

CONF 601: Section 002
THEORIES OF CONFLICT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION
Spring 2011

Instructor: Richard E. Rubenstein
Teaching Associate: Michael English
Monday, 4:30-7:10 p.m.
Founders Hall 209

Objectives

Welcome to CONF 601. This course is designed to explore a wide range of conceptual frameworks for analyzing and resolving social conflict. Our objectives include:

- Examining and critiquing social theories that may prove useful in analyzing various types of social conflicts
- Evaluating the usefulness of these social theories by applying them to specific conflict situations
- Assisting students to become better critics of conflict-related theories and more acute conflict analysts; and
- Enabling them to develop their own abilities to construct useful theories of conflict and conflict resolution.

Instructors and Office Hours

This section of the course is taught by Richard Rubenstein, Truland 646. He can be reached at 703-993-1307 or at rubenstein.richard@gmail.com. In an emergency, call 703-400-7674. The teaching associate is Michael English, who can be reached at menglis1@gmu.edu. The instructor is available to talk about the course or any other matters of interest by appointment.

Graded Exercises and Related Matters

Grades in this course will be based on two exercises: a take-home examination given at midterm (40% of grade) and a final examination or term paper (60%). Students have the option to submit a term paper in lieu of sitting for the final examination, but the topic for the final paper must be approved by the instructor by Week 11 (April 8) at the latest. So start planning early if you prefer to write a term paper.

In order to receive a passing grade, it is necessary to attend classes prepared to discuss the week's reading and to turn in all assignments on time. Please note that it is ICAR policy to refuse to grant grades of Incomplete for reasons other than documented medical or family emergencies.

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.

Course Materials

The required articles and book chapters in this course will be delivered to students via email or placed on the ICAR Community Forum

(<http://icarcommunity.ning.com/>). Recommended readings will be available either on the Forum or on reserve in the John Burton Library.

There are two categories of reading materials, required reading and recommended reading. Required reading materials are mandatory. Recommended materials are optional but very useful for students wishing to deepen their understanding of the subjects under study. In addition, students are strongly encouraged to follow and critically examine daily news reports on current events related to social conflict; they will be discussed in class to supplement the assigned reading materials.

Course Structure

In broad outline, three types of social theories will be studied in this course:

1. *Theories of human nature* – viewing each individual as a unit of analysis; accounting for “what is inside you,” with an emphasis on what lies beneath the person’s consciousness;
2. *Theories of structure* – viewing a social institution, typically comprised of sustained, hierarchical, and multi-layered human relationships, as a unit of analysis; accounting for “what you are inside of”.
3. *Theories of culture* – viewing an epistemological system of meaning-making as a unit of analysis; accounting for “what is inside us,” with an emphasis on shared interpretive lenses with which to understand social phenomena.

These three types are loose categories that overlap significantly. Human nature theories include basic human needs (week 3), aggression (week 4), and psychoanalysis (week 5). Structural theories include realism and functionalism (week 2), Marxism (week 7), and modernization and globalization (week 10). Cultural theories include meaning-making (week 9) and some aspects of the session focusing on alternative starting points for theory-building (week 11).

In order to help students assess the practical strengths and limitations of these theories, we will incorporate a case study session and a movie (weeks 5 and 8) in this course.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND ASSIGNMENTS

Week 1: January 24

Introduction to the course

This session will offer an overview of the course and explore why we need to study social theory for conflict analysis and resolution. Read Rubenstein, “Some Thoughts About Conflict Theory” (emailed). Recommended reading: Herman Melville’s novella, “Billy Budd: Foretopman,” which can be found in numerous editions and on-line at <http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/MelBill.html>

Week 2: January 31

Realism and functionalism

Required reading:

Hans J. Morgenthau. 1967. *Politics among Nations*, 3-14, 25-35, and 162-171

Lewis A. Coser. 1956. *The Functions of Social Conflict*, 33-65

Wikipedia Encyclopedia 2007. "Factors Leading to War"

Recommended reading (available on two-hour reserves at Burton Library):

John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. 2003, esp. pp. 267 et seq.

James E. Dougherty and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr. 2001. *Contending Theories of International Relations: A Comprehensive Survey*, 5th edition, 63-103

Week 3: February 7

Basic human needs

Required reading.

