

**CONF 658**  
**Diversity and Difference in Conflict Analysis and Resolution**  
**School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution**  
**Spring, 2016**

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**Class Sessions:**

March 19-20, 2016, April 2-3, 2016, April 16-17, 2016  
10:00 AM – 5:00 PM,  
Arlington Campus, Founders Hall, Room 478

Welcome to the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution and especially to the Certificate Program! I am delighted to have you in class and look forward to an engaging learning experience. My hope is to partner with you on creating an environment that promotes learning, discussions, reflection and integration.

**Course Description:**

This course is intended to be an intensive exploration of the most critical elements of cultural diversity while building understanding and awareness of one's self in relation to others. Together we will investigate creative strategies of approaching and dealing with issues of diversity that are intertwined with perceptions of identity, boundaries and worldviews on the individual, communal, organizational, national, international and global levels. During this course we will consider meaning making, develop an awareness of the dynamics of diversity, and understand the potential impact of critical turning points in conflict situations. We will examine the importance of gender, race, religion, ethnicity, class, age and ability in understanding and mitigating conflict as well as work experientially through self reflection, participant-observation and case studies.

**Course Objectives:**

Define, discuss and engage in conversation about what is meant and encompassed by the term diversity and difference;

1. Gain a better understanding of issues pertaining to culture, gender, race, religion, ethnicity, class, age and ability and their role in conflict engagement;
2. Identify the various characteristics that shape social identity and explore the difference between internal and external perceptions of one's identity and its impact on social conflict;
3. Provide an environment to discuss one's understanding of self and others and implications for interaction, collaboration, integration and problem solving; and
4. Develop strategies to better mitigate and address issues of diversity, difference and culture.

### **Course Philosophy:**

As faculty for this class, I would like to acknowledge that my personal and professional experience, ethnic and cultural heritage, and religious identity impacts the way I understand the issues and the way I select to present them. In light of this acknowledgement, I would invite you to:

- a) Respect all points of view regardless of where you are on these issues;
- b) Listen to gain insight; reflect on what the other person is trying to communicate;
- c) Accept that we are here as a learning community – in which each person is a teacher and a learner.
- d) Participate in the shaping and framing of discourse on the topics of study to shape the emerging conversations on these important and critical topics.

### **Basic Course Requirements:**

- Students should arrive to sessions on time and be prepared to participate in class discussions and activities. Seminars will involve discussions and activities which require your preparation. The quality of our discussions will depend on the level of preparation by the entire class. In our pursuit of serious scholarly inquiry we will explore difficult and controversial topics, concepts and issues. It will be our collective responsibility to maintain an intellectually rigorous and respectful environment.
- Barring exceptional circumstances, you are expected to attend all weekends for the full time scheduled.
- Please turn in your assignments on time. In keeping with departmental policy, incomplete grades will be given only in cases of personal or immediate family illness. Late assignments will be penalized (5 percent for each day of delay unless permission is granted).
- Written work must be typed, double spaced. All papers must have page numbers, and endnotes or footnotes when appropriate. Please remember to put your name and date on the first page of the paper (OR add your name as a header or footer on all pages.)

### **University Resources and Assistance:**

- If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.
- The Writing Center is available to all Mason students and offers online and individual consultations as well as workshops and mini courses. Writers at all levels can benefit. Each Mason campus has a Writing Center. You can find them in the Arlington Campus in the Original Building, Room 334C, by phone at 703-993-4491 or online at: <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>
- You are responsible for knowing, understanding and following Mason's Honor Code, which is found at <http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#Anchor12> Be certain that all work submitted is your own and that you use sources appropriately. I strongly recommend that you review requirements regarding use and citation of sources prior to submitting your work.

### 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](http://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."

### **Grading Criteria:**

- Class participation and written work should demonstrate critical thinking and the ability to provide and include one's analysis of the readings.
- Written submissions should demonstrate and include discussion of concepts, theories, and themes discussed in class and covered by the readings. I highly encourage you to show how it links.
- Class presentations should show and demonstrate your ability to lead, discuss and deal with group dynamics and difficult conversations.

