

**CONF 330-003**  
**Community, Group and Organization Conflicts Analysis and Resolution**  
**Spring 2016**

Monday 10:00 am - 12:40 pm  
Arlington: Founders Hall 478  
Instructor: Prof. Adeeb Yousif  
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Phone: 215-268-4509

**Office Hours:**

By: appointment on campus or via Skype

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**Course Description:**

Welcome to the course, CONF 330! Groups, organizations and communities are powerful entities that shape the ways we think about ourselves, the ways in which we see others, and how others see us. In terms of building sustainable peace, group processes often lie at the heart of peacebuilding. Analysis of the strengths of groups, organizations and communities, as well as the social conflicts they experience, can show productive ways to prevent or transform violent conflict. This course covers conflict at mezzo level, introducing theories of social harmony and conflict. Through class discussions, films, case studies, academic readings, and role-plays of real-world conflicts, you will further develop the ability to analyze social group conflicts and consider conflict interventions.

This course will provide opportunities for students to examine a variety of social conflicts and explore theories of conflict that are grounded in analysis of group dynamics. It also seeks to explore a range of methods for engaging constructively with group, organizational and community-level conflicts and to sharpen students' skills for critical thinking when embedded within or entering live conflict dynamics. It draws on a broadly interdisciplinary approach to understanding group dynamics and includes literature from the fields of conflict analysis and resolution, social psychology, global studies, management, and sociology