

George Mason University

School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (S-CAR)

CONF 642: Integration of Theory and Practice

Semester: Fall 2013
Class Time: Mondays, 7:20-10:00 pm
Location: Arlington Campus, Founders Hall, Rm. 307
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

CONF 642 is the capstone course for S-CAR's MSc. students, designed to provide them, in *their final semester*, with opportunities to "bring it all together," to *integrate* into a *coherent whole* all that they have been exposed to in the program: *conflict theory* (Theory A) and *conflict resolution theory* (Theory B) and *practice*, with *research methods* playing a pivotal role, facilitating the application of conflict resolution theory to practice and, via *evaluation research*, the implications of practice for theory.

The rationale for the course is that the integration of theory, research methodology, and practice can provide end-of-program MSc. students with a clearer idea of the contours of their multidisciplinary field. Most importantly, the integrative process can enhance the utility of theory as a basis for practice in dealing with the great issues subsumed under the "Global Problematique"; i.e., complex problems that no one country or international actor can deal with on its own (e.g., climate change, pandemics, poverty, environmental degradation, state failure, terrorism, WMD proliferation).

Accordingly, students will weave together into a coherent system "bits and pieces" from their various courses and related experiences dealing with:

- (a) **Theory [A]** (*conflict theory*) on the *causes* and *conditions* of conflict initiation and escalation at *all* levels;
- (b) **Theory [B]** (*conflict resolution theory*) on hypothesized approaches and *processes* for dealing with conflicts

at *all* levels;

(c) **Practice** of actual approaches and processes for dealing with conflicts at *all* levels (which we have actually experienced); and

(d) **Research methods** for applying theory to practice and feeding the results of practice back to theory.

Among the means deemed potentially useful in this enterprise are efforts to respond to the following three (3) questions:

- (1) *"What do we know?"*
- (2) *"What don't we know?"* And
- (3) *"How can we find out what we don't know?"*

These three questions will constitute the *core questions of the course*.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Prerequisites: S-CAR MSc. students in their *final semester*.

2. Assessment:

(a) A short "thought paper," due the week after Labor Day, on the implications for the CAR field and how the course should be "taught," of a 96-minute video presentation by Jeremy Rifkin on his "The Empathic Civilization" (1-3 double-spaced pages); **due Monday, 9 September 2013 (10 percent of final grade)**.

(b) A midterm paper will be required in which students utilize the *three pillar framework (3PF)*, plus all other knowledge they have acquired with regard to Theory (A) and Theory B/Practice, to "map" a developing or manifest violent conflict (10-15 double-spaced pages); **due Monday, 21 October 2013 (30 percent of final grade)**.

(c) A final paper will be required in which students utilize all course readings to map the CAR field into a coherent whole, as I attempted in my initial 3PF article in 1998, but updating the field beyond that first published formulation of the 3PF.

In effect, students are asked to describe what they knew about the CAR field at the outset of the semester and what they have learned by the end of the semester from our course readings, with regard to Theory (A) and Theory (B)/Practice (15-20 double-spaced pages); **due: Tuesday, 10 December 2013 (50 percent of final grade).**

NOTE: Since these papers are meant, among other things, to demonstrate that students have been in the course, *the papers should contain appropriate references to course concepts and the corresponding readings.* For further clarification -- including about the GMU Honor Code (e.g., avoiding any hint of plagiarism) -- please feel free to consult with the instructor.

(d) Students will also participate in class discussions of the status of the field, including presenting on course readings (10% of final grade).

3. Office Hours: Mondays, before class (6:00-7:00 pm) and by appointment.

4. Withdrawal: The last day to drop the course is 27 September 2013.

REQUIRED READINGS

(1) Morton Deutsch, Peter T. Coleman, and Eric C. Marcus (eds.). *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice* (2d Edition). Jossey-Bass, 2006.

(2) J. Joseph Hewitt, Jonathan Wilkenfeld, and Ted Robert Gurr. *Peace and Conflict 2012*. Paradigm Publishers, 2012.

(3) Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse, and Hugh Miall. *Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The Prevention, Management and Transformation of Deadly Conflicts* (3rd Edition). Polity Press, 2011.

(4) Dennis J.D. Sandole, Sean Byrne, Ingrid Sandole-Staroste, and Jessica Senehi (eds.). *Handbook of Conflict Analysis and Resolution*. London and New York: Routledge, 2009.

(5) Dennis J.D. Sandole, "A Comprehensive Mapping of Conflict and Conflict Resolution: A Three Pillar Approach." *Peace and Conflict Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1998, pp. 1-30. Available online at: www.gmu.edu/academic/pcs/sandole

(6) Dennis J.D. Sandole, *Peacebuilding: Preventing Violent Conflict in a Complex World*. Polity Press, 2010.

(7) Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger*. Bloomsbury, 2011.

