

**CONF 302:
Identity Conflicts and Their Resolution
Spring 2012**

Tuesday 10:30 am to 1:15 pm
Robinson Hall B, Room 218

Taught by Arthur Romano
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Office Hours: Tuesday 2 to 3pm and by appointment (Room 116, Northeast Module II)

Course Description:

This course is designed to offer a conceptual and analytical grounding in the literature on social identities and their impact on conflicts and their resolution. It seeks to take into account the complex global world we inhabit by supporting learners in critically examining the complex, dynamic and multi-layered influences on social identity and how identity impacts conflict dynamics. This course analyzes deeply rooted social conflicts around core issues of identity, such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender and class and it reviews a wide array of theoretical and conceptual approaches in the field. Overall, students will be asked to reflect both on their positionality and to consider what informs and influences contemporary social identity conflicts and their resolution.

Course Aims

During the course class students will:

- Familiarize themselves with theories examining social identity and identity conflicts and further develop critical thinking skills
 - Examine social and cultural variables influencing identity construction, salience and change
 - Consider the role of identity in analyzing conflicts and proposing resolution strategies
 - Evaluate the role of self-reflexivity in the analysis and resolution of identity conflicts
 - Examine the role their and their peers' multiple identities play in influencing their worldviews
 - Develop improved writing skills and produce clear, well-structured and convincingly argued papers
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Course Requirements:

Participation: 25%

Regular attendance and consistent informed participation in class discussions and activities is expected. **It is critical to complete all assigned readings** prior to each class so that you are prepared to engage in discussions. Also you should bring books and class materials with you so that you can cite the text when needed in class. Further, you will need **to take notes** to be able to capture the material discussed in class. We will frequently engage in small group work and experiential activities and the quality of your participation and preparation is essential for maximizing learning and excelling on written assignments.

Pop Quizzes (15%)

There will be three pop quizzes and the lowest grade will be dropped. The quizzes will test you on concepts and factual information from the required readings that have been assigned for that class. If you miss the quiz you get a grade of zero. If I hand out the quiz at the beginning of class, those who are late to class and miss the quiz also will get a zero. The only exceptions to this policy are for those with a documented learning disability, emergent medical problem or a death in the family. In all cases, I will need to receive written documentation and discuss the issue with you.

Written Assignments:

There will be **four writing assignments** in the course, all of which should be submitted at the start of class on the day in which they are due. Your assignments should only contain your G number and not your name as they will be graded anonymously. No late assignments will be accepted and missed work will result in a grade of 0 for that assignment. The only exceptions are for documented learning disabilities, emergent medical problems or a death in the family. In all cases, I will need to receive written documentation. All papers should use APA style formatting. For more information on APA formatting you can visit: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

Additional information about the assignments (when applicable) will be posted under the “assignments” section of Blackboard.

Assignment 1 - Multiple Identities-A Self-Reflexive Account Paper (750 to 1000 words). 10%

You can write this paper as a scientific report or alternatively as a letter to a friend or family member or someone from a different country who may not be familiar with the culture and some of the identities you claim.

- a. List all the social groups you are involved in.
- b. List and briefly describe your **social identities**
- c. Describe your most salient **social identities** and explain how they influence your attitudes, values and behavior.
- d. Describe how your **social identities** have changed (give examples) and any times when your non-salient identity became your most salient one and how the social context influenced those changes.

Draw on a minimum of 6 academic sources (these should not all be resources that I have given you in class) in defining and clarifying social identity, identity salience and the other key concepts you draw on in your work.

Due: February 21

Assignment 2 - Identity Interviews Project (12 to 15 pages) (25%):

This assignment will be carried out over the course of 4 weeks (February 21-March 20). For this project, you will have a chance to conduct original research on identity and place it in dialogue with the theories we are discussing in class. In this assignment you will interview 3 people examining their multiple social identities and how those identities influence their views of the social world, their stereotypes of other people and groups and the conflicts that impact them. We will conduct mock interviews in class and you will have multiple opportunities to think through how you will conduct this work in the field and relate your 'data' to the literature we are studying in class.

