

**Culture and Conflict**  
George Mason University  
Fall 2013

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Office hours: Mondays, 6PM – 7PM, or by appt.

Course time and location: Mondays, Founders Hall 210, 7:20 pm - 10:00 pm

**INTRODUCTION:**

This graduate course will explore the relationship between culture and conflict resolution as a key problem for our field. We will consider the conceptual difficulties in understanding “culture” and other frameworks of group identity, study how group identity becomes important in protracted social conflicts, and examine the problems of culture through case studies and special topics. This is obviously a big and important area and there is only so much we can do over a semester. Nevertheless, when you leave this course you should have a greater appreciation for the ways in which culture and cultural systems present both challenges and opportunities for conflict researchers and practitioners.

**BOOKS (required):**

1. Avruch, Kevin, *Culture and Conflict Resolution*, USIP Press, 1998. [CCR]
2. Cohen, Raymond, *Negotiating Across Cultures*, USIP Press, 1997. [NC]
3. Bourgois, Philippe, *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2002. Cambridge University Press. [ISR]
4. Goodale, Mark, *Dilemmas of Modernity: Bolivian Encounters with Law and Liberalism*, Stanford University Press, 2009. [DoM]

**COURSE FORMAT:**

The course is a graduate seminar and will, therefore, involve the following features and expectations: (1) students will be expected to come to each seminar with the readings fully digested and prepared to engage in a sustained interactive discussion of both critical concepts found in the readings, and ongoing themes that the seminar will inevitably develop; (2) seminar participants will be expected to engage in discussion and, at times, debate, with respect for the differences in background, belief, and ideology found at S-CAR; and (3) students will be expected to devote themselves to their written work with the kind of energy associated with graduate study and to turn in assignments on time. Seminars will feature a combination of context-setting exposition by the professor, student presentation of critical concepts in the readings, discussion structured by student-prepared questions, free discussion, and, hopefully, guest lectures or presentations.

## EVALUATION:

1. Mid-term exam: Students will take an in-class midterm exam on **October 15**. This exam will be open book and will cover material up to the exam. Students will be asked to choose between a number of questions and write an essay that responds critically to the chosen question. This will be worth 20% of your final grade.

2. Research Paper and Presentation: students will write a 15-18-page, double-spaced research paper on a relevant topic on culture and conflict. Proposals for research papers are due electronically by **October 7**. These papers will be due on or before **December 6**. During the last two class sessions, students will make presentations on the substance and importance of their culture and conflict research papers. Students should feel free to use whatever audio-visual techniques will enhance presentations. The paper and presentation will be worth 45% of your final grade.

3. Culture and Conflict of the Week: Beginning on **September 9**, student teams will begin each course with a presentation of a “culture and conflict of the week.” Students will select one cultural conflict from current news and present a 20-minute SPITCEROW-type conflict analysis. Assignments will be randomly made and distributed during the first week of class. This will be worth 15% of your final grade.

4. Points for Discussion: Beginning on **September 9**, students will be assigned points for discussion. They will have the responsibility for preparing “points for discussion” for the rest of the class. Points should be distributed via email before our Monday evening seminars. During the second part of each class, the discussion teams will introduce the points and take the lead in facilitating a discussion about them. This will be worth 15% of the final grade.

5. Participation: Because this is a graduate seminar, active participation is vital to its success. Even if students will be reading and thinking about certain issues and concepts for the first time, they will be expected to address them critically, substantively, and with an eye toward developing reasoned independent positions. This portion of the class will be worth 5% of the final grade.

6. Class Website: We will use a class group on the S-CAR website ning for much our communications. You will receive an invitation to join the group and should do so immediately. Our course content will be posted as “discussions” to the group.

\*\* We will discuss class requirements and expectations in detail on our class website before our first meeting.

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## **Introduction to course and course participants**

Monday August 26

This course will meet **electronically** through our group website:

<http://network.scar.gmu.edu/group/fall-2013-720>

You will read the first article at the top of the list on our class group page (Avruch, "Cross-Cultural Conflict") and add a discussion that responds to the question:

What is culture *not*?

Also, you should post any questions you have about the course as a discussion to the class website and I will respond to them at the same place.

