

## CONF 393-001: PHILOSOPHY, CONFLICT THEORY, AND VIOLENCE

SPRING 2013

Prof. Richard E. Rubenstein, Instructor

M, 1:30-4:10

University Hall 1203

### SYLLABUS AND SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

**Welcome to the course!** The instructor is Prof. Rich Rubenstein, who will be available to meet with students after each class by appointment. He can be reached via email at [rrubenst@gmu.edu](mailto:rrubenst@gmu.edu), via telephone at 703-400-7674, or in his Arlington office (Truland 646) at 703-993-1307. In an emergency his mobile no. is 703-400-7674. Please feel free to come in to talk about course matters or any other matters of interest.

Our **main goal** in this course will be to learn to think more creatively about violence – in particular, violence between groups – in order to understand it better and to equip ourselves to help mitigate or eliminate it. This will mean looking at several types of violence, and studying them from the point of view of diverse disciplines, including philosophy, social sciences, history, literature, and the creative arts.

A secondary goal is develop students' writing skills. We will be doing a number of short writing assignments in the course, as well as a final paper.

**Grades** in the course will be based on two short papers (4-6 pages), a movie review (4-6 pages) and a final paper (10-15 pages), all due on the dates indicated in the Schedule of Classes and assignments below. Most papers will be take-home assignments offering students a choice of topics to discuss. Each short paper is worth 20% of the grade, and the final paper is worth 40%.

All papers should be submitted via email by the close of business on the due date. Late papers will not be accepted or graded unless the lateness is for documented medical reasons. Final grades of Incomplete will not be given except for documented medical reasons.

Students are expected to attend all classes prepared to discuss the week's reading assignment. Students who miss more than 3 classes (except for documented medical reasons) will not pass the course.

**Required books** are listed below. All are available in the Fairfax Campus Bookstore.

Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*. 1970. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich  
Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. 2005. Grove Press

Graham Greene, *The Quiet American*. 2004. Penguin Classics  
Richard E. Rubenstein, *Reasons to Kill: Why Americans Choose War*. 2010.  
Bloomsbury Pres

**Required articles or selections** are posted on the S-CAR Community Forum in the space reserved for the CONF 393-001 group. Please click on [network.scar.gmu.edu](http://network.scar.gmu.edu) and join the group. (The group will be closed to the public a bit later.) A list of Recommended Readings and Films will be distributed in class. Students should choose one of these films to review for the third writing assignment.

**University requirements** are listed immediately below in language suggested by the Provost's Office. We will take time in the first class to discuss any questions that you may have about this material, including questions about plagiarism.

### **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;

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

<http://caps.gmu.edu>

The UNIVERSITY CATALOG, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university affairs.

## SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND ASSIGNMENTS

### Jan. 21: INTRODUCTION TO COURSE

Class and university policies; overview of the course subject matter. General intro to theories about personal and intergroup violence. Read and discuss Johan Galtung, "Structural Violence," posted on Community forum and the Book of Genesis, esp. the story of Cain and Abel

### Jan 28: VIOLENCE AND HUMAN NATURE

Discuss Chris Hedges, selection from *War is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*  
Stephen Pinker, "A History of Violence"

[http://www.edge.org/3rd\\_culture/pinker07/pinker07\\_index.html](http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/pinker07/pinker07_index.html)

Howard Zinn, "On Human Nature and Aggression (video)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=subwDAZtEN0>

"The Seville Statement on Violence" and Gerald Baroldi's Critique

<http://www.lrainc.com/swtaboo/taboo/violence.html>

### Feb. 4: VIOLENCE AND SOCIETY

Discuss Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*

### Feb. 11: VIOLENCE AND COMMUNAL WAR

Complete discussion of Arendt. Discuss selection from Sukhir Kakar, *The Colors of Violence*, posted on Community Forum

### Feb. 18: VIOLENCE AND EMPIRE

Discuss Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Foreward, Preface, and pages 1-62, and Richard E. Rubenstein, "Conflict Resolution in An Age of Empire," posted on Community Forum

### Feb. 25: FIRST SHORT PAPER ASSIGNMENT DISTRIBUTED IN CLASS

Discuss Graham Greene's novel, *The Quiet American*

### March 4: FIRST SHORT PAPER DUE VIA EMAIL BY NOON

View and discuss film, "The Battle of Algiers"

Mar. 11: **SPRING BREAK**

March 18: March 4: **VIOLENCE AND INTERSTATE WAR**

Discuss selections from Richard E. Rubenstein, *Reasons to Kill: Why Americans Choose War*, and Jackson and Morelli, *Reasons for Wars*, both posted in Community Forum

March 25: **VIOLENCE AND RELIGION**

**SECOND SHORT PAPER ASSIGNMENT DISTRIBUTED IN CLASS**

Discuss selections from Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, and Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, both posted on Community Forum

April 1: **VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM**

**SECOND SHORT PAPER DUE VIA EMAIL BY NOON**

View and discuss film, "Paradise Now"

April 8: **VIOLENCE, MASS PROTEST, AND REVOLUTION**

Discuss selections from Rubenstein, *Rebels in Eden*, and Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution*, both posted on Community Forum

**FILM REVIEW ASSIGNMENT DISTRIBUTED IN CLASS**

Apr. 15: **NEW IDEAS ABOUT VIOLENCE**

Discuss selection from Slavoj Zizek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* posted on Community Forum

Apr. 22: **NONVIOLENCE AS A FORM OF STRUGGLE**

Discuss selections on civil disobedience and other forms of nonviolent action posted on Community Forum

**FILM REVIEW PAPER DUE VIA EMAIL BY NOON**

**FINAL PAPER ASSIGNMENT DISTRIBUTED IN CLASS**

Apr. 29: **VIOLENCE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

Discussion by practitioners on methods of mitigating or resolving violent conflicts

.May 13: **FINAL PAPERS DUE VIA EMAIL BEFORE 5:00 P.M.**