

CONF 600: FOUNDATIONS OF CONFLICT ANALYSIS AND RESOLUTION

SPRING 2017

COURSE SYLLABUS AND CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

Instructor, course purpose and structure

Welcome to the course and to the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution! Your instructor is Prof. Richard E. Rubenstein, Room 5070, Metropolitan Building, whose email is rrubenst@gmu.edu and telephone no. 703-400-7674. Office hours are T 3:00-4:30 and by appointment. The class meets in Founders Hall 468 on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4:30 until 7:10 p.m.

CONF 600 will provide an introduction to key theories and practices in the field, and will serve as a basis for your further, more specialized studies. Its aim is to integrate ideas about theory, research, and practice in an intensive, semester-long seminar involving active participation by students in reading, analysis, various forms of writing, and experiential learning. Critical thinking is prized; the development of your own perspectives on conflict causation, dynamics, and resolution is our primary interest.

The course is divided into four parts. (a) During the first two weeks of the course, we investigate our own reasons for studying conflict, write an ungraded short paper on this subject, and study the development of the field. (b) For the next eight weeks, we focus on major theories of social conflict and forms of conflict resolution practice related to those theories. During this period we write two short analytical papers. (c) In the final four weeks of the course we explore key current issues in the field, concluding with student presentations and a discussion of the future of our profession. During this period we also engage in a simulated conflict resolution workshop and a Dialogue and Difference project and write three short reflection papers about these experiences.

Course learning objectives

1. Students will become familiar with the intellectual and practical foundations of the field, including key concerns, controversies, methodologies, research approaches, and epistemological traditions.
2. Students will be able to engage in critical reflection on the major contributions of the field, and will develop analytical reasoning skills required for conflict research and conflict resolution practice.

3. Students will be able to identify and assess the value commitments that underpin the work of conflict researchers and conflict resolution practitioners.

4. Students will strengthen their capacity to communicate effectively in both written and oral forms and to work collaboratively on projects of common interest.

Grading and requirements

I apologize for the bureaucratic tone of the following material, but rules are involved, and it is better to get them clear now than to suffer the effects of vagueness later on.

Course grades will be determined as follows:

Papers

Short Papers – 15% each for total of 30%

Reflection Papers – 10% each for total of 30%

Group Project and Presentation – 20%

Final Exam – 20%

See the attached list of classes and assignments for due dates. Late assignments will be accepted only if accompanied by documentation by a medical authority that the student was unable to complete the assignment on time for medical reasons. Other reasons for lateness will not be accepted unless they rise to the level of a death in the family or similar personal emergency. The instructor should be notified as early as possible of any emergency that may delay timely receipt of a paper.

Class attendance and participation

Regular class attendance and active participation in classroom work and discussions are required to receive a passing grade in this course. If it appears that a student is missing too many classes or not participating actively, the instructor will issue a warning to that effect. If the warning is not heeded, the student will be notified that a passing grade will not be issued at the conclusion of the course.

Short analytical papers

Students will write 2 four to six page take-home papers (double-spaced, 12-point font), each critically examining certain material covered over the previous weeks (readings, exercises, films, class discussions). You will not need to do any additional reading or conduct any additional research in order to write these papers. I will distribute the questions for each paper in class. You will have a week to write each paper. Papers should be submitted to the instructor by the due date via email.

Short reflection papers

Students will write 3 three to four page take-home reflection papers (double-spaced, 12 point font). In each paper you will reflect on the experience of engaging in one of the three experiential learning activities we will be conducting during the course: conflict resolution workshop simulation, Dialogue and Difference event, and conflict assessment presentations. In these papers you may consider such questions as the application of theoretical frameworks in practice, the ethical concerns that emerged during the activity, and group dynamics, among others. The reflection papers should be submitted by the due date to the instructor via email.

Final exam paper

There will be a take-home final exam paper responding to a question selected from a list of possible topics based on the course readings and class discussions. The final paper will be 8-10 pages in length (double-spaced, 12 point font). The topics will be handed out during our final class meetings. The exam should be submitted electronically via Blackboard on or before the stated due date.

Ungraded papers

From time to time during the course, the instructor will ask you to write very short papers (1-3 pages) which are intended to stimulate the learning process and provide a basis for class discussions. These exercises will not be graded, but you are required to submit them by the deadline stated.

Writing guidelines

Your written assignments for this class will be graded according to the criteria stated below. The relative weight given to each of these categories will vary depending on the nature of the assignment.

