

**CONF 302:
Culture, Identity and Conflict and Their Resolution
Fall 2013**

Thursday 10:30 am to 1:10 pm
Robinson Hall A, Room 412

Taught by Dr. Arthur Romano
Assistant Professor
School of Conflict Analysis and Resolution
aromano7@gmu.edu

Office Hours: Thursday 1:30 to 2:30pm and by appointment (Room 116, Northeast Module II)

Course Description:

This course is designed to offer a conceptual and analytical grounding in literature on social identities, their impact on conflicts, and their resolution. It seeks to take into account the complex global world we inhabit by supporting learners in critically examining the complex, dynamic, and multi-layered influences on social identity and how identity impacts conflict dynamics. This course analyzes deeply rooted social conflicts around core issues of identity, such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and class, and it reviews a wide array of theoretical and conceptual approaches in the field. Overall, students will be asked to reflect on their positionality and consider what informs and influences contemporary social identity conflicts and their resolution.

Course Aims

During the course students will:

- Familiarize themselves with theories examining social identity and identity conflicts, while further developing critical thinking skills
- Examine social and cultural variables influencing identity construction, salience, and change
- Expand analytical tools for examining multiple identities and critically evaluating stereotypes
- Consider the role of identity in analyzing conflicts and proposing resolution strategies

- Evaluate the role of self-reflexivity in the analysis and resolution of identity conflicts
- Examine the role they and their peers' multiple identities play in influencing their worldviews
- Develop improved writing skills and produce clear, well-structured, and convincingly argued papers

Course Requirements:

Participation: 25%

Regular attendance and consistent informed participation in class discussions and activities is expected. **It is critical to complete all assigned readings** prior to each class so that you are prepared to engage in discussions. Also, you should bring books and class materials with you so you can cite the text when needed in class. Further, you will need **to take notes** to be able to capture the material discussed in class. We will frequently engage in small group work and experiential activities, and the quality of your participation and preparation is essential for maximizing learning and excelling on written assignments.

****Note on Extra Credit:** Students that go to the writing center two times or more to improve their work will receive an additional **10% on their participation grade**. You will be required to submit a short reflection piece to me via hardcopy in class no later than November 21. The reflection piece should be no longer **than 250 words** and should address the following questions: What did you find helpful in your session with the writing fellow? What issues do you see consistently coming up in your work that you were able to work on in the session? What did you learn from the session? **Be sure to include the name and date of the person you worked with at the center and any documentation they gave you to verify you were there.**

Pop Quizzes (15%)

There will be three pop quizzes that will be given during class. The lowest grade of the three will be dropped. The quizzes will test you on concepts and factual information from the required readings that have been assigned for the class in which they are given. **Students are allowed to use a regular 3X5 index card with notes and reflections on the readings during the quiz. You may bring multiple index cards to class with notes on them but during the quiz you will need to pick only 1 card to use as a reference during the exam.** If you miss the quiz you get a grade of zero. If I hand out the quiz at the beginning of class, those who are late to class and miss the quiz will also get a zero. The only exceptions to these policies are for those with a documented learning disability,

emergent medical problem or serious issue where I have been informed in a prompt manner. In all cases, I will need to receive written documentation and discuss the issue with you.

Written Assignments:

There will be **three writing assignments** in the course, all of which should be submitted by the start of class on the day they are due. Most assignments will be submitted via Safe Assignments on Blackboard. Your assignments should only contain your G number and not your name, as they will be graded anonymously. No late assignments will be accepted, and missed work will result in a grade of 0 for that assignment. The only exceptions are for documented learning disabilities, emergent medical problems, or a death in the family. In all cases, I will need to receive written documentation. All papers should use APA style formatting. For more information on APA formatting, you can visit: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

WRITING INTENSIVE COURSE:

This course fulfills the writing intensive requirement for majors in conflict analysis and resolution. It does so through a sequence of assignments that totals 6250–9450 words. The sequenced assignments include drafts and revisions of

Assignment #1: Multiple Identities Paper [750-1200 words].

Assignment #2: Interview Portfolio [5500-7500]

Assignment #3: Paper Re-write [0-750]

Assignment 1 - Multiple Identities-A Self-Reflexive Account Paper (750 to 1200 words) (15)%:

This paper examines your own social identity system. Consider the groups to which you belong. Then list and describe your social identities. Determine what are your most salient identities **NOW** and explore the reasons why these choices were made. Also explore contextual factors at play. Bring in applicable course materials covered to this point as you analyze the processes at work in the construction of your own personal and social identity.