### **Required Readings:**

#### Books:

1. Cornell West (2001) Race Matters. Boston: Beacon Press. ISBN: 0-8070-0972-5
2. Gary Okihiro. (1994) Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture. ISBN: 9780295973395
3. Tim Wise. (2008) Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son. US: Soft Skill Press. ISBN 1-932360-68-9
4. Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003). Feminism without borders, Decolonizing Theory. ISBN: 9780822330219

#### Additional Readings and References: ( please retrieve through library resources or online)

1. Ta-Nehisi Coates. The Case for Reparations. The Atlantic Monthly, June 2014
2. Teju Cole. Unmournable Bodies. The New Yorker, January 9, 2015.  
<http://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/unmournable-bodies>
3. Malcolm Gladwell, Sacred and Profane: how not to negotiate with believers, New Yorker, March 31, 2014.  
[believershttp://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/03/31/sacred-and-profane-4](http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/03/31/sacred-and-profane-4)
4. Edward Said. (1979) Orientalism. Please visit some on line resources such as: <http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/Orientalism.html> - to read a general review of the theory and his work.

Course Requirements:

a) Class Participation (20 percent)

Your attendance and participation in on-going class discussions is crucial to the success of this class, your learning and will be a critical measure of evaluation.

Attendance: Should you miss a day or a few hours of class for circumstances beyond your control, please notify me immediately so we can discuss how best to address the situation. Participation in class means: demonstrating active listening skills, participating in large and small group discussions and exercises, demonstrating interest and engagement in classroom discussions. Class may also include student led discussions related to course readings.

b) Interview: (40 percent) submit no later than April 2, 2016.

Conduct a 30 - 45 minute interview on a topic of your choice that you would like to explore with someone (a friend, a family member, a coworker, a colleague, a student, a recent visitor to the US) who might hold a different point of view on the issue. Topics may include but not limited to race, gender, ethnicity, rights, politics, the arts, climate change, the environment, immigration, gangs or any other dimension of our daily lives that you might find controversial or has created some reflection on your part. Develop an opening statement and a brief list of questions that you might ask.

Write a 12-15 page reflection paper on the interview (double space). Consider some or all of the following questions in your response:

- Did you experience any challenges in identifying the issue, and/or in conducting the interview? And why?
- What did you learn about the other person's perspective and point of view?
- Was there a difference between the way you frame the issue and the person's framing of the issue? In what way did it impact the discussion?
- Did you experience any strong reactions to the opinion being expressed? Gain any additional insights?
- Was there a turning point(s) in the discussion?

c) Group Project ( 40 percent) April 16-17,2016

Form a group ( 3-4 members) and select a conflict in which diversity, difference and culture plays is a major factor that impacts the dynamics of a conflict (community, national, organizational, international, environmental . . .) that has its roots on issues pertaining to race, gender, ethnicity, and identity. Submit a paragraph on the selected topic of research no later than March 29<sup>th</sup> for approval.

- 1) Provide a comprehensive analysis of the conflict.
- 2) Prepare an annotated bibliography (5 – 7 references) on your topic.
- 3) Design an interactive group presentation to educate your peers on the conflict, theory (ies) that help explain the sources and dynamics of the conflict with ties and links to class readings and discussions where relevant.
- 4) Conclude your presentation on what could be done to address the root causes of the problem and help address the issues.
- 5) Post class presentation: Submit a 5 page reflection paper on the group work experience. (Due April 25, 2016).

**Course Schedule:**

Weekend # 1 – March 19-20, 2016

Read: West, Tim Wise, and assigned additional readings

- Introductions, approach and expectations;
- Overview of the course and assignments;
- Framing the conversation;
- Select groups for project; and
- Housekeeping.

Perspectives on issues of diversity and difference

What are the theories that can help us understand difference.

- There is more to race than black and white;
- Gender and race inequalities;
- Fault lines and their role in diversity based conflicts;
- Power and the relationship between social identity & social inequality;
- Making meaning - recognizing and understanding worldviews; and
- The role of diversity in conflict settings.
- Student led discussions – developing questions related to readings.
- Guest Speaker (TBD)

Weekend #2 – April 2-3, 2016

Read: Mohanty, Okiihiro

Perspectives on issues of diversity and difference continued. Change theories and intervention strategies.

- Check in to discuss questions, comments, from previous seminar.
- Gender revisited;
- Understanding and respecting difference (gender, sexual identification, race, ability and the concept of beauty);
- Fault lines and their role in identity based conflicts;
- Boundary behaviors – the factors that influence group identity
- Willingness to expand or limit group membership;
- Behavioral responses to social exclusion.
- Student led discussions
- Guest Speakers (TBD)

Weekend #3 –April 16-17, 2016

Case studies / group presentations / Pending issues, moving the conversation forward.

- Group Presentations.
- Wrap up and celebration.

*Many thanks in advance for your commitment to learning and for your potential contributions to the success of this course.*