

Professor Jamie Price
Spring 2011
4:30 – 7:10 PM
Founders Hall 467

Wed. 2 – 3:30 & by appointment
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CONF 813: Qualitative Methods (Humanities)

KEY WORKING ASSUMPTIONS

As I set about the basic tasks involved in creating this course – identifying learning objectives, sequencing readings, formulating written assignments, and so on – I had to wrestle with a set of questions related to both the topic of the purpose of the course. In answering those questions, I arrived at a set of working assumptions that enabled me to structure the content of the course and develop a plan for teaching it. But this is your course. It is also a course on method. So it felt incumbent upon me to bring my working assumptions to your attention and to make them as clear as possible within the constraints of a syllabus.

To be frank, I found this to be a difficult assignment. It is simply easier to describe things than to explain them. And as the course unfolds, I suspect that you too will find that it is much simpler to do something than to explain what you are trying to do, what the method is that you are employing in doing it, and how that method yields the results you seek. But I also suspect that you will find yourself becoming more and more expert at doing so.

1. **CONF 813** – CONF 813 is a “required option” for your doctoral program. To me, this suggests that beyond whatever intrinsic merits the course may have, it should also be broadly relevant to your pursuit of a doctorate. I have therefore designed the course with an eye to making it potentially relevant to:
 - Passing your qualifying exams
 - Pursuing your dissertation research
 - Informing your practice
 - Enhancing your capacity to work critically and collaboratively with others in analyzing and resolving conflicts
2. **Method** – When you think about “method” in the context of this course, you might spontaneously find yourself thinking of techniques, tools, roadmaps, and rules. Instead, think of method in a broader, more comprehensive sense: method as a collaborative framework that guides standards of inquiry and practice in the field, method as “a set of related and recurrent operations yielding progressive and cumulative results.” Needless to say, the natural sciences are the poster children of successful, methodological collaboration in this broader sense. But it is almost 400 years now since Galileo’s methodological breakthrough, and natural scientists have made creative use of the intervening centuries. One of the primary goals of this course is to help advance the

development of a comparable achievement in the field of conflict analysis and resolution.

3. **Humanities** – When you think about “humanities” in relation to this course, you might spontaneously find yourself thinking about traditional academic disciplines – history, literature, art, philosophy, religion. Instead, think of humanities in the broader sense of human studies. Think of conflict analysis and resolution as a discipline seeking to establish itself as a human science in its own right – which in doing so, needs to study the same human realities that the traditional disciplines seek to explore and explain in their own ways and with their own particular emphases.

The humanities focus of this course will lead us to distinguish broadly between the “natural world” (studied by the natural sciences) and the “human world” (studied by the humanities and conflict analysis and resolution). This “human world” – the world in which human persons live and move and lock themselves into conflict with each other – is primarily a world mediated and constituted by meaning: meanings that are carried and mediated by art, symbol, language, culture, and gesture – meanings that are constituted by acts of understanding, knowing, valuing, deliberating, deciding, and acting performed by human persons – persons who are at once individual and social, male and female, political and cultural, moral and spiritual, shaped by their histories and oriented toward their futures – persons who are centrally occupied by their conflicts with each other and their efforts to resolve and reconcile those conflicts. This preoccupation, of course, is the point of entry for the field of conflict analysis and resolution in the realm of humanities.

4. **Qualitative** – When you think about the word “qualitative” in relation to this course, you might spontaneously find yourself thinking: “not quantitative.” Yes, think that. For while all methods perform the same basic function inasmuch as they provide a way for scholars to move from question to answer – from an unknown to a known – the feature that distinguishes one method from another is the interpretive framework it uses to fix the relationship between questions and answers.

Simply put: quantitative methods use mathematical frameworks to guide the way a researcher uses her mind to formulate questions and assess answers. Qualitative methods do not – and neither will this course. Instead, we will use the interpretive framework I have been employing here to guide my effort to clarify the working assumptions of this course: critical, reflexive, philosophy. A primary goal of this course is to develop your familiarity and expertise in working with this explanatory, philosophical framework.

5. **Empirical Principle** – As noted above, this course seeks to advance one of the founding principles of ICAR: that conflict analysis and resolution is a discipline best conceived on the analogy of a science, rather than an art. While this is an ideal that has yet to be fully achieved, it nevertheless sets a high standard for our performance in the field and in this course. Specifically, it means that in scholarship and practice we must seek to produce genuinely scientific and explanatory results. It means that the methods we use

– whether quantitative or qualitative – must be grounded by an empirical principle of scholarship, which stipulates that an appeal to some kind of empirical element is required for critically grounding any judgments of fact, possibility, or probability.

We will appeal to an empirical element that is consistent with the qualitative, humanities focus of the course. Instead of the appeal that natural science makes to the data of sense, we will appeal to the data of consciousness – to the data revealed to us when we pay explicit attention to the activities, levels, patterns, and norms that characterize the conscious operation of our minds. We will learn to differentiate the content of consciousness from its operation – and a critical, reflexive, philosophical framework will help us to do so. It will guide us in achieving the self-appropriation required to critically engage our minds in the task of questioning, understanding, and explaining how we use our minds to create, resolve, and reconcile conflicts. We will raise a foundational set of questions for which we will seek answers empirically grounded in the data of consciousness:

- What are we doing when we lock ourselves into conflict with each other?
- What are we doing when we unlock ourselves?
- Why does doing that transform or resolve the conflict?
- How do we do it more predictably, more often, more collaboratively?

