

CONF 210- 001
Theories of Conflict Analysis and Resolution
Fall 2014

Instructor: Phil Gamaghelyan Class: Wednesdays 10.30am – 1.10pm
Email: fgamagh2@gmu.edu Classroom: MTB 1004
Office: Northeast Module II
Office Hours: by appointment

Introduction:

Conflicts in our lives are an everyday occurrence and can be found everywhere: in a family, at a workplace, within and between societies or states. Some conflicts are violent and destructive, others are not. This course starts with the assumption that conflict is neutral. It can be destructive when we do not have the skills or the adequate knowledge to analyze and address it. But it can be also constructive and lead to improved relationships when we do.

Building on what you have learned in CONF 101, in CONF 210 we examine how various disciplines and schools of thought interpret conflict and what solutions they offer. The aim is to further develop our ability to understand and analyze conflicts from multiple perspectives maximizing their constructive potential.

In addition to discussions of theories, we apply each of them to analyze present day conflicts internationally and in the US, developing our analytic and critical thinking abilities and reflecting on the transformation of our own understanding of the term conflict.

By the end of the course, you should be able to recognize alternative approaches to conflict, analyze any conflict from more than one angle and see its constructive potential, while at the same time having awareness about your own conflict style and approaches that you are most comfortable with.

Course Agenda:

The course is structured to reflect the evolution of debates in the field of conflict analysis and resolution, from more traditional approaches used in international relations to recent developments. Each week we discuss one key theoretical approach to conflict analysis and corresponding conflict resolution mechanisms, and analyze one or more present day conflicts from the perspective of that theory. We also engage with the theories critically, tracking the evolution of our analysis based on the lens we apply and the transformation of our understanding of possible conflict resolution interventions. Later in the semester we focus on applied techniques, such as facilitation and reflective practice.

Grading

This course will be evaluated in the following way:

Presence and active participation: 30%

Short reflective essays: 30%

Simulation: 20%

Final paper: 20%

Participation (30%):

This is an interactive class that meets only once a week, therefore your active participation is essential to your learning. Consequently, the participation accounts for 30% of the final grade. Your participation will be evaluated based both on your attendance and on your contributions to our class discussions. In other words, you will be graded on the *quality* and the *regularity* of your contributions. For each class, you should be prepared to summarize what you have learned, discuss authors' contribution to the field, apply the theories discussed to analyze the Syrian, US and other conflicts, and convey your own critical perspective on the topic. When reading the texts, try to think about the following: what are the authors' main points? Are they compelling? How would they explain the Syrian conflict and other conflicts that you are familiar with? What would be some possible conflict resolution interventions that correspond with the respective theory? How does this theory relate to other theories we learned?

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 only the quantity of your contributions but the quality and your presence that matters, as well as your ability to listen openly to others' perspectives.

Short Reflective Essays (30%):

Five short essays (approximately two pages long, Times New Roman, 1,5 spaced) will be required over the course of the semester. These essays should:

- a. Help evaluate your comprehension of the core of the theory discussed in the readings of that particular week (1/2 page);
- b. show your ability to apply the respective theory to explain a conflict of your choice (1 page);
- c. contain a personal reflection on questions that the readings of the week raised for you (1/2 page to 1 page).

The essays will be graded based on your ability to briefly summarize the core of the theory discussed and your ability to apply this theory to analyze a conflict. The third part of your paper, the reflections, will not be graded so you can freely explore and reflect on questions that the course materials raise for you. At the same time the reflections are a required part of the essay. So their absence will negatively affect the overall grade you receive for the essay.

You can submit "make up" essays, in case you are not happy with the grade you received for one or more of the previous essays. In this case the essays with the lowest grades will not count toward your final grade, and only the five essays that have higher grades will.

The essays should be submitted between weeks 2 and 11, which are the weeks when we have theoretical readings assigned. **At least three of the essays should be submitted between weeks 2 and 6.** These three essays, along with your participation, will serve as the basis for your mid-term grade. The remaining essays should be submitted between weeks 7 and 11. Within these limits, you can choose yourself which are the exact weeks when you prefer to submit the essays. No essays will be accepted after Week 11. The essays will be returned to you during the following class, containing comments and a grade.

Important: the printed essays are due on Wednesdays at the start of the class. The title of each essay should clearly identify the name of the student, the week that the essay relates to and the number of the essay submitted. I will be trying to review the papers within 7 days of their submission. If you do not get my comments on your essays by the following class, please approach me or email me to ensure that the essay is not lost.

Problem-Solving Workshop Simulation: 20%

This assignment will be discussed in class.

