CONF 301: Research and Inquiry in Conflict Analysis and Resolution
Fall 2015 - Thursdays, 10:30am to 1:10pm - Music/Theater Building 1002

Instructor: Michael D. English, Graduate Lecturer, menglis1@gmu.edu
Office Hours: By appointment

Welcome to Research and Inquiry in Conflict Analysis and Resolution. The aim of our work for this semester is to provide you with a foundation for understanding social research, and more specifically, how the conduct and analysis of research relates to the study of violence and conflict resolution. Research is an essential component of the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution's tripartite commitment to the integration of theory, research, and practice, which rest at the heart of an interdisciplinary approach to the field of peace and conflict studies. The conduct of research is always informed by theory and practice. Likewise the development of theory and practice rely heavily on the production of scholarly research. Knowledgeable engagement with research and the research process are essential for your success as at George Mason and as future conflict scholars and practitioners seeking to enter the job market.

Four key questions will guide our journey over the term:
1. What is research and why should we care?
2. What is the relationship between research, theory, and practice and why does it matter?
3. How can we tell good research from bad research from "non-research"?
4. How do I conduct my own research project?

As this is course about the research process, our efforts will be directed to that end. This means that while we will look at examples dealing with contemporary studies of violence, peace, and conflict, we must keep in mind that our priority is to understand how various authors engaged the research process to reach their conclusions. What was their research question? How did they collect and analyze their data? Do their conclusions make sense in relation to their findings? While we will discuss the implications of particular studies, theories, and practices, please remember that our primary mission is to develop your skills in the area of research. Discussions that wander too far off topic will be concluded at the discretion of the instructor.

Course Objectives
1. Students will learn how to develop research questions and a research proposal;
2. Students will examine the strengths and weakness of various research traditions, including positivist, post-positivist, constructivist, and critical;
3. Students will explore multiple methods of data and information collection and analysis;
4. Students will further their understanding of the importance of research in the production of conflict theory and practice;
5. Students will evaluate their role as researchers and the ethical underpinnings of research, especially as they relate to interventions in conflict zones and with diverse populations.

Required Texts – Required means you must obtain. Both books are available at the bookstore.
- O'Leary, Zina. 2014. *The Essential Guide to Doing your Research Project*. London: SAGE.
- Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 2011. *The Craft of Research*. Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press.
- Other mandatory readings for this course are available in Blackboard under the Reading Schedule tab. The reading schedule by week is located at the back of the syllabus.

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Important Dates
Last day to add class - September 8
Last day to drop class - October 2
Selective withdrawal period ends - October 30

Course Assignments - Specific details for these assignments will be posted on Blackboard under the Assignments tab and discussed in class. <u>All written work must be submitted through Blackboard in Microsoft Word Document form</u>. PDFs and other file formats will not be accepted.

1. Ethics Paper – 500 words. *Due September 30* (10 points)
   - Reflection paper on the ethics of research.
2. Proposal Paper 1 – 500 words. *Due October 6* (10 points)
   - First draft of proposal (research topic, potential questions, initial lit search).
3. Proposal Paper 2 – 1000 words. *Due October 27* (15 points)
   - Revised draft (topic and question, theoretical framework and literature review).
4. Proposal Paper 3 – 2500 words. *Due December 8* (25 points)
   - Full draft proposal including discussion of methods and timeline.
5. Final Reflection Paper – 750 words. *Due December 12* (10 points)
   - A critical reflection on your participation in the course and with the materials.
6. Reading Exams (20 points)
   - You will have a number of short in-class quizzes pertaining to your readings.
7. Participation (10 points)
   - Throughout the term we will engage in a number of group assignments and in-class exercises.

Grading Scale - Your grade will be computed out of 100 points.

A = 100-93	A- = 92-90	
B+ = 89-87	B = 86-83	B- = 82-80
C+ = 79-77	C = 76-73	C- = 72-70
D = 69-60	F = 59-0	

Grading Rubric - Your papers are generally accessed using the following criteria:
- A range: Excellent work. Paper is turned in on time, presents a coherent structure, shows careful consideration of assignment in the context of class experience and readings, and/or engages topic in a thoughtful manner. Work contains no obvious errors.
- B range: Good work. Paper integrates class materials and experience in a sufficient manner. Author follows guidelines for assignment and demonstrates above average engagement with material. Reflection on class material and experiences moves beyond summarization. Work contains few errors.
- C range: Satisfactory work. Paper follows minimum guidelines for assignment. Paper only summarizes or uses minimal class readings or experience, contains frequent errors, and/or fails to meet length requirements.
- D range and below: Unsatisfactory work. Paper does not follow guidelines, is unreadable, and/or clearly has nothing to do with the course.