6. **Bernard Lonergan** – As you peruse the schedule of reading assignments for the course, you will notice a fair number of essays by Bernard Lonergan, the Canadian philosopher, theologian, and methodologist (1904 – 1984). But just as you might expect a quantitative methods course to devote a good deal of attention to statistics, so in this course we will devote a good deal of attention to Lonergan’s philosophical writings. This is because I find his reflections extremely useful for developing the explanatory, reflexive, philosophical framework we need to guide our collaborative efforts to move from questions to critically grounded answers in the field of conflict analysis and resolution.

COURSE FORMAT

This course will follow a seminar format, with discussion focused on the readings for the day. Each class will open with journal reflections by each participant. Lectures and small group work will be incorporated as necessary. Ideally, the conversation will be progressive, cumulative and engaging. This conversation will culminate with group presentations that collaboratively employ the reflexive, philosophical framework we have developed over the course of the semester to (1) critically analyze one of the conflicts we have studied, and (2) offer detailed plans for the resolving it.

GRADING & ACCOUNTABILITY

1. Seminar Participation

Come to class prepared to critically discuss the readings for the day.

2. *Self-Appropriation and Reflection Journal* (40%)

At the end of each class, I will assign a question connected to the readings and discussion for the day. Sometime within the next 24 hours, reflect on this question in the form of a short journal entry (approximately 500 words) and submit in to me electronic format via email. Sometime within the next 48 hours, I will respond to your journal with short, written comments and questions. Come to the next class ready to discuss your journal reflections in roundtable form.

3. *Class Presentations and Final Paper* (30% + 30%)

In the final weeks of the seminar, class members will self-select into two groups to deepen further into the two conflicts analyzed in class on March 23rd and 30th. Half the class will focus on the social, cultural, and gender conflict precipitated by Norwegian immigration policies (Unni Wikan, *Generous Betrayal*). The other half will focus on the social and racial conflict precipitated in the United States by criminal policies of mass incarceration (Todd Clear, *Imprisoning Communities*)

- On **April 13**, both groups will present detailed analyses of their conflicts; each group will also serve as case consultants for the other – helping their colleagues to wrestle with their questions and deepen their analysis
 - On **April 20**, both groups will present detailed plans for resolving their conflict; each group will also serve as case consultants for the other – helping their colleagues to critically hone and refine their proposal for resolving the conflict.
 - On **April 27**, each student will submit a 4000 – 5000 word paper critically assessing the related and recurrent operations performed by their group – and the progressive and cumulative results produced in the effort to analyze and resolve the conflict.
4. *Students are required to uphold the codes and standards of ethical and scholarly conduct set forth in the GMU Student Handbook.*

CLASS & READING SCHEDULE

Week 1 – January 26: Introduction and Overview (1)

Week 1 - January 29: Self Appropriation & Differentiation (2)

- Robert Kegan – *The Evolving Self*
 - Chapter One – The Unrecognized Genius of Jean Piaget
- Marshall Rosenberg – *Nonviolent Communication*
 - Chapter Three – Observing without Evaluating
 - Chapter Five – Taking Responsibility for our Feelings

Week 2 – February 2: Making Meaning and Making Conflict (3)

- Bernard Lonergan – *Collection*
 - "Dimensions of Meaning"
- Kenneth Melchin & Cheryl Picard – *Transforming Conflict Through Insight*
 - Chapter Four – Applying Insight Theory to Mediation

Week 3 – February 9: Values & Development (4)

- Brian Hall – *Values Shift*
 - Chapter Three – World Views and Consciousness Shifts
 - Chapter Eight – Early Cycles of Development
 - Chapter Nine – Transforming the Values Gap
 - Chapter Ten – The Later Cycles of Development

Week 4 – February 16: Religion (5)

- Charles Taylor, Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*
 - Introduction -
- Walter Wink – *Engaging the Powers*
 - Chapter Nine – Jesus' Third Way: Nonviolent Engagement
- Bernard Lonergan, "Religious Experience"

Week 5 – February 23: Policy, Law, and the Human Good (6)

- Jane Jacobs – *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*
 - Chapter Two – The Uses of Sidewalks
- Martha Nussbaum – *Shame and the Law*
 - Chapter One – Law and Emotions
- Lonergan, "The structure of the human good"

Week 5 – February 26 – Culture, Healing, and Objectivity (7)

- Bernard Lonergan, "Healing and Creating in History"
- Robert Fitterer – *Love and Objectivity in Virtue Ethics*
 - Chapter Four – Emotive Perception of Value and Objectivity
- Joseph Liechty and Cecelia Clegg – *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*
 - Chapter Six – When is a Religious Idea Sectarian?

Week 6 – March 2: Power, Freedom, and Domination (8)

- Gene Sharp – *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*
 - Chapter One – The Nature and Control of Political Power
- Elizabeth Morelli, “The Feeling of Freedom”
- Bernard Lonergan, “The Dialectic of Authority”
- Paul Butler, *Let’s Get Free*
 - Chapter Seven – “A Hip Hop Theory of Justice”

Week 7 – March 9: Method (9)

- Bernard Lonergan, “The World Constituted and Mediated by Meaning”
- Bernard Lonergan, “Method: Trends and Variations”
- Bernard Lonergan, “Method”
- Bernard Lonergan, “Functional Specialization”

Week 8 – March 16: (No Class: Spring Break)

Week 9 – March 23: Culture and Conflict (10)

- Unni Wikan – *Generous Betrayal*

Week 10 – March 30: (11)

- Todd Clear – *Imprisoning Communities*

Week 11 – April 6 (No Class: previously held on January 29)

Week 12 – April 13 – Group Presentations and Case Consultations (12)

Week 13 – April 20 - Group Presentations and Case Consultations (13)

Week 14 – April 27 – Wrap-up and Reflections; Papers Due (14)

Week 15 – May 4 (No Class previously held on February 26)