Final Paper Synthesis: (20%)

In this short final paper you are asked to synthesize your learning from the entire class. You will be asked to analyze a conflict of your choice using a combination of at least 3 theories discussed during the semester.

You need to discuss your choice of the conflict with me prior to October 30.

The paper can contain, but does not have to be limited to the following: description of the theories from the course that you find relevant for the analysis of the conflict of your choice and how do these theories complement each other enhancing your understanding of the conflict; analysis of the conflict based on the theoretical approach you had chosen.

Please do not present a background to your conflict that is separate from your analysis. As we will learn in the class every description is implicitly based on certain assumptions we have about conflict. Our aim here is to make these assumptions explicit. So let your analysis be your description.

We will further discuss the requirements for the final paper towards the end of the semester.

The paper should be between four (4) and six (6) pages long, be 1,5 spaced and use 12pt Times New Roman font. Proper citations, cover pages, page numbering, footnotes, and bibliography are expected.

The final papers should be submitted electronically to fgamagh2@gmu.edu no later than midnight on December 11, 2014.

Grading:

The course will be graded according to the following chart:

Points	95-100	90-94	85-89	80-84	75-79	70-74	65-69	60-64	50-54	0-49
Grade	A+	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C	C-	D	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:

Demmers, Jolle. 2012. Theories of Violent Conflict: An Introduction. Taylor & Francis.

Dale Hunter, Anne Bailey, and Bill Taylor, (1995). The Art of Facilitation. Fisher Books.

Recommended:

Dale Hunter, Anne Bailey, and Bill Taylor, (1995). Zen of Groups. Fisher Books.

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

Schedule**Week 1: Aug 27****Overview of the course**

Welcome, introductions. Expectations and concern from the class

Revisiting 101

Questions of epistemology of conflict theories

In preparation for the class: Please review the course syllabus and come prepared to discuss it. Reflect on the following topics:

- your experience in CONF 101 and other conflict classes you had up to date. Which conflict theories appeal to you? Why?

- what cases of conflict you would be interested in exploring during this semester (e.g. the conflicts in Syria or Crimea; the pro-life and pro-choice debate in the US, etc.).

These decisions need not be final. You will have many opportunities to change your preferences during the semester. Instead, they are aiming to facilitate your thinking regarding theories and cases that interest you and you would want to explore deeper.

Please review the following literature:

Review Search for Common Ground: Resources at: <http://www.sfcg.org/resources/>

Pay special attention to:

Basic Facts About Conflict: http://www.sfcg.org/resources/resources_conflict.html

Commonly Used Terms: http://www.sfcg.org/resources/resources_terms.html

Conflict styles: http://www.sfcg.org/resources/training/conversation_styles.html

Review the discussion of positivism, post-positivism and anti-positivism at:

<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/positvsm.php>

http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/anti_positivism.htm

[Intros](#)

[Conflict Styles?](#)

Structures and Agency Debate in Conflict Analysis and Resolution

Week 2: Sep 3

International Relations Theories: Realism and Liberalism

Required:

Political Realism in International Relations:

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/realism-intl-relations/#HanMorReaPri>

Liberalism and International Relations Theory:

http://www.princeton.edu/~amoravcs/library/liberalism_working.pdf

The Limits of International Relations Theory: A Postcolonial Critique

<http://www.e-ir.info/2012/08/24/the-limits-of-international-relations-theory-a-postcolonial-critique/>

When reading, please pay attention to the similarities and differences of the two approaches

Week 3: Sep 10

Alain Lempereur, Identifying Some Obstacles: from Intuition to a Successful Mediation Process. (ESSEC. 2003).

William Zartman, "Ripeness: The Hurting Stalemate and Beyond," in Stern and Druckman, *International Conflict Resolution after the Cold War* (Washington D.C.: National Academy Press, 2000).

Negotiation Simulation

Week 4: Sep 17 Economic Approaches and Game Theory

Collier, Paul (2007). "Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and their Implications for Policy." World Bank. Available at <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~econpco/research/pdfs/EconomicCausesofCivilConflict-ImplicationsforPolicy.pdf>

Michael Nicholson, "Negotiation, Agreement and Conflict Resolution: The Role of Rational Approaches and Their Criticism," in *New Directions in Conflict Theory: Conflict Resolution and Conflict Transformation*, Raimo Vayrynen, ed. (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1991).