## **Theories of Culture, Conflict, and Conflict Resolution**

September 9

Avruch, CCR, pp. 3-22

Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture" (course website)

September 16

Avruch, CCR, pp. 23-73

Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System"

Adorno, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception"

September 23

Avruch, CCR, pp. 74-109

Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on a Balinese Cockfight"

## **Culture, Conflict, and International Diplomacy**

September 30

Cohen, NC, Chapters 1-4

October 7

Cohen, NC, Chapters 5, 6, 11, 12

October 15 (NB: This is a Tuesday)

IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAM

**Culture and Conflict in Out-of-Way Places**

October 21

Goodale, DOM, Ch. 3, 4

October 28

Goodale, DOM, Ch. 5, 6, Conclusion

**“In Search of Respect”: Cultural Relativism, Conflict, and Practice**

November 4

Bourgois, Philippe, ISR, Intro – Ch. 3

November 11

Bourgois, ISR, Ch. 4-6

November 18

Bourgois, ISR, Ch. 7-9, Epilogues

November 25

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS OF RESEARCH PROJECTS

December 2

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS OF RESEARCH PROJECTS

COURSE EVALUATIONS (completed electronically)

December 6

**Final research papers due electronically to: [mgoodale@gmu.edu](mailto:mgoodale@gmu.edu)**

## George Mason University Honor System and Code

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Please familiarize yourself with the Honor System and Code, as stated in the George Mason University *Undergraduate Catalog*. When you are given an assignment as an individual, the work must be your own. Some of your work may be collaborative; source material for group projects and work of individual group members must be carefully documented for individual contributions. For an overview of the Honor Code, see the explanation below:

### HONOR CODE

To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of George Mason University, and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the members of George Mason University, have set forth the following code of honor.

#### I. The Honor Committee

The Honor Committee is a group of students elected from the student body whose primary and indispensable duty is to instill the concept and spirit of the Honor Code within the student body. The secondary function of this group is to sit as a hearing committee on all alleged violations of the code.

#### II. Extent of the Honor Code

The Honor Code of George Mason University deals specifically with *cheating* and *attempted cheating*, *plagiarism*, *lying*, and *stealing*.

A. Cheating encompasses the following:

1. The willful giving or receiving of an unauthorized, unfair, dishonest, or unscrupulous advantage in academic work over other students.
2. The above may be accomplished by any means whatsoever, including but not limited to the following: fraud; duress; deception; theft; trick; talking; signs; gestures; copying from another student; and the unauthorized use of study aids, memoranda, books, data, or other information.
3. Attempted cheating.

B. Plagiarism encompasses the following:

1. Presenting as one's own the words, the work, or the opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgment.
2. Borrowing the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgment.

C. Lying encompasses the following:

The willful and knowledgeable telling of an untruth, as well as any form of deceit, attempted deceit, or fraud in an oral or written statement relating to academic work. This includes but is not limited to the following:

1. Lying to administration and faculty members.
2. Falsifying any university document by mutilation, addition, or deletion.
3. Lying to Honor Committee members and counsels during investigation and hearing. This may constitute a second charge, with the committee members who acted as judges during that specific hearing acting as accusers.

D. Stealing encompasses the following:

Taking or appropriating without the permission to do so, and with the intent to keep or to make use of wrongfully, property belonging to any member of the George Mason University community or any property located on the university campus. This includes misuse of university computer resources (see the Responsible Use of Computing Policy section in the "General Policies" chapter). This section is relevant only to academic work and related materials.

Source: *George Mason University Faculty Handbook*  
<http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/handbook/aD.html>

For a more complete understanding of what constitutes plagiarism, see the statements below:

### **Plagiarism Statement**

Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving that person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes; a simple listing of books and articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in an academic setting. Student writers are often confused as to what should be cited. Some think that only direct quotations need to be credited. While direct quotations do need citations, so do paraphrases and summaries of opinions or factual information formerly unknown to the writers or which the writers did not discover themselves. Exceptions for this include factual information which can be obtained from a variety of sources, the writers' own insights or findings from their own field research, and what has been termed common knowledge. What constitutes common knowledge can sometimes be precarious; what is common knowledge for one audience may not be so for another. In such situations, it is helpful, to keep the reader in mind and to think of citations as being "reader friendly." In other words, writers provide a citation for any piece of information that they think their readers might want to investigate further. Not only is this attitude considerate of readers, it will almost certainly ensure that writers will never be guilty of plagiarism. (statement of English Department at George Mason University)

## **Plagiarism and the Internet**

Copyright rules also apply to users of the Internet who cite from Internet sources. Information and graphics accessed electronically must also be cited, giving credit to the sources. This material includes but is not limited to e-mail (don't cite or forward someone else's e-mail without permission), newsgroup material, information from Web sites, including graphics. Even if you give credit, you must get permission from the original source to put any graphic that you did not create on your web page. Shareware graphics are not free. Freeware clipart is available for you to freely use. If the material does not say "free," assume it is not. Putting someone else's Internet material on your web page is stealing intellectual property. Making links to a site is, at this time, okay, but getting permission is strongly advised, since many Web sites have their own requirements for linking to their material.