

RS: Integration

CONF 490 Section 002 – Spring 2015

Class Time: Thursday 10:30 – 1:10

Location: Hanover Hall L003

Instructor: Patricia Maulden, Ph.D.
Northeast Module II, Room 106
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Office Hours: By appointment.

Course Description

Conflict 490 is a capstone research and scholarship course in which students reflect on what they have learned by integrating and synthesizing knowledge from all their coursework in conflict analysis and resolution courses, as well as related areas of study. During the course students engage in two projects--one small group and one individual--that emphasize and encourage the integration of theory with practice. The course builds on previous courses in particular CONF 301, *Research and Inquiry in Conflict Resolution*.

Conflict 490 is a designated course in the General Education program. Accordingly, the course is interdisciplinary; students will explore conflict, conflict resolution, and specific conflicts by drawing on material and ways of knowing from multiple fields, as well as from conflict analysis and resolution. Students will also develop skills in focus group research thus engaging in critical thinking about the integration of theory and practice.

Course Objectives

Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

- Communicate effectively in both oral and written forms, applying appropriate rhetorical standards (e.g., audience adaptation, language, argument, organization, evidence, etc.)
- Connect issues in a given field to wider intellectual, community or societal concerns using perspectives from two or more disciplines
- Apply critical thinking skills to evaluate the quality, credibility, and limitations of an argument or a solution using appropriate evidence or resources

Course Overview

This class is designated as Research and Scholarship (RS) Intensive course, which means that students are given the opportunity to actively participate in the process of scholarship and make a

significant contribution to the creation of a interdisciplinary or disciplinary-appropriate product. In this course, students will:

- Create an original scholarly or creative project and specifically:
 - Justify that the project is intended to be engaging and novel to a particular audience
 - Take responsibility for executing the project
- Communicate knowledge from an original scholarly or creative project and specifically:
 - Present their understanding from a scholarly perspective for a specific audience
 - Demonstrate awareness of the broader implications of their work for the conflict analysis and resolution field
- Engage in Scholarly Inquiry and specifically:
 - Articulate and refine a scholarly question
 - Gather evidence appropriate to the question
 - Apply appropriate scholarly conventions during scholarly inquiry
 - Apply appropriate scholarly conventions when reporting or performing

Students will also gain an understanding of current debates in the field of conflict analysis and resolution and develop the ability to reflect critically on those debates.

Course Materials

The following books are available from the campus bookstore:

Required Texts:

Colin Robson. *How to do a Research Project: A Guide for Undergraduate Students*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007).

Supplementary Text:

Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams. *The Craft of Research* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008) Strongly recommended, especially if you have never read this text.

Course Requirements

Students are expected to attend all class sessions and to come prepared to participate in class. The instructor will facilitate discussions in class based on the assumption that all students have read and reflected on all the required reading. Class time will be used to engage in deep exploration of research approaches, assumptions, topics, theoretical frameworks, research design, method, and analysis. Put all cell phones away during class time.

Graded Assignments

Participation 15% - [This includes attendance at the Undergraduate Research Conference held Tuesday, April 21 in George's \(Johnson Center\). There will be no class that Thursday.](#)

Weekly Assignments 20%

Focus Group 15%

Electronic Poster 15%

Video Project Presentation 15%

Final Project Paper 20%

Assignments turned in late will be graded down, unless the student furnishes written documentation of the medical or family emergency that made timely completion of the work impossible. Please note that it is S-CAR policy to refuse to grant grades of Incomplete for reasons other than documented medical or family emergencies.

Group collaboration is an integral part of this course. Students will be required to work in groups both in and out of class, including electronically. Students are also required to use Blackboard, which will be the repository for most assignments, including readings other than books.

Academic Integrity

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. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee for review. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. 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.

Students are expected to upload the final assignment to SafeAssign to check for plagiarism issues and to make the needed corrections BEFORE submitting the assignment for grading. 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. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt, please ask for guidance and clarification.

GMU E-MAIL ACCOUNTS

Students must use their Mason email accounts—either the existing “MEMO” system or a new “MASONLIVE” account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information. It will not be possible to contact you through another email account, and you should check your email for important course, S-CAR, and Mason information.

OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. <http://ods.gmu.edu>

OTHER USEFUL CAMPUS RESOURCES

- Writing Center: <http://writing center.gmu.edu>– Robinson Hall A114 (703.993.1200)
- Counseling and Psychological Services: <http://caps.gmu.edu/> (703.993.2380)
- University Library: “Ask a Librarian” <http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>; Mary Oberlies is S-CAR's liaison librarian and can be contacted at moberlie@gmu.edu.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

The University Catalog, <http://catalog.gmu.edu> is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university academic affairs. Other policies are available at <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu>. All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.

S-CAR hosts a variety of activities during the semester, such as films, talks, seminars, and social events. You are encouraged to attend these and to offer reflections on them in class and/or on our Blackboard site.

Agenda

January 22

Introduction

Overview of course; topics; assumptions; project planning

January 29

Preliminaries

Reading: Robson Chapter 1

Explore topic development

Distribute narrowing topic assignment

February 5

Approaches

Reading: Robson Chapter 2

Introduction to focus group activity

***Bring narrowing topic assignment to class

***Bring list of assumptions about topic to class

February 12

Developing Ideas

Reading: Robson Chapter 3

Discuss literature 'gap'

Begin search for background sources (bring a list of 5 sources to class)

***Bring two or three theories related to your topic (see research paper guidelines)

February 19

Methods of Data Collection

Reading: Robson Chapter 4

Due via email (pmaulden@gmu.edu): Topic Statement and Preliminary Sources List

February 26

Practicalities of Data Collection

Reading: Robson Chapter 5

Preliminary planning for Focus Group Project

March 5

Writing the Research Report

Reading: Robson Chapter 7

Peer review of topic statement, sources, theories, literature gap, possible methodologies

March 12

NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

March 19

Analyzing and Interpreting Research Findings

Reading: Robson Chapter 6

Electronic Poster / YouTube Video explanation

Due In Class: Narrowing Topic and Research Problem Lists

- March 26** **Synthesis I**
- April 2** **Synthesis II**
Due In Class: Research Problem Draft, Bibliography, and Research Plan
- April 9** **Individual Student Meetings with Instructor**
Due on YouTube Channel: Practice 490 Conference Paper Presentation
- April 16** **Peer Review II**
Due In Class: Electronic Poster
- April 21 (Tuesday)** **Research Conference – George’s (in JC)**
- April 30** **Course Synthesis**
Focus Group Reports
Student Evaluations

Research Paper Due: – Monday, May 11 by 8:00 am (pmaulden@gmu.edu)

Grading Scale

Points Accumulated	Letter Grade
94-100	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-
77-79	C+
74-76	C
70-73	C-
60-69	D
0-59	F