

CONF 393-002: PHILOSOPHY, CONFLICT THEORY, AND VIOLENCE

SPRING 2011

Prof. Richard E. Rubenstein, Instructor
Roi Ben-Yehuda, Teaching Associate
Science and Technology I, Room 120

SYLLABUS AND SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

Welcome to the course! This course meets weekly on Thursdays at 1:30 pm in . The instructor is Prof. Rich Rubenstein, who will be available to meet with students before or after each class and by appointment. He can be reached via email at rrubenst@gmu.edu, via telephone at 703-400-7674, or in his Arlington office (Truland 646) at 703-993-1307. Teaching Associate Roi Ben- Yehuda can be reached at rbenyehu@gmu.edu. 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. Finally, we will do some work on developing oral presentation skills. Students will be asked to make brief class presentations on topics of their choosing, as described below

Grades in the course will be based on two short papers (4-6 pages) and a final paper (10-15 pages), all due on the dates indicated in the Schedule of Classes and assignments below. All papers will be take-home assignments offering students a choice of topics to discuss. Each short paper is worth 25% of the grade, and the final paper is worth 50%.

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.

Readings are listed in the Schedule below. All required readings are posted on the ICAR Community Forum in the space reserved for the CONF 393-002 group. Please click on <http://icarcommunity.ning.com> and join the group. (The group will be closed to the public a bit later.) A list of Recommended Readings will be distributed in class.

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;

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<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. 27: **INTRODUCTION TO COURSE.** Class and university policies; overview of the course subject matter. General intro to theories about personal and intergroup violence. . Discussion of recent assaults and killings in Tucson, Arizona (to be researched on-line).

Feb. 3: **VIOLENCE AND HUMAN NATURE.** Read Jerold J. Block, "Lessons from Columbine: Virtual and Real Rage," *American Journal of Forensic Psychology*, 2007
Stephen Pinker, "A History of Violence,"
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>
Baumeister and Bushman, "Human Nature and Aggressive Motivation: Why Do Cultural Animals Turn Violent?"

Feb. 10: **VIOLENCE AND SOCIETY.** Read Johan Galtung, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1969), pp. 167-191. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/422690>
Johan Galtung, "Cultural Violence." *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Aug., 1990), pp. 291-305. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/423472>
"The Seville Statement on Violence" and Gerald Baroldi's Critique,
<http://www.lrainc.com/swtaboo/taboo/violence.html>

Feb. 17: **VIOLENCE AND CRIME.**

Read Michelle Alexander, selection from *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New Press, 2010)
Michel Foucault, selection from *Discipline and Punish*

Feb. 24: **VIOLENCE AND WARFARE.** Read Carl von Clausewitz, Selection from *On War*

John W. Dower, Selection from *Cultures of War*

Richard E. Rubenstein, "Why Americans Fight: Justifications for Asymmetric Warfare," *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict*, Vol. 2, No. 1, March 2009, 51-68

Chris Hedges, Selection from *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning* (2003)

FIRST SHORT PAPER ASSIGNMENT GIVEN

Mar. 3: **VIOLENCE AND RELIGION.** Read Joseph Campbell, "Mythologies of War and Peace"

Jack David Eller, Selection from *Cruel Creeds, Virtuous Violence*

Roi Ben-Yehuda, "On The Binding of Isaac" (emailed)

Richard E Rubenstein, "Religion and Violence in the 21st Century" (emailed).

Mar. 10: **FIRST SHORT PAPER DUE.** View and discuss film: "The Believer."

Mar. 17: **SPRING BREAK**

Mar. 24: **VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM.** Read Selection from Andre Malraux, *Man's Fate*

Shaul Bakhash, "The Riddle of Terrorism." <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/4662>

Martha Crenshaw, "The Psychology of Terrorism"

<http://www.jstor.org.mutex.gmu.edu/stable/3791798>

Robert A. Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism"

<http://www.jstor.org.mutex.gmu.edu/stable/3117613>

Mar. 31: **VIOLENCE AND REVOLUTION.** Read essays by GWF Hegel, Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx, and Franz Fanon

Hannah Arendt, "Reflections on Violence" (from *New York Review of Books*, 2/27/69) http://www.cooperativeindividualism.org/arendt-hanna_reflections-on-violence.html

SECOND SHORT PAPER ASSIGNMENT GIVEN

Apr. 7: **SECOND SHORT PAPER DUE.** View film, "Waltz With Bashir"

Apr. 14: **THE OTHER OF VIOLENCE.** Read essays by Mohandas Gandhi, Adolf Hitler, and Malcolm X

Richard Rubenstein, "Evil Enemies" from *Reasons to Kill*

Read all documents on Philip Zimbardo's website,

<http://www.lucifereffect.com/index.html> and Zimbardo article,

http://www.psichi.org/pubs/articles/article_72.aspx

Apr. 21: **VIOLENCE AND WOMEN.** Discuss essays by Linda Gordon, Del Martin, Bruce B. Lawrence, and Catherine MacKinnon

Apr. 28: **COMBATTING VIOLENCE.** Panel discussion on methods of violence-reduction and non-violent strategies.

FINAL PAPER ASSIGNMENT GIVEN

May 9: **FINAL PAPERS DUE VIA EMAIL BEFORE 5:00 P.M.**