

CONF 301- 001 - Research and Inquiry in Conflict Resolution

Spring 2013

Instructor: Phil Gamaghelyan Class: Thursday 10.30 am-1.10pm

Email: fgamagh2@gmu.edu Classroom: W 1007

Office: Northeast Module II, Room 117

Office Hours: Thursday 1:15pm - 2:45 pm or by appointment

Introduction

This course is an introduction into contemporary social science research. It is designed to help us be intentional about understanding and analyzing the world we live in, dynamics of conflicts in it and how we can engage with these conflicts. The course starts from a question: what is research? It then moves toward examining competing research paradigms, developing our ability to build sound research questions, and discussing how to work with primary and secondary sources, how to distinguish between scholarly and non-scholarly literature, how to work with internet. We will discuss the concepts of methodology and method, as well as learn what separates quantitative and qualitative approaches to social science research. During the later stages of the course we will engage in an experiential learning activity followed by a reflection on the activity and discussion of conflict resolution research and practice ethics.

Course Objectives

- Understand the basics of social science research
- Integrate research with theory and practice of conflict resolution
- Develop an ability to build a sound research question
- Examine strengths, limitations, and theoretical underpinnings of quantitative and qualitative research
- Learn to work with primary and secondary sources

Grading

This course will be evaluated in the following way:

Presence and active participation: 20%

Assignment 1: 20 %

Assignment 2: 20%

ELA: 20%

Final paper: 20%

Undergraduate Conference Participation: Bonus points

Participation:

Your grade for participation will be based both on your attendance and on your contributions to our class discussions. Please note that you will be graded both on the *quality* and the *regularity*

of your contributions. For each class, you should be prepared to summarize what you have learned from the week's readings, discuss authors' main ideas and convey your own critical perspective. When reading the texts, try to think about the following: What are the authors' main points? Are they compelling? Do they help me understand what research is or how to conduct it? Do I agree with some perspectives more than others? Can I explain why and how?

To receive a high grade for participation you should be an active and regular contributor to our discussions, as well as a generous listener. In other words, it is not the quantity of your contributions but the quality and your active presence (which is not always verbal) that matters most, as well as your ability to listen openly to others' perspectives.

Assignment 1:

By February 14 you should choose three example research topics. We will discuss in class what a research topic and how it can be developed into a problem statement and a research question. By February 20 you should develop your three topics into a 3 short problem statements followed by research questions. Each example problem statement and research question (together) should be one page long. The entire assignment should be 3 pages long. The assignment is due electronically by midnight on February 20.

Assignment 2:

Building on Assignment 1, my feedback and the class readings and discussions, pick one out of your three research question and develop a 3 page-long scholarly literature review. You need to use at least 15 scholarly sources related to your research question to develop the literature review. The assignment is due electronically by midnight on March 13.

ELA:

This assignment will be discussed in class and handouts distributed.

Final Reflection Paper:

Reflection questions will be discussed in class and emailed to you toward the end of the semester. The paper should show a synthesis and critical analysis of course material. The final paper should be 4-5 pages long. Additional information will be given later in the course. Due via email to fgamagh2@gmu.edu by midnight on May 9, 2013.

Undergraduate Conference Participation

On Monday, April 15 S-CAR is holding its annual undergraduate conference. As writing research papers and presenting them during academic conferences is part of any research process, your participation is highly encouraged. Students in CONF 301 class who present or otherwise actively participate in the conference would receive a bonus grade. In case of participation your final grade will be adjusted by half a point: to an A + from an A; to an A from an A-; to an A- from a B+; etc.

Important: all written assignments should be submitted electronically to fgamagh2@gmu.edu. The header of each essay should clearly identify the name of the student and the date the assignment is sent. I will be trying to review the assignments within 7 days of their submission. If you do not receive my comments within 10 days after you submitted the paper, please approach me or email me to ensure that the assignment is not lost.

All papers should use 1,5 spaced, 12pt Times New Roman font. Proper citations, page numbering, footnotes, and bibliography are expected.

Grading:

The course will be graded according to the following:

Points	Grade
95-100	A+
90-94	A
85-89	A-
80-84	B+
75-79	B
70- 74	B-
65-69	C
60-64	C-
50- 59	D
0-49	F

Plagiarism and Honor Codes:

You can find a copy of the Honor Code at: academicintegrity.gmu.edu.

You are expected to abide by George Mason University's Honor Code while preparing all work for this class. If you have any questions about Honor Code issues (e.g., whether you are permitted to discuss an assignment with a fellow student), are uncertain about how to cite a source, or if you have observed Honor Code violations, please discuss these with the Professor.

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.