Paper Submission and Late Work - <u>All written assignments must be submitted through Blackboard in Microsoft Word Document format</u>. Do not print out your papers and bring them to class and do not email them to me. Late work will be reduced one letter grade per day. No work will be accepted over one week late without a valid written medical excuse or notice of death in the family.

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Expectations - The course will follow a learning community model, where all members of the class, including the instructor and any guests, embark on a cooperative learning experience. This involves preparation by all involved and a commitment to different learning and participation styles. Lectures, class discussions, simulations, student presentations, and small group work are just some of the varied ways in which we will learn over the semester. Students are expected to attend class regularly. More than two unexcused absences or frequent tardiness will result in an automatic deduction of one letter grade from your overall mark in the class. Readings and assignments should be completed prior to the start of class. Participation in discussions and exercises is required. Students may be called on at random to participate in class discussions. *Please note in advance that the professor does not regularly use powerpoint slides or give summaries of missed sessions in person or via email.* Students are responsible for obtaining notes from their classmates.

*Consumer Warning - Frequent tardiness does not fly with me. Some instructors are cool about when you roll in. I am not one of those instructors. Unless you have a specific medical reason, I expect you to be in the classroom and ready to go at the start time. I understand that life happens but if late is your regular thing you might consider another section of this course.

Technology - Computers and tablets for the purposes of note taking are allowed. However, if these devices become a distraction the instructor reserves the right to ban them from the classroom at his discretion. Mobile phones are prohibited once we start our session and should be kept in pockets or bags on silent for the duration of the class. Audio and visual recordings of the classroom sessions must be approved by the instructor in advance. Please speak with me directly if you have such a need.

Emails, Office Hours, and Reference Requests - The best way to contact me is through my Mason email address. I check my mail regularly and you should expect a response from me within 48 hours. If you have not received a reply to your email within this timeframe please send me a follow up email. However, before emailing me, please review the syllabus or your assignment guidelines to make sure that the answer you are looking for is not right in front of you. Also, you do not need to email me if you miss class unless you had an emergency. If you would like to meet with me for office hours I am willing to stick around after class or you can email me to set up an appointment. Please note that my office is on the Arlington Campus if you need to meet on a different day. I am also willing to consider reference requests on a case by case basis. My willingness is based on your performance in the class; specifically did you attend our sessions regularly, participate, and put in an above average effort on your assignments.

Mason Honor Code - *To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the University Community, have set forth this:* Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, and/or lie in matters related to academic work.

A note on the Honor Code. When you enrolled in this course you agreed to abide by the university's Honor Code. The Honor Code does not preclude collaborative work, such as informal discussions and studying in communities. Nor does it preclude assigned group work. The Honor Code does require that work you, as an individual, turn in ultimately be the product of your own individual synthesis or integration of ideas, and that the work a group turns in ultimately be the product of the group's collective ideas. If you are uncertain of the line between

collaboration and cheating, see an instructor. <u>As always, cite your sources. If you do not, it is plagiarism</u>. Plagiarism means lifting someone else's ideas or words and presenting them as your own without proper attribution of the source. This is all sources, including the Internet. Use an approved citation method, such as MLA, APA, etc. For a summary of the styles, visit http://infoguides.gmu.edu/content.php?pid=289805&sid=2455080.

Commitment to Diversity Statement - S-CAR is an intentionally inclusive community that celebrates diversity and strives to have faculty, staff and students who reflect the diversity of our plural society. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, class, linguistic background, religion, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, or physical ability.

Disability Services - 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. If you have learning differences, but have not sought support through Disability Services, you are welcome to describe these to me. I will attempt to make class as accessible as possible to different learning styles but cannot provide extra time or modifications to assignments without the prior approval of Disability Services.

The Writing Center - The Writing Center is a free writing resource for all Mason students that offers individual, group, and online tutoring. For general questions and comments, please visit http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/ or e-mail wcenter@gmu.edu.

READING SCHEDULE
Please complete all readings prior to class. Additional readings are hyperlinked below. Some require you to log in to specific journals via the University Libraries proxy if you are off campus. Please contact the library if you have trouble obtaining these materials.

Week 01 (09/03) Introduction to Course
No Readings.