In this paper you should:

- a. List all the social groups you are involved in
- b. List and briefly describe 3 of your **social identities**
- c. Describe 2 of your most salient **social identities NOW** and explain how that identity influences your attitudes, values, and behavior. How has your social context influenced the development of this social identity?

- d. Describe how your **social identities** have changed (give examples), and any times when your non-salient identity became your most salient one. How did the social context influence those changes?

Draw on a minimum of 6 academic sources (these should not all be resources that I have given you in class). Be sure to define the key concepts you are using such as social identity, identity salience, etc.

Due: September 26

Assignment 2 - Identity Interviews Project (12 to 15 pages) (30%):

This assignment will be carried out over the course of 4 weeks (September 26-October 24). For this project, you will have a chance to conduct original research on identity and place it in dialogue with the theories we are discussing in class. In this assignment, you will interview 3 people, examining their multiple social identities and how those identities influence their views of the social world, their stereotypes of other people and groups, and the impacts of their social context on their sense of self. We will conduct mock interviews in class, and you will have multiple opportunities to think through how you will conduct this work in the field and relate your 'data' to the literature we are studying in class.

Due date for the entire project portfolio is October 24.

Assignment 3 - Revision of Previous Assignment (15%):

Rewrite one assignment (you can choose from assignments 1 and 2 only) in a timely manner, incorporating the comments made on your assignment and your own further thinking. The revised version must include a cover sheet that restates the comments I originally made and briefly summarizes the changes you have made. Additionally, all the changes you made in the body of the document should be highlighted, as this will allow me to see exactly what has been altered. Revised papers should be posted under **Safe Assignments on Blackboard before November 21**. Your paper may not exceed an additional 750 words from your original text, unless you have previously discussed this with the professor.

Due no later than November 21

Required Texts:

Volkan, Vamik. (1997). *Blood Lines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Korostelina, Karina. (2007). *Social Identity and Conflict: Structures, Dynamics and Implications*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Tentative Course Agenda

"I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable." - Dwight D. Eisenhower

August 29: Introduction

Welcome, overview, class norms, and initial exploration of the theme of identity

September 5: Social Identity Theories and Identity Saliency

Readings:

Korostelina: Ch 1

Gardner, Robert 2003. "Identity Frames." At http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/identity_frames/

Kondo, Dorinne. (1990). *Crafting Selves: Power, Gender, and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, pp. 11-48.

September 12: Examining the Relationships between Individual and Social Identities

Readings:

Korostelina: Ch 2

Kriesberg, Louis. (2003). "Us versus Them." at http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/identity_issues/

September 19: Identity Saliency

*Class will be held in the Johnson Center Instruction Room and include a presentation about research strategies and provide time for student led research

Readings:

Korostelina: Ch 3

September 26: Identity Saliency & Introduction to Qualitative Research and Interviewing

Assignment 1 Due: (Multi-identities Paper)

Print out the two readings below and bring to class:

Qualitative Interview Design: A Practical Guide for Novice Investigators (2010)
<http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR15-3/qid.pdf>

An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing (1996)
([http://www.inside-installations.org/OCMT/mydocs/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20Booksummary Interviews SMAK 2.pdf](http://www.inside-installations.org/OCMT/mydocs/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20Booksummary%20Interviews%20SMAK%202.pdf))

October 3: Qualitative Research and Interviewing Continued

Readings:

Lazarre, Jane. (1996). *Beyond the Whiteness of Whiteness: Memoir of a White Mother of Black Sons*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 21-97

In-class Interviews begin

October 10: Hyphenated and Intersectional Identities

Readings:

M., Fine & S. Sirin, (2007). Hyphenated Selves: Muslim American Youth Negotiating Identities on the Fault Lines of Global Conflict. *Applied Development Science*, 11(3), 151-163

Additional Readings, TBA

In-class Interviews continued: Opportunity to Practice Data Analysis in Class
(bring both required texts to class)

October 17: First-hand accounts on Identity: Taking Perspective Seriously

Readings:

Adams et al., Readings for diversity and social justice, excerpts

October 24: Introduction to Ethnic Conflict Assignment 2 Due (Interview Portfolio)

Readings:

Volkan: Ch 1, 2, 3

Additional Readings: TBA

October 31: Religion, Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict

*It is Halloween and students are welcomed to come to class dressed in costume (this is a class about identity after all)

Readings:

Volkan: Ch 9

Gopin, Marc. (1997). Religion, Violence and Conflict Resolution. *Peace and Change*, 22(1), 1-31.

