

CONF 703: CONCEPTIONS OF PRACTICE  
FALL 2006

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## 1) DESCRIPTION

The work of conflict resolution practitioners typically includes an intervention that seeks to reduce hostilities, redress injustices, and/or promote positive change. Interventions presumably focus on the sources of the conflict, focusing on the kind of practice that is best suited to the particular case. In this course, students explore conceptions of practice through a reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of various interventionist techniques. Such techniques include negotiation, mediation, and problem solving. Underpinning certain techniques are various methods for understanding conflict, and models for assessing the interventions, and value judgment about the purposes of the intervention.

This course examines the social, philosophical, and ethical presuppositions associated with measures that seek to "rehumanize" relations among conflict protagonists. Students will examine how conflictual behaviors have negative consequences on ingroup identities, with negativities against the Other reverberating to patterns of dehumanization within the "glorified" ingroup. Consciousness about ingroup identity (ethnic, religious, national) and outgroup dangers becomes a major force in the escalation of violent conflict. Students also examine the social processes and normative presuppositions associated reconciliation. What exactly is reconciliation? When, if ever, does this occur? How can this best be achieved?

## 2) OBJECTIVES

- a) Broaden students' understanding of various interventionist techniques of practitioners.
- b) Demonstrate how skillful intervention by a practitioner requires critical reflection on the techniques deployed.
- c) Test interventionist techniques against case studies, revealing comparative strengths and weaknesses of various methods.
- d) Show the ethical underpinnings of practice by exposing for each method the value-commitments towards, for example, peace, equality, or justice.
- e) Show the close connections among kinds of practice, analysis, and evaluation.

## 3) REQUIRED READING

### Books:

Mohammed Abu-Nimer, ed., RECONCILIATION, JUSTICE, AND COEXISTENCE: THEORY AND PRACTICE, Lexington Press. 2001. ISBN 0-7391-0268-0 (Paper)

John Paul Lederach, Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies Washington, DC. United States Institute of Peace, 1997. ISBN 1-878379-73-9 (paper).

Martin Buber, I and Thou. New York: Scribner Classics Edition 2000. ISBN 0-7432-0133-7 Paperback

Cheldelin, Sandra, Daniel Druckman, Larissa Fast, eds., Conflict. New York, NY: Continuum, 2003. ISBN 0-8264-5747-9 Paperback

### **Ereserve**

1. S. Cobb, "Empowerment and Mediation: A Narrative Perspective," Negotiation Journal 9: 3 (July 1993): 245-255.
2. Tamra Pearson D'Estree, Larissa A. Fast, Joshua N. Weiss, and Monica S. Jakobsen, "Changing the Debate About "Success" in Conflict Resolution Efforts," Negotiation Journal, April 2001: 101-113.

### **Online**

1. Church, Cheyanne, and Julie Shouldice. *The Evaluation of Conflict Resolution Interventions: Part II: Emerging Practice and Theory*. Ulster: International Conflict Research (INCORE), 2003. Available online at <http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/publications/research/THE%20FINAL%20VERSION%202.pdf>
2. Scriven, Michael (1999). *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 6(11). <http://pareonline.net/getvn.asp?v=6&n=11> The Nature of Evaluation Part I: Relation to psychology
3. Scriven, Michel (1999). The Nature of Evaluation Part II: Training <http://pareonline.net/getvn.asp?v=6&n=12>
4. "Program Development Model" Cooperative Extension: Program Development and Evaluation <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande>

## **4) COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS**

- a) UNIT I Integration of Theory, Research, Practice.
  - i) Week 1 (Aug. 29): Introduction
    - (1) Editors, "Introduction" CONFLICT, Chapter 1
    - (2) Editors with Kevin Clements, "Theory, Research, and Practice" CONFLICT, Chapter 2
  - ii) Week 2 (Sept. 5): Interactive resolution and problem-solving
    - (1) Christopher Mitchell, "Problem-solving" Chapter 14 of CONFLICT
    - (2) Ronald J. Fisher, "Social-Psychological Processes in Interactive Conflict Analysis and Reconciliation," in RECONCILIATION, JUSTICE, AND COEXISTENCE, Chapter 2.
  - iii) Week 3 (Sept. 12): Mediation
    - (1) Sandra Cheldelin, "Mediation and Arbitration" Chapter 13 of CONFLICT
    - (2) S. Cobb, "Empowerment and Mediation: A Narrative Perspective," Negotiation Journal 9: 3 (July 1993): 245-255.
- b) UNIT II: Reconciliation
  - i) Week 4 (Sept. 19) : Seeking the Moral and Philosophical Foundations of Conflict