Due date for the entire project portfolio is March 20.

Assignment 3 - Ethnic Conflict Paper (1000-1500 words) 15%

Your challenge in this essay is to write your own version of Dr. Martin Luther King's letter from Birmingham jail in relation to a contemporary ethnic conflict. In order to do so you must define ethnic conflict based upon the required readings for class and pick an ethnic conflict based on that definition. You will examine newspaper articles, personal narratives and academic analysis of the conflict. In examining this ethnic identity conflict, consider the perspectives of two opposing sides and write a letter in support of one of the parties that seeks to address pressing issues and yet also demonstrates a deep understanding and sense of empathy for the positionality of the other group or party. You should also include some proposal for constructive responses to the conflict based on your analysis. We will read and discuss the letter from Birmingham Jail in class and I will review your draft in advance to provide additional support of your work.

Due: April 17

Paper 4 - Revision of Previous Assignment 10%

Rewrite one assignment (you can choose from assignments 1 and 2 only) in a timely manner, incorporating the comments made on your assignment and your own further thinking, **no later than April 17**. The revised version must include a cover sheet that restates the comments I originally made and briefly summarizes the changes you have made.

Additionally all the changes you made in the body of the document should be highlighted as this will allow me to see exactly what has been altered. Revised papers should be turned in during class anytime before April 17. Your grades for the revision will not be posted until the end of the semester. Your paper may not exceed an addition 250 words from your original text unless you have previously discussed this with the professor.

Due no later than April 17

Required Texts:

Volkan, Vamik. 1997. Blood Lines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism. Boulder: Westview Press

Korostilina, Karina. 2007. Social Identity and Conflict: Structures, Dynamics and Implications. Palgrave Macmillian

**Please note from time to time additional readings will be announced through Blackboard throughout this course and it is IMPERATIVE that you check the announcements and your GMU email regularly. If a reading on the syllabus is listed as available on Blackboard then you will find it under the course documents link. If a reading is not listed as available on Blackboard it is your responsibility to find it in the library system.

Tentative Course Agenda

"I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable." - Dwight D. Eisenhower

January 24: Introduction

Welcome, overview, class norms, and initial exploration of the theme of identity

January 31: Social Identity Theories

Korostelina; 1

Gardner, Robert 2003. "Identity Frames." At http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/identity_frames/

Kriesberg, Louis, 2003. "Us versus Them." at http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/identity_issues/

Review Syllabus and bring questions to class

February 7: Examining the Relationships between Individual and Social identities

Korostelina; 2, 3

Kondo, Dorinne, 1990. *Crafting Selves: Power, Gender, and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, pp. 11-48

Available on Blackboard under course content as of January 31.

February 14-Multiple Identities, the Role of Culture and A Systemic Approach to Identity

Korostelina; 4

**Guest Speaker: Kane Smego, poet and cultural worker and founding member of Sacrificial Poets and Poetic Portraits of a Revolution*

February 21: Identity Salience & Introduction to Qualitative Research and Interviewing

Assignment 1 Due: (Multi-identities Paper)

Korostelina; 5

Qualitative Interview Design: A Practical Guide for Novice Investigators (2010)

<http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR15-3/qid.pdf>

An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing (1996)

[http://www.inside-installations.org/OCMT/mydocs/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20Booksummary Interviews SMAK 2.pdf](http://www.inside-installations.org/OCMT/mydocs/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20Booksummary%20Interviews%20SMAK%202.pdf)

February 28: Social Identities-A Systems View and Qualitative Research and Interviewing Continued and introduction to Ethnic Conflict

Lazarre, Jane, 1996. *Beyond the Whiteness of Whiteness: Memoir of a White Mother of Black Sons*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 21-97

