan:101-136; Brown: 322-357;
- November 19: Social identity conflicts
Readings: Korostelina: 127-154, 201-205; Bar-Tal: 135-194
- November 26: Paper presentation and discussion
- December 3: Paper presentations and discussion