November 7: Gender and Conflict

Readings:

Cockburn, C. (1999) Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence.

Additional Readings: TBA

November 14: Gender and Conflict Continued

Readings:

Byrne, B. (1996). Towards A Gendered Understanding of Conflict.

Additional Readings: TBA

November 21: The Role of Education in Identity Based Conflict Resolution

Readings:

Kelman, H. (1999). The Interdependence of Israeli and Palestinian National Identities: The Role of the Other in Existential Conflicts.

Assignment 3 (Paper Re-Write Due)

November 28: Thanksgiving Break (NO CLASS)

December 5: Synthesis and Reflection

Closing Activities and Class Evaluation

Readings:

Korostelina: Ch 9 |

Sampson, C. (2010). Positive approaches to peacebuilding: a resource for innovators. Ch 14

Grading:

I do not curve for this course and most assignments are graded anonymously. You may contest grades. It is in your interest to take some time to formulate your questions/concerns about your grade in advance and make them clear to me in writing before we meet. Contesting grades can cut both ways—you may make a good case for **raising your grade. However**, I may find mistakes I missed the first time and **deduct points** after reviewing it again.

Attendance, Late Work, Participation, and Special Needs:

- While points are not directly deducted for missed classes, not attending classes makes it difficult to participate and generally results in lower participation grades. As a rule of thumb, **more than two unexcused absences tends to result in a 25% deduction from your participation grade and more than four absences results in an F for your participation grade.**

- If you anticipate absences from this class, **PLEASE NOTIFY ME IN ADVANCE** so we can make arrangements if necessary.

- If you are absent due to illness, crisis, or unexpected obstacles, **GET IN TOUCH WITH ME** as soon as you can so we can discuss possible arrangements.

- I STRONGLY ENCOURAGE YOU TO COMMUNICATE WITH ME** regarding absences and challenges that may disrupt your ability to complete requirements for the course.

****Timely and honest communication regarding absences, trouble with assignments, etc. can often prevent falling behind and feeling overwhelmed, and it can allow us to consider creative possibilities moving forward. With that said, I rarely accept attempts to make up for missed or late work at the end of the semester.**

- In terms of content, if you miss a class, it is a good practice to reach out to your classmates to get an idea of what you have missed in advance of contacting me.

- No text-messaging, personal web surfing, talking on cell phones, or private conversations in class. These activities are disruptive to others and will negatively affect your participation grade.

Student Resources:

English Language Institute:

The English Language Institute offers free English language tutoring to non-native English speaking students who are referred by a member of the GMU faculty or staff.

GMU Writing Center:

“The Writing Center seeks to foster a writing climate on campus and beyond by offering free writing support to George Mason students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

No matter what your writing abilities are, writing specialists can help you develop skills you need to become a successful writer. Free services include: One-on-one 45 minute sessions with a writing specialist; online writing lab; one-on-one sessions with an ESL specialist; workshops on topics such as documenting sources, grammar, and punctuation; writing handouts on a variety of subjects; a library of handbooks and writing manuals; [and an] online chat with a tutor about papers submitted to the Online Writing Lab” (<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>). Students who regularly use the writing center tend to score better marks in my classes.

Disability Support Services:

Any student with documented learning disabilities or other conditions that may affect academic performance should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with the Office of Disability Support Services (993-2474) to determine the possible accommodations you might need; and 2) **contact her or his instructor to discuss reasonable accommodations at the beginning of the semester.**

George Mason University is committed to providing appropriate services and accommodations that allow students with disabilities to access programs and activities at the university as stated in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. To achieve this goal, the university maintains and supports the Disability Resource Center Office, which is responsible for assuring that students receive the services and accommodations to which they are entitled. The professional staff of the Disability Resource Center Office coordinate services for students with disabilities, determine reasonable services and accommodations on the basis of disability, and act as a liaison between students and faculty/ administration on concerns relating to services and accommodations.”

(<http://www.gmu.edu/departments/advising/dss.html>).

LAST BUT NOT LEAST: Honor Code and Plagiarism

All George Mason University students have agreed to abide by the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code. You can find information about the Honor Code at <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/resources/students.php>. 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.