Demmers Jolle, Theories of Violent Conflict, Ch. 5

Role Play

Week 5: Sep 24 Structures and Structuration

Structures:

Review Galtung's articles on structural and cultural violence

Johan Galtung. Violence, Peace, and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research*, Sage Publications, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1969), pp. 167-191
URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/422690>

Johan Galtung. Cultural Violence *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Aug., 1990), pp. 291-305

Required Readings

Demmers Jolle, Theories of Violent Conflict, Ch. 3

Structuration Theory

Anthony Giddens: The theory of structuration at <http://www.theory.org.uk/giddens2.htm>

Chapter prepared by Paul Gingrich for the course Sociology 319 - Contemporary Social Theory
– University of Regina, Department of Sociology and Social Studies
<http://uregina.ca/~gingrich/f300.htm>

In preparation for the class, think about the difference between structure and structuration.

Identity, Social Psychology, and Conflict Resolution

Week 6: October 1

Identity and Social Psychology

Review:

Cate Malek. Identity (Inter-Group) Conflicts” at
<http://www.beyondintractability.org/coreknowledge/identity-issues>
Kriesberg, Louis, 2003. “Us versus Them.” at
http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/identity_issues/

Required:

Demmers Jolle, Theories of Violent Conflict, Ch. 1, 2

Rothman, J. and M., Olson - From Interest to Identities: Toward a New Emphasis in Interactive Conflict Resolution (289-305).

Vamik Volkan, 2001. “Transgenerational Transmissions and Chosen Traumas: An Aspect of Large-Group Identity.” *Group Analysis* 34(1):79-97.

Identity Exercise

Week 7: Oct 8

Needs Theory and Problem Solving Workshops

Review:

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

John W. Burton, “Needs Theory,” in *Violence Explained* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1997)

Required Readings:

Eileen F. Babbitt and Pamela P. Steiner, with Jabir Asaqla, Chassia Chomsky-Porat, and Shirli Kirschner, “Combining Empathy with Problem Solving: The Tamra Model of Facilitation in Israel.” (2009). <http://hhi.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/In%20Line%20Images/programs%20-%20previous%20-%20inter-communal%20-%20empathy.pdf>

Kelman, H.C. (2010). Interactive Problem Solving: Changing political culture in the pursuit of conflict resolution. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 16(4), 389–413
http://scholar.harvard.edu/hckelman/files/interactive_problem_solving0001.pdf

Week 8: Oct 15
Problem-Solving Workshop – Simulation

Review:

Dale Hunter, Anne Bailey, and Bill Taylor, (1995). *The Art of Facilitation*. Fisher Books.

Dale Hunter, Anne Bailey, and Bill Taylor, (1995). *Zen of Groups*. Fisher Books.

Week 9: Oct 22
Problem-Solving Workshop – Simulation and Analysis

Week 10: Oct 29
Facilitation and Reflective Practice

In preparation to the class, reflect on the simulation

Readings:

Dale Hunter, Anne Bailey, and Bill Taylor, (1995). *The Art of Facilitation*. Fisher Books.

Gamaghelyan, Philip and Christopher Littlefield. "Facilitator Co-Debriefing" *Beyond Intractability*. Eds. Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess. Conflict Information Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder. November, 2012. <http://www.beyondintractability.org/bi-essay/facilitator-co-debriefing>

Constructivist Approaches

Week 11: Nov 5
History and Memory

Required:

Tint, Barbara 2010. "History, Memory and Intractable Conflict." *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* 27(3):239-256.

Rosalind Shaw, "Memory Frictions: Localizing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Sierra Leone." *International Journal of Transitional Justice*. 2007; 1: 183-207

Recommended:

Maurice Halbwach, (1992). *On Collective Memory*. University of Chicago Press. Preface and Chapters 1-3

Week 12: Nov 12
Narrative Analysis

Sara Cobb, 2004. "Fostering Coexistence in Identity-Based Conflicts: Towards a Narrative Approach." In A. Chayes and M. Minow, eds., *Imagine Coexistence*. Jossey Bass: San Francisco: pp. 294-310.

John Winslade and Gerald Monk, 2000, *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Read Chapter 1, "Narrative Mediation: What is It?" and Chapter 2, "Theoretical and Philosophical Issues in Narrative Mediation."

Week 13: Nov 19

Discourse Analysis and Critique of Some Key Assumptions in Conflict Resolution

Required:

Demmers Jolle, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, Ch. 6

Phillips & Hardy, 2002. *Discourse Analysis*.

Vivienne Jabri, 2005. *Revisiting Change and Conflict: On Underlying Assumptions and the Depoliticisation of Conflict Resolution*. Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management/ Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation (online). Available at: http://www.berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/dialogue5_jabri_comm.pdf

Week 14: Nov 26
THANKSGIVING BREAK: No Class

Week 15: Dec 3
Last Day of Class

Reflections, evaluation

Final papers due on Dec 10 by midnight!

Please email the electronic copies of the final paper to fgamagh2@gmu.edu. Please keep a backup copy in case of any problems.