

# CONF 802: Micro Theories of Conflict

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Fall 2014  
W 4.30 pm - 7:10 pm  
Arlington: Founders Hall 320

## Overview

*The pre- or co-requisites for this course are CONF 801, and acceptance in the doctoral program.*

This course is designed to explore theoretical approaches to psychological processes, personality, ingroup and intergroup dynamics with the emphasis on their role in processes of conflict resolution and transformation. Critical understanding of psychological and socio-psychological phenomena as both generators and outcomes of conflict will be important part of the course.

This course has three main parts: psychological processes, approaches to person, and group processes. Class participants are expected to develop:

- A general awareness of the breadth of approaches to micro theory
- More in-depth understanding of selected micro theories as relevant to conflict and conflict resolution
- Increased skills in original critical analysis of micro theories relevant to conflict and conflict resolution
- Expertise in a range of theories that seek to explain a particular aspect of conflict or conflict resolution

This course is a graduate seminar designed for doctoral students to actively engage in reflecting on the course material interactively. Participants are expected to arrive in class having read and reflected on the week's readings, and prepared to participate in discussion.

### **Academic Integrity**

Students must be responsible for their own work, and students and faculty must take on the responsibility of dealing explicitly with violations. The tenet must be a foundation of our university culture. [See <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/distance>].

**Honor Code** Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode>].

**MasonLive/Email (GMU Email)** Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account. [See <https://thanatos.gmu.edu/masonlive/login>].

**Patriot Pass** Once you sign up for your Patriot Pass, your passwords will be synchronized, and you will use your Patriot Pass username and password to log in to the following systems: Blackboard, University Libraries, MasonLive, myMason, Patriot Web, Virtual Computing Lab, and WEMS. [See <https://thanatos.gmu.edu/passwordchange/index.jsp>].

**University Policies** Students must follow the university policies. [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu>].

**Responsible Use of Computing** Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing>].

**University Calendar** Details regarding the current Academic Calendar. [See <http://calendar.gmu.edu>].

**Students with Disabilities** Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See <http://ods.gmu.edu>].

**Students are expected to follow courteous Internet etiquette.**

### **University Libraries**

University Libraries provides resources for distance students. [See <http://library.gmu.edu/distance> and [http://infoguides.gmu.edu/distance\\_students](http://infoguides.gmu.edu/distance_students)].

### **Writing Center**

The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing. [See <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>]. You can now sign up for an Online Writing Lab (OWL) session just like you sign up for a face-to-face session in the Writing Center, which means YOU set the date and time of the appointment! Learn more about the [Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#). There is a service available to students with English as a second language to help with writing that you may find useful. For more information go to [http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/?page\\_id=10](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/?page_id=10)

### **Counseling and Psychological Services**

The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See <http://caps.gmu.edu>].

### **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), also known as the "Buckley Amendment," is a federal law that gives protection to student educational records and provides students with certain rights. [See <http://registrar.gmu.edu/privacy>].

### **Assessment of Students:**

Class participation (20%) All students are expected to participate actively in discussion in this seminar-style class. Absences will be excused only in exceptional circumstances.

Reflection papers: (40%-- 20% each) Two times (after the end of first and second part of the course), write a case study paper using 2-3 theoretical approaches analyzed in these parts of the course. To write these two papers, choose a particular conflict and apply theories to the analysis of this case. The case study can be drawn from the organizational, communal, national, or international level and can represent any social conflict between groups- professional, gender, ethnic, religious, national, political, etc. In your analysis try to answer the following questions: What approaches have been useful, and what approaches less useful in understanding of conflict dynamics? In what ways do these various approaches complement each other? Contradict each other? As a whole, what ideas do they offer scholars of conflict analysis and resolution? Papers should be 3-4 pages maximum. Due are:

**September 24 for psychological processes.**

**October 15 for approaches to person.**

Final paper: analysis of conflict of your choice (40%)

The case study can be drawn from the organizational, communal, national, or international level. Be sure to analyze conflict based on theoretical ideas and notions you studied during the course. Show how theoretical analysis can help understand micro level of conflict. Plan to present your paper for seven minutes during last two classes. The research paper should be 15 pages in length double space, 12. Due date for draft is:

**December 3. Due date for final paper is December 11.**

**All papers should be submitted on the Blackboard.**

### **Required reading:**

**The following texts must be purchased or rented:**

Bar-Tal, D. (2011). *Intergroup conflicts and their resolution*. New York: Psychology Press.

Volkan, Vamik (1997). *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Brown, R. (2000). *Group processes*. Malden, MA: Blackwell publishers.

**The following texts are available online through the University Library by clicking on the links:**

Bordens, Kenneth S. and Horowitz, Irwin A. *Social Psychology* L. Erlbaum. 2001  
<http://magik.gmu.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=2007255>

Korostelina, K. V. (2007) Social identity and conflict. Palgrave  
<http://magik.gmu.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=3089685>

Fernald, L. Dodge Psychology : Six Perspectives Sage Publications. 2008  
<http://magik.gmu.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=3107424>

Additional readings (PDFs) will be provided on blackboard. Access Blackboard 9.1 by following these steps:

1. Go to <http://mymason.gmu.edu>.
2. Login using your NETID and password,
3. Click on the ‘Courses’ tab.
4. Double-click on CONF 708 under the “Blackboard 9.1 Course” heading.

### Weekly Schedule

- August 27: Introduction to Course. Morality  
Reading: **Rothbart and Korostelina: Chs.1&3 (PDF); Lederach PFD.**  
Review:  
<http://www.prisonexp.org/>, <http://www.simplypsychology.org/milgram.html>  
and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oIVHKgIBXc&feature=related>
- September 3: Cognitive processes (perception, memory, cognition)  
Reading: **Lakoff and Johnson: PDF**; Brown: 265-270, 280-309; Bar-Tal: 61-82;  
105-124
- September 10: Emotions and aggression  
Reading: Bordens: 363-403; **Crisp and Turner: PDF**; Bar-Tal: 83-104
- September 17: Main approaches to person: Behaviorism, phenomenological and social learning approaches.  
Reading: Fernald: chs. 5-6
- September 24: Main approaches to person: psychodynamic approach  
Reading: Fernald: ch. 4; Volkan: 19-49
- October 1: Main approaches to person: cognitive, discursive and developmental approaches  
Reading: Fernald: ch. 4; **Harré, PDF; Kegan: PDF; Kelly: PDF**
- October 8: Personal and social identity. Prejudice.  
Reading: Korostelina: 15-31, 35-46, 59-67; Bordens: 105-154, 298-303;  
Bar-Tal:125-134
- October 15: Individual and group  
Reading: Brown: 2-64; Bordens: 105-154, 298-303
- October 22: Group processes: influence, conformism, and polarization  
Reading: Brown: 123-165; 201-212; Bordens: 238- 285
- October 29: Group processes: leadership and conflict

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· Readings in bold are on the blackboard.

Reading: Brown: 91-121, 225-262

November 5: Intergroup conflict  
Readings: Volkan:101-136; Brown: 322-357;

November 12: Social identity conflicts  
Readings: Korostelina: 127-154, 201-205; Bar-Tal: 135-194

November 19: Power  
Reading: TBD

December 3: Paper presentations and discussion