Week 02 (09/10) Foundations and Paradigms of Social Research
Essential Guide, Chapters 1 and 2, pp. 1-30.

Craft of Research, Part I, pp. 3-27.

Emile Durkheim. 1982. "What is a social fact?" in Durkheim, Émile, Steven Lukes, and W. D. Halls. *The Rules of Sociological Method*. New York : The Free Press.

C. Wright Mills. 2000. "The Promise," in Mills, Charles Wright, and Todd Gitlin. *The Sociological Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Week 03 (09/17) Methodologies
Essential Guide, Chs 8-9 pp. 120-180.

Druckman, Daniel. "Why Do Research?" In *Doing Research.* 2005.Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications: 2-23.

RESEARCH DESIGN
Week 04 (09/24) Social Research, Ethics, and Politics
Essential Guide, Chapter 4, pp. 45-72.

Brun, Catherine. 2013. "I Love My Soldier" in Mazurana, Dyan E., Karen Jacobsen, and Lacey Andrews Gale. *Research methods in conflict settings: a view from below*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 129-148.

Mazurana, Dyan E. and Lacey Andrews Gale. 2013. "Preparing for Research in Active Conflict Zones" in Mazurana, Dyan E., Karen Jacobsen, and Lacey Andrews Gale. *Research methods in conflict settings: a view from below*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 277-292.

Williams, Malcolm. 2003. "The Ethics of Social Research." In *Making Sense of Social Research*. London, England: SAGE Publications: 154-72.

Week 05 (10/01) Research Questions
Craft of Research, pp 31-67.

Essential Guide, Ch 3, pp 31-44.

Week 06 (10/08) Research Design and Proposals
Essential Guide Ch 5 and 7, pp 72-84, 105-119.

Tickner, J. Ann. 2005. "What Is Your Research Program? Some Feminist Answers to International Relations Methodological Questions." *International Studies Quarterly* 49 (1): 1–22. doi:10.1111/j.0020-8833.2005.00332.x.

Week 07 (10/15) Literature Reviews and Library Resources
Essential Guide, Ch 6, 85-104.

Craft of Research, pp. 68-100.

MODES OF DATA AND INFORMATION COLLECTION
Week 08 (10/22) Sampling and Interviews
Essential Guide, Chapter 10 and 11, pp. 181-242.

DiCicco-Bloom, Barbara and Benjamin F Crabtree. 2006. "The qualitative research interview," *Medical Education*. 40: 314–321.

Week 09 (10/29) Experiments and Survey Research
Babbie, Earl R. 2007. "Experiments" *The Practice of Social Research*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth: 220-242.

Babbie, Earl R. 2007. "Survey Research" *The Practice of Social Research*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth: 243-283.

Rousseau, David L., and Rocio Garcia-Retamero. 2007. "Identity, Power, and Threat Perception A Cross-National Experimental Study." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51 (5): 744–71. doi:10.1177/0022002707304813.

Week 10 (11/05) Ethnography and Participatory Action Research
Wolfinger, Nicholas H. 2002. "On Writing Fieldnotes: Collection Strategies and Background Expectancies." *Qualitative Research* 2 (1): 85–93. doi:10.1177/1468794102002001640.

Ratelle, Jean-François. 2013. "Making Sense of Violence in Civil War: Challenging Academic Narratives through Political Ethnography." *Critical Studies on Security* 1 (2): 159–73. doi:10.1080/21624887.2013.824654.

Sullivan, Marianne, Rupaleem Bhuyan, Kirsten Senturia, Sharyne Shiu-Thornton, and Sandy Ciske. 2005. "Participatory Action Research in Practice A Case Study in Addressing Domestic Violence in Nine Cultural Communities." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 20 (8): 977–95. doi:10.1177/0886260505277680.

Week 11 (11/12) Working with Documents and Narrative Analysis
Essential Guide, Chapter 12, pp. 243-273.

Montgomery, Mary E. 2003. "Working for Peace While Preparing for War: The Creation of the United States Institute of Peace." *Journal of Peace Research* 40 (4): 479–96.

Harre, Rom, and Nikki Slocum. 2003. "Disputes as Complex Social Events: On the Uses of Positioning Theory." *Common Knowledge* 9 (1): 100–118.

Week 12 (11/19) Writing, Arguing, and Drafting
Craft of Research, pp. 105-210.

Week 13 (11/26) No Class. Mason Closed.
No Readings.

Week 14 (12/03) Proposal Workshop - Final Class
No Readings.