Course Structure

26 Aug: Introduction.

- A. Student Expectations.
- B. Course Overview.
- C. Assignments for Presentations on Course Readings.
- D. The Three Core Questions:
 1. "What Do We Know?"
 2. "What Don't We Know?"
 3. "How Do We Find Out What We Don't Know?"

- a. *Theory (A)*: Causes and Conditions of Conflict at All Levels (**Conflict Theory**).
- b. *Theory (B)*: Hypothesized Approaches

and

Processes for Dealing with Conflicts at All Levels (**Conflict Resolution Theory**).

c. *Practice*: Actual Approaches and Processes for Dealing with Conflicts at All Levels.

d. *Research Methods* for Applying **Theory** to **Practice** and for Feeding the Results of Practice Back to Theory.

2 Sep: Labor Day (No class).

9 Sep: Sensitizing Ourselves to the "Bigger Picture" of Conflict Analysis and Resolution (CAR): The "Global Problematique". Discussion of Jeremy Rifkin's "The Empathic Civilization" and its Relevance to the Course.

(Watch and listen to his video at:

http://www.filmsforaction.org/watch/jeremy_rifkin_the_empathic_civilization/)

(Read: Sandole, *Peacebuilding*, Ch. 1.)

9 Sep: Short paper on "The Empathic Civilization" due.

16 Sep: Integration for What? To Enhance Solving Complex Global Problems - Elements of the "Global Problematique" - That Drive Deadly Conflicts:

- A. The US: Likely to remain the most violent country in the industrialized world?
- B. Worldwide: Anticipated trends in *identity-based* and other conflicts; e.g., ethnic, racial, religious conflicts? Terrorism? "Clashes of Civilization"?
- C. Extreme weather-related and scarce resource conflicts: "New frontiers" of conflict?

(Read: Hewitt, et al., *Peace and Conflict 2012*. All. Ramsbotham, et al., *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, Ch. 3.)

23 Sep/ 30 Sep: Frameworks for Facilitating Further Responses to the Core Questions and for "Bringing It All Together."

- A. Three Levels of Conflict Reality.
 - 1. Conflict as Symptoms.
 - 2. Conflict as Challenged Relationships.
 - 3. Conflict as Deep-rooted Causes and Conditions.
- B. Three Level Framework (3PF).
 - 1. Conflict Elements (Pillar 1/Theory A).
 - 2. Conflict Drivers (Pillar 2/Theory A).
 - 3. Conflict (3rd Party) Intervention (Pillar 3/Theory B).

and
(Read Sandole, "A Comprehensive Mapping of Conflict Resolution. All. Sandole, *Peacebuilding*, Chs. 2 and 3. Ramsbotham, et al., Ch. 1.)

7 Oct: **Structural Violence and Related Factors as Drivers of**

Conflict (Pillar 2/Theory A).

- A. Structural, Cultural, and Direct Violence.
- B. Relative Deprivation.
- C. Rank Disequilibrium.
- D. Frustration-Aggression.
- E. Basic Human Needs (BHNS).
- F. Conflict Dynamics.

(Read: Wilkinson and Pickett, *The Spirit Level*. All. Ramsbotham, et al., Ch. 4. Sandole, *Peacebuilding*, Ch. 4.)

15 Oct: **Columbus Holiday Period: Monday's class (14 October) meets on Tuesday, same room and time. Structural Violence/Conflict Drivers discussion, cont'd.**

21 Oct: **Class Discussion: What do we know? What don't we know? And how can we find out from Deutsch, et al., *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution*.**

21 Oct: **Midterm Papers due.**

28 Oct: **Class Discussion of Deutsch, et al., cont'd.**

4 Nov: **Class Discussion: What do we know? What don't we know? And how can we find out from Sandole, et al., *Handbook of Conflict Analysis and Resolution*.**

11 Nov: **Class Discussion of Sandole, et al., cont'd.**

18 Nov: **Class Discussion: What do we know? What don't we Know" And how can we find out from Ramsbotham, et al., *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*?**

25 Nov: **Class Discussion of Ramsbotham, et al., cont'd.**

2 Dec: **Course Wrap-up. The Use of Scenarios Development in Responding to the "Global Problematique." Stages:**

- A. Identify a *Conflict* (Current, Developing or Potential) that Could Worsen during the Next 5-10

Years (*Pillar 1/Theory A*). Option: *The war in Syria*.

- B. Explore Conflict Trajectories:
1. Identify the Factors -- "*Drivers*" -- that Could Make the Conflict Worse or Better (*Pillar 2/Theory A*).
 2. Construct a *Scenario* Indicating How Those Factors Could Combine to Make the Conflict Worse (Worst-Case Scenario=Negative Trajectory) or Better (Best-Case Scenario=Positive Trajectory) (*Pillar 2/Theory A*).
- C. Design a *Strategy* for Responding to these Factors ("*Drivers*") to Either Undermine their Potential Negative Impact or Enhance their Positive Impact on the Conflict (*Pillar 3/Theory B*).

(Read: Sandole, *Peacebuilding*, Ch. 5.)

10 Dec: Final Papers due.