Available on Blackboard as of January 31

In class Interviews

March 6: Identity and Conflict Introduction

M., Fine, et al., *Hyphenated Selves: Muslim American Youth Negotiating Identities on the Fault Lines of Global Conflict*, *Applied Development Science* 2007, Vol. 11, No. 3, 151-16

http://web.gc.cuny.edu/psychology/socpersonality/Fine/Mfine/hyphenated_selves.pdf

In class Interviews Continued: Opportunity to Practice Data Analysis in Class (bring both required texts to class)

March 13: SPRING BREAK

March 20: Ethnic Conflict

Assignment 2 Due (Interview Portfolio)

Korostelina; 6, Volkan; 1, 2

March 27: Ethnic Conflict Continued and The Four C Model of Identity Conflict

Korostelina; 7, Volkan; 3, 4

April 3 Religion, Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict

Assignment 3 Draft Due

Volkan; 9

Kelman, H.; The Interdependence of Israeli and Palestinian National Identities: The Role of the Other in Existential Conflicts. (1999) *Available on Blackboard*

Gopin, Marc, 1997. "Religion, Violence and Conflict Resolution." *Peace and Change* 22 (1): 1-31

Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Dr. Ned Lazarus will join us to discuss his innovative work evaluating the Seeds of Peace Education Project that brings together Palestinian and Israel youth.

April 10: Gender and Conflict

Film: Pray the Devil Back to Hell

Lesley Gill, 1997. "Creating Citizens, Making Men: The Military and Masculinity in Bolivia." *Cultural Anthropology* 12(4):527-550.

Byrne, B.; *Towards A Gendered Understanding of Conflict* (1996). *Available on Blackboard*

Cockburn, C.; *Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence* (1999). *Available on Blackboard*

Assignment 3: Draft Back

April 17: Resolution and Management of Identity Conflicts

Assignment 3 Final Version Due and Paper 4 Revision Due

Volkan; 5, 6 and Korostelina; 9

April 24: Resolution and Management of Identity Conflicts Continued

Kristian Berg Harpviken and Hanne Eggen Røislien: “Mapping the Terrain: Mapping the Role of Religion in Peacemaking” (2005)

http://www.prio.no/files/file46875_mapping_the_terrain_stateoftheheartpaper_jul05_.pdf

May 1: Synthesis and Reflection

Closing Activities and Class Evaluation

Grading:

I do not curve for this course and most assignments are graded anonymously. You may contest grades. It is in your interest to take some time to formulate your questions/concerns about your grade in advance and make them clear to me in writing before we meet. Contesting grades can cut both ways—you may make a good case for **raising your grade**, however, I may find mistakes I missed the first time and I may **deduct points** after reviewing it again.

Attendance, Late Work, Participation, and Special Needs:

- While points are not directly deducted for missed classes, not attending classes makes it difficult to participate and generally result in lower participation grades. As a rule of thumb, **more than two unexcused absences tends to result in a 25% deduction from your participation grade where more than four absences results in an F for your participation grade.**
- If you anticipate absences from this class, please notify me in advance so we can make arrangements if necessary.
- If you are absent due to illness, crisis, or unexpected obstacles, get in touch with me as soon as you can so we can discuss possible arrangements.
- I encourage you to communicate with me regarding absences and challenges that may disrupt your ability to complete requirements for the course. Timely and honest communication regarding absences can often prevent falling behind and feeling overwhelmed and can allow us to consider creative possibilities.
- In terms of content if you miss a class, it is a good practice to reach out to your classmates to get an idea of what you have missed in advance of contacting me.
- No text-messaging, personal web surfing, talking on cell phones, or private conversations. These activities are disruptive to others and will negatively affect your participation grade.

Student Resources:

English Language Institute:

The English Language Institute offers free English language tutoring to non-native English speaking students who are referred by a member of the GMU faculty or staff.

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>). Students who regularly use the writing center tend to score better marks in my classes.

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 at the beginning of the semester.**

George Mason University is committed to providing appropriate services and accommodations that allow 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>).

LAST BUT NOT LEAST: Honor Code and Plagiarism

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.