John Burton. 1979. "Institutional Values and Human Needs," from *Deviance, Terrorism, and War: The Process of Solving Unresolved Social and Political Problems*, 85-94

Johan Galtung. 1991. *Conflict: Human Needs Theory*. Ed. John Burton, 301-335

Richard E. Rubenstein. 2008. "A Few Q's and A's About Basic Human Needs Theory" (email)

Recommended reading:

Coate and Rosati, *The Power of Human Needs in World Society* (Lynn Rienner, 1988)

Jay Rothman, *Resolving Identity-Based Conflicts in Nations, Organizations, and Communities* (Jossey Bass, 1997)

Richard Rubenstein, "Basic Human Needs: Steps Toward Further Theory Development." www.gmu.edu/academic/ijps/vol6_1/Rubenstein.htm (1996)

Week 4: February 14

Aggression and relative deprivation

Required reading:

Baumeister and Bushman. 2004. "Human Nature and Aggressive Motivation: Why Do Cultural Animals Turn Violent?" *Revue Internationale de Psychologie Sociale*, 205-220

Chris Hedges. 2002. Selection from *War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning*

Ted R. Gurr. 1970. *Why Men Rebel*. 22-58

Recommended reading:

James C. Davies. 1972. *Anger, Violence and Politics*, Ed. I.K. Feierabend, R.L.

Feierabend and T. R. Gurr., 67-84

James E. Dougherty and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr. 2001. *Contending Theories of*

International Relations, 5th ed., 231-263 (on reserve in Burton Library)

Week 5: February 21

Psychoanalytic Perspectives

Required reading:

David B. Stephenson, 1996. "The Freud Web."

<http://www.victorianweb.org/science/freud/>

Vamik Volkan. 1997. *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*. pp. 19-29, 36-49, and 81-100

Christopher Mitchell, "Psychological Dimensions of Conflict," from *The Structure of International Conflict*

Recommended reading:

Herbert Marcuse. 1966. *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*. (Especially Chapters 1 to 4, pp. 11-105, available at Burton Library. The whole volume is available on the Arlington library's two-hour reserve.)

Vamik Volkan. 2004. *Blind Trust: Large Groups and Their Leaders in Times of Crisis and Terror*, 23-55

Week 6: February 28

Case analysis (review of weeks 1 to 5)

There is no reading assigned for this week. Case study materials will be emailed to you at least one week prior to this session. Be ready to apply each of the theories learned in weeks 1 to 5 in the analysis and resolution of the conflict described in the scenario. Then ask these questions: (1) How useful is each theory for explaining why the conflict emerged and grew in a way it did? (2) How helpful is the theory in your attempt to explore possible ways to resolve the conflict? (3) What similarities and differences do you find between alternative theoretical approaches to conflict analysis and resolution? There is no need to submit your answers to these and other questions in writing. But be prepared to present your thoughts in class.

Week 7: March 7

MIDTERM EXAM DISTRIBUTED IN CLASS.

Marx and class struggle

Required reading:

Karl Marx. 1845. "The German Ideology" (highlights)

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01a.htm>

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. 1848. "Manifesto of the Communist Party" (1848) <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/>

Karl Marx. 1850. "Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte"

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch01.htm>

1870. "The Civil War in France"

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/civil-war-france/intro.htm>
Richard E. Rubenstein. 1993. "Resolving Class Conflicts," *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice: Integration and Application*. Ed. D.J.D Sandole and H. van der Merve, 146-157

Recommended reading:

David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press, 2004
(Available at Burton Library)

Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking Recognition," *New Left Review*, May-June 2000.
www.newleftreview.org/?view=2248

Roger Sion, *Gramsci's Political Thought*. Lawrence & Wishart, 1991
Leon Trotsky, *The Permanent Revolution*.
www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1931/tpr/pr-index.htm

Spring Break (March 14) - No class

Week 8: March 21

MIDTERM EXAM DUE VIA EMAIL BY 12:00 NOON

Film - Battle of Algiers

Discuss how the theories studied so far may help us to understand the conflict(s) described in the film.