- (1) “Global Overview,” (John Paul Lederach, Building Peace: Chapter 1)
- (2) Lederach, Chapters 2, 3, 4, 5
- ii) Week 5 (Sept. 26): Towards a Framework for Peace
  - (1) Lederach, Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
- iii) Week 6 (Oct. 3)
  - (1) Prendergast, Applying Concepts to Cases: Four African Case Studies (in Lederach)
  - (2) Erin McCandless: the Case of Land in Zimbabwe: Causes of Conflict, Foundation for Sustained Peace,” Chapter 11, Reconciliation, Justice, and Coexistence.
  - (3) Wendy Lambourne, “Justice and Reconciliation: Postconflict Peacebuilding in Cambodia and Rwanda,” Chapter 16, Reconciliation, Justice, and Coexistence.

Exam #1

- c) UNIT III. Identities Divided/Justice Sought
  - i) Week 7 (Oct. 17): Transforming Identities through Changes in Collective Axiologies (Exam #1)
    - (1) Sandra Cheldelin, “Identity and Gender: The Notion of the ‘Other’” Chapter 10, Identity, Morality and Threat
    - (2) Joseph V. Montville, “Reconciliation as *REALPOLITIK*: Facing the Burdens of History in Political Conflict Resolution.” Chapter 14, Identity, Morality and Threat
  - ii) Week 8: (Oct. 24): Identities and Threats
    - (1) Rothbart and Korostelina, “Towards an Axiology of Difference” Chapter 1, Identity, Morality and Threat
    - (2) Sandole, “Identity Under Siege: Injustice, Historical Grievance, Rage, and the 'New' Terrorism,” Chapter 9, Identity, Morality and Threat.
- d) UNIT IV: Seeking Reconciliation
  - i) Week 9 (Oct. 31): I and Thou
    - (1) Martin Buber, I and Thou, Part One
  - ii) Week 10 (Nov. 7): Forgiveness
    - (1) Martin Buber, I and Thou, Part Two
    - (2) Marc Gopin, “Forgiveness as an Element of Conflict Resolution in Religious Cultures.” Chapter 5 Reconciliation, Justice, and Coexistence.
- e) UNIT V: Evaluation of Practice
  - i) Week 11 (Nov. 14): What is Evaluation?
    - (1) Scriven, Michael (1999). The nature of evaluation part i: relation to psychology. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 6(11). <http://pareonline.net/getvn.asp?v=6&n=11>
    - (2) Scriven, Michel (1999) . The Nature of Evaluation Part II: Training <http://pareonline.net/getvn.asp?v=6&n=12>
    - (3) “Program Development Model” Cooperative Extension: Program Development and Evaluation <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande>
  - ii) Week 12 (Nov. 21): Models of Evaluation

- (1) Tamra Pearson D'Estree, Larissa A. Fast, Joshua N. Weiss, and Monica S. Jakobsen, "Changing the Debate About "Success" in Conflict Resolution Efforts," *Negotiation Journal*, April 2001: 101-113.
  - (2) Church, Cheyanne, and Julie Shouldice. *The Evaluation of Conflict Resolution Interventions: Part II: Emerging Practice and Theory*. Ulster: International Conflict Research (INCORE), 2003. Available online at <http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/publications/research/THE%20FINAL%20VERSION%202.pdf>
- f) UNIT VI Class Presentations.
- i) Week 13 (Nov. 28)
  - ii) Week 14 (Dec. 5)
- 5) Assignments
- a) Take-home exam after Unit II, week 6. (25% of course grade)
  - b) "Two for one" Case Study
    - i) This assignment requires a critical reflection on the work of two professionals (non-ICAR faculty), both of whom are targeting THE SAME protagonist group.
    - ii) The following features of this study are required.
      - (1) Gather Information. Schedule at least one interview with each professional currently working with disputants or protagonists of local conflict. The professional could be a probation officer working for the courts, guidance counselor dealing with violence, psychologist addressing family disputes, lawyer engaged in dispute resolution, or mediator of civil disputes.
      - (2) Theory/Practice. Include a clear comparison of the scope of responsibilities for both professionals. Such a perspective includes assumptions about the character and capacity of disputes, models of the conflictual behavior, value commitments for positive changes, and the various kinds of resolution techniques that can be brought to bear on the conflict.
    - iii) Three Phases of work
      - (1) Plan. A detailed plan include the description of the work of two professionals, their techniques, and their professional relationship. Include an account of the history of the conflict among the disputants. (10% of course grade)
      - (2) Presentation. Present your results for purposes of class discussion (10% of course grade).
      - (3) Paper. Write up the final results in the form of a 15-20 page paper. (30% of course grade).
  - c) Take home exam (25% of course grade)