1. Clear and sound content, including a well-stated thesis and related points to support that thesis supported by logically presented, specific evidence. The best presentations will recognize and deal with possible counter-arguments as well.
2. Depth of engagement with the ideas presented; originality; seriousness of thought; conceptual complexity and nuance.
3. Well-organized structure; text 'flows' with coherent and effective transitions between and among ideas; appropriate voice, tone, and style for audience and purpose (e.g. no slang or contractions); accurate word choice.
4. Sufficient and consistent citations.
5. Correct mechanics, including grammar, syntax, spelling and punctuation.

All papers should be thoroughly proofread before being handed in and will be marked down for excessive typographical or grammatical errors. (The University Writing Center is an excellent source of assistance for students needing help with their writing – see below.)

Conflict resolution workshop project

Working with a faculty member or doctoral student engaged in a current conflict intervention activity, students will familiarize themselves with the conflict and the issues involved in organizing a conflict resolution workshop.

Dialogue and Difference project

The class as a whole will organize a Dialogue and Difference event on a contemporary contentious topic that will be open to the S-CAR and the Arlington campus communities. Students will decide on a topic they feel would be of interest to the campus community, design and organize the event, choose appropriate speakers and invite them, and facilitate conversations at the event itself. For more information about the Dialogue and Difference project, including information on past events, see: <http://scar.gmu.edu/dialogue-and-difference/>.

Group presentations: case study and conflict assessment

The class will be divided into four groups, each of which will be assigned a particular conflict for assessment and analysis. (Topics to be announced.) You will have time during the course to meet with your group to prepare a case analysis and presentation. Each presentation will be 20 minutes long with ten minutes reserved for questions and responses to questions. All groups will present their assessments near the end of the semester. Further details of this assignment will be discussed in class.

Honor Code and plagiarism

All George Mason University students are required 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 regard to plagiarism, three fundamental 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 quotations and 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. We will discuss these issues further at the beginning of the course.

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. 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.

English Language Institute

The English Language Institute offers free English language tutoring to non-native English speaking students who are referred by members of the GMU faculty or staff. For more information contact 703-993-3642 or malle2@gmu.edu.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center is a free writing resource that offers individual, group, and online tutoring. Its reputation for giving effective assistance to a wide variety of students is very high. For general questions and comments please contact 703-993-4491 or wcenter@gmu.edu.

Readings

The text assigned for this class is *Contemporary Conflict Resolution, 4th Edition*, by Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse, and Hugh Miall. It is available for purchase at the GMU Arlington Bookstore as well as via on-line sources. Other required readings are available on our Blackboard site. You can also find many of them at the Burton Library, the GMU library or at other libraries that are part of the university consortium. Further readings will be recommended and can be done by students at their own option. The volume of assigned readings has been limited to approximately 60-80 pages per week in the expectation that students will

CLASS MEETINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

PART I: BASIC APPROACHES TO CONFLICT

Jan. 24: **Introduction to the course and to each other.** What is conflict and what is conflict resolution? What don't we know, and how can we learn what we need to know? Reading assignment: Chapter 18 of Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885). The whole novel can be found at <http://contentserver.adobe.com/store/books/HuckFinn.pdf>

Jan. 26: **Current concepts of conflict and resolution.** Read *Contemporary Conflict*

Resolution (hereafter, CCR), Chapter 1, pp. 3-37; Rich Rubenstein, *Resolving Structural Conflicts* (2017), Ch. 2. **Ungraded paper assignment handed out, due in class on Jan. 31.** 2-4 typed pages on a conflict or resolution experience that influenced your life. What was the experience? How did it alter your thinking and behavior? What effects of the experience do you consider positive or negative?

Jan. 31: **Learning from our own experiences of conflict and resolution.** Share papers written for this class.

Feb. 2: **Emergence and development of the CAR field.** Read CCR, Ch. 2, pp. 38-67. Also read "Conflict Assessment: Paul Wehr Conflict Map," <http://spot.colorado.edu/~wehr/40GD1.HTM>. Guest appearance by Mary Oberlies, Conflict and Peace Studies Librarian, Arlington Campus Library.

Feb. 7: **Conflict and competing interests: Realism and interest group theories.** Read Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (1967), Chs. 1, 3; Clive S. Thomas, "Interest Group," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, on-line at <https://www.britannica.com/topic/interest-group>

Feb. 9: **Realism in practice: war, diplomacy, and ADR.** Read Roger Fisher and Bill Ury, *Getting To Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In* (2d Ed. 1991), http://www.fd.unl.pt/docentes_docs/ma/AGON_MA_25849.pdf

Feb. 14: **Conflict and basic human needs: Burton and Galtung.** Read John Burton, "Institutional Values and Human Needs," Ch. 3 of *Deviance, Terrorism and War* (1979); Johan Galtung, "International Development in Human Perspective," Ch. 15 of John Burton, Ed., *Conflict: Human Needs Theory* (1991)

Feb. 16: **Basic needs theory in practice: problem-solving workshops.** Watch Christopher Mitchell describe problem-solving workshops on YouTube as part of S-CAR's "Parents of the Field" series: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kK50Np7-5x8>. Read Herbert Kelman, "Evaluating the Contributions of Interactive Problem Solving to the Resolution of International Conflicts" (2008). Recommended reading: Michelle Malise, "Problem-Solving Workshops," <http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/problem-solving-workshops>
Guest appearance by Prof. Christopher Mitchell

Feb. 21: **Conflict and basic needs II: relative deprivation and social identity.** Read Ted Gurr, "Relative Deprivation and the Impetus to Violence," Ch. 3 of *Why Men Rebel* (1971); Krueger and DiDonato, "Social Classification and the Perception of Group Differences," *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* (2008)

Feb. 23: **Identity theories in practice:** Read CCR, Chapters 4 and 7, pp. 110-143 and 199-235. **First graded short paper handed out, due via email by close of business on March 2**

Feb. 28: **Class conflict and Marxian theory.** Read Marx and Engels, “The Communist Manifesto” (Chapters I and II) and “Socialism: Utopian and Scientific,” Marxist Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/sw/> Watch lecture by David Harvey, “The Contradictions of Capitalism,” YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8UD-QqYFJqY>

Mar. 2: **Class conflict and conflict resolution.** Read Richard Rubenstein, *Resolving Structural Conflict*, Ch. 4; Cloward and Piven, “The Weight of the Poor: A Strategy to End Poverty,” from *The Nation* (2010), <https://www.thenation.com/article/weight-poor-strategy-end-poverty/>; Gar Alperovitz, “6 Ways We’re Already Leading an Economic Revolution, *Yes Magazine* (2016), <http://www.yesmagazine.org/new-economy/6-ways-were-already-leading-an-economic-revolution-20160907>

Mar. 7: **Modernization and globalization.** Read the Wikipedia article on Max Weber, esp. sections on Weber’s theories of authority, bureaucracy, and politics, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Max_Weber; C.E. Black, “The Dynamics of Modernization” (1966); and the three theories of globalization described on the Globalization Theory Website of Emory University: <http://sociology.emory.edu/faculty/globalization/theories.html>

Mar. 9: **Globalization and peacebuilding.** Read CCR, Chapters 5 and 9, pp. 144-172, 266-285. **Second graded short paper handed out, due via email by close of business on March 21**

Mar. 14: **SPRING RECESS**

Mar. 16: **SPRING RECESS**

Mar. 21: **Structural violence and system transformation.** View and discuss film, “The Battle of Algiers” (1967)

Mar. 23: **Social movements and CR practice.** Read Johan Galtung, “Violence, Peace and Peace Research” (1966); Sidney G. Tarrow. Ch. 9, “Cycles of Contention,” from *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (1998); Erica Chenoweth and Jay Ulfelder, “Can Structural Conditions Explain the Onset of Nonviolent Uprisings?” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (2015), 1-27

Mar. 28: **Discourse theory and the problem of power.** Read Michel Foucault, selection from *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*; Kevin Avruch, Ch. 6 (“On Power”) from his award-winning *Context and Pretext in Conflict Resolution: Culture, Identity, Power and Practice* (2012). Guest appearance by Prof. Avruch

Mar. 30: **Narrative theory and narrative mediation.** Read Sara Cobb, *Speaking of Violence: The Politics and Poetics of Narrative in Conflict Resolution* (2013), Intro. and Chapter 1; John Winslade and Gerald Monk, *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution* (2000) Chapter 1. Guest appearance by Prof. Cobb

Apr. 4: **Depth psychology and the problem of trauma.** Read Vamik Volkan, selections from *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism* (1997): "Summary of Freud's Basic Ideas," from *Reason and Meaning* (2014), <http://reasonandmeaning.com/2014/11/18/theories-of-human-nature-chapter-16-freud-part-1/>

Apr. 6: **Historical memory, trauma healing, and CR practice: simulated workshop led by Prof. Al Fuertes. Write short reflection paper due by close of business on April 11**

Apr. 11: **Key issues in the field: race, gender, and social conflict**

Apr. 13 **Key issues in the field: religion and social conflict**

Apr. 18: **Key issues in the field: climate change and social conflict**

Apr. 20: **Dialogue and Difference Project. Write short reflection paper due by close of business in April 25.**

Apr. 25: **Key issues in the field: responses to terrorism and insurgency.**

Apr. 27: **Key issues in the field: R2P and great power intervention.** Read

May 2: **Case study presentations by groups A, B, C, and D**

May 4: **Wrap-up session on the future of the CAR field**

May 14: **FINAL PAPERS DUE ON BLACKBOARD BY MIDNIGHT**