Week 9: March 28

Meaning-making (including culture, worldview, and civilization)

Required reading:

Kevin Avruch and Peter W. Black. 1991. "The Culture Question and Conflict Resolution." *Peace and Change*, 16 (1), 22-45

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

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/423472>

Samuel P. Huntington. 1993. "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs*. Summer, vol. 72

<http://www.foreignaffairs.org/19930601faessay5188/samuel-p-huntington/the-clash-of-civilizations.html>

Rubenstein and Crocker. 1994. "Challenging Huntington." *Foreign Policy*. Autumn, Vol. 96. Available via JSTOR at <http://www.jstor.org/pss/1149220>

Recommended reading:

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities, Rev. Ed.* (Verso, 1993)

Black and Avruch, "Cultural Relativism, Conflict Resolution, and Social Justice."

www.gmu.edu/academic/pcs/BlackAvruch61PCS.html

Mary Clark. 1989. Chapter 8: On Acquiring a Worldview. *Adriadne's Thread: The Search for New Modes of Thinking*. 213-242

Johan Galtung. 1996. *Peace By Peaceful Means*

Week 10: April 4

Modernization and globalization

Required reading:

C.E. Black. 1966. *The Dynamics of Modernization: A Study in Comparative History*, 1-34

Benjamin Barber. 1992. "Jihad vs. McWorld," *Atlantic Monthly*, Mar. 1992.

www.theatlantic.com/doc/199203/barber

Paul Collier, 2006. "Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and Their Implications for Policy," 1-25

Richard Rubenstein. 2008. "Conflict Resolution in an Age of Empire: New Challenges to an Emerging Field," from Sandole and Byrne, *Handbook of Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice* (email)

Recommended reading:

Gordon Finlayson, 2005, *Habermas: A Very Short Introduction*

Harry Magdoff. 1978. *Imperialism: From the Colonial Age to the Present*.

Especially Chapter 3: Imperialism: A Historical Survey and Chapter 6: The Multinational Corporation and Development – A Contradiction?, in pp. 94-113, 165-197. These selected chapters are available at Burton Library.)

Thomas L. Friedman. 2005. *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century*. pp. 3-47, 414-438.

Jan A. Scholte. 2000. *Globalization: A Critical Introduction*. (Available at the Arlington library.)

Week 11: April 11

Non-Western perspectives on conflict

Most reading materials for this course are derived from contemporary Western epistemological traditions. In this session, we will explore alternative epistemological starting points for theory-building, asking questions like: What if CONF 601 were to be taught in a completely different epistemological and geographic context?; What would this syllabus look like if ICAR had emerged as an epistemic community based in Baghdad, Hanoi, Durban, or elsewhere? The point of asking these counterfactual questions is to critically reflect on the underlying assumptions from which the theoretical knowledge learned in this course has historically evolved. Through this exercise, we will explore alternative approaches to conceptualizing social conflict and conflict resolution.

Required reading:

Mohammed Abu-Nimer. 2000-2001. A Framework for Nonviolence and Peacebuilding in Islam. *The Journal of Law and Religion*. vol. 15, no. 1 & 2. 217-265 (

Nomonde Masina. 2000. Xhosa Practices of *Ubuntu* for South Africa. *Traditional Cures for Modern Conflicts*. Edited by I.W. Zartman. pp. 169-181

Recommended Reading:

Johan Galtung. 1988. Peace and Buddhism: An Evaluation of Strong and Weak Points. *Transarmament and the Cold War: Peace Research and the Peace Movement*, 369-380

Week 12: April 18
Postmodernism

Required reading:

Michel Foucault. 1979. Chapters titled "The Body of the Condemned" and "Illegality and Delinquency". *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. pp. 3-31, 257-292

Judith Butler. 2006. Selection from *Gender Trouble* (email)

Recommended reading:

"Foucault and Feminism" *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
<http://www.iep.utm.edu/f/foucfem.htm>

STUDENTS OPTING TO DO RESEARCH PAPER MUST HAVE TOPIC APPROVED BY THIS DATE

Week 13: April 25
Interventions and resolutions

Articles to be distributed via email. Panel discussion featuring ICAR practitioners

FINAL PAPER TOPICS DISTRIBUTED IN CLASS

Week 14: May 2
Conclusion: What have we learned about conflict theory? What more do we need to discover?

This session will provide 360-degree reflections on the course. Exercises include: (1) mapping the theories of conflict from a bird's eye perspective and identifying different types of theories, (2) offering a brief overview of important theories left out of this course, (3) understanding similarities and differences between theories of conflict analysis and theories of conflict resolution, and (4) envisioning what new theories are needed and what they might look like. Bring your questions to the class for discussion.

May 9: FINAL EXAMS DUE VIA EMAIL BY 5:00 P.M.