S-CAR requires that all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit a student's work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. S-CAR's policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace or substitute for it."

SCAR's policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code.

Student Services:

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>).

Required Texts:

Booth, Wayne C. 2008. *The Craft of Research*. 3rd ed. Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wisker, Gina. 2009. *The Undergraduate Research Handbook*. Palgrave Study Skills. London ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

All other readings are available either on-line (links are provided in the syllabus) or on GMU Blackboard

COURSE AGENDA**INTRODUCTION****Week 1. Jan 24 Overview of the course**

Required reading: Booth, Prologue and Chapter 1 (Thinking in Print), pages 3-16

WHAT IS RESEARCH?**Week 2. Jan 31 What is research? When do we use it?**

Required readings: Wisker, Chapter 1 (The Inquiring Mind in Action) & Chapter 2 (Starting Research)
Booth, Chapter 2 (Connecting with Reader); also review Chapter 1 if have not done so for the previous class

Week 3. Feb 7 Research paradigms

Required readings: Wisker, Chapter 3 (Good Research: the Essentials) & Chapter 5 (Research Paradigms)

Two example of conflict research:

- a. Search for Common Ground: 2007 External Evaluation: Health Care Coverage for the Uninsured Project (HCCU). Available on blackboard and at:
[http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/ilt/evaluations/USA_KF_2007_Health%20Care%20for%20the%20Uninsured%20Consensus-Building%20Initiative%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/ilt/evaluations/USA_KF_2007_Health%20Care%20for%20the%20Uninsured%20Consensus-Building%20Initiative%20(2).pdf)
- b. Dwyer, Leslie 2009. "A politics of silences: violence, memory and treacherous speech in post-1965 Bal" (available on blackboard)

DEVELOPING RESEARCH QUESTIONS & WORKING WITH SOURCES

Week 4. Feb 14 Research topic and research question
 Required readings: Booth, Chapter 3 (From Topic to Questions) & Chapter 4 (From Questions to a Problem)

Example of research question in development: Carolyn Nordstrom, "Deadly Myths of Aggression." *Aggressive Behavior* 24(2):147-159. (available on blackboard)

Start working on Assignment 1

Week 5. Feb 21 Evaluating sources: scholarly vs. non-scholarly sources; journal or opinion articles; and more.
 Required readings: Booth, Chapter 5 (From Problems to Sources)
 Wisker, Chapter 9 (Finding and Using Sources)

Guest Speaker: Librarian

Assignment 1 is due via email by midnight on Wednesday, February 20

Week 6. Feb 28 Working with sources
 Required readings: Booth, Chapter 6 (Engaging Sources)
 Wisker, Chapters 10 (Using the Internet for Research)

Start working on Assignment 2

Week 7. March 7 NO CLASS! Spring Break!

Week 8. March 14 Literature Review
 Required readings: Wisker, Chapter 7 (Carrying Out a Literature Review)

Assignment 2 is due by midnight on Wednesday, March 13

CONDUCTING RESEARCH

Week 9. March 21 Research methodology and research methods

Required readings: Wisker, Chapter 8 (Research Methodology and Methods)

Malhotra, Deepak, and Sumanasiri Liyanage. 2005. "Long-Term Effects of Peace Workshops in Protracted Conflicts." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49 (6) (December): 908–924. Available on blackboard

Week 10. March 28 Quantitative and qualitative methods

Required readings: Wisker, Chapter 11 (Quantitative Methods) & Chapter 12 (Qualitative Methods)

Review: Christopher Blattman and Edward Miguel, "Civil War," *Journal of Economic Literature* 48:1 (2010): 3-57. Available on blackboard

&

Christopher Blattman and Edward Miguel, "Civil War," *Journal of Economic Literature* 48:1 (2010): 3-57. Available on blackboard

Week 11. Apr 4 Research Methods

Required readings: Wisker, Chapter 13 (Action Research; Phenomenology; Ethnography; and other Real-World Research)

Review: Marlene Pomrenke. Using Grounded Theory to Understand Resiliency in Pre-Teen Children of High-Conflict Families. Available on blackboard

Week 12. Apr 11 ELA

Week 13. Apr 18 ELA

Week 14. Apr 25

Research Ethics

Required readings:

Wisker, Chapter 17 (Putting Ethics into Practice)

Rossmann, Gretchen B., and Sharon F. Rallis. 2010. "Everyday Ethics: Reflections on Practice." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 23 (4): 379–391. Available on blackboard

Week 15. May 2

Last day of class: discussion of final paper; reflections, evaluation

Final papers due on May 9 by midnight!

Electronic copies of the papers to be sent to fgamagh2@gmu.edu by midnight on May 9. Please keep a backup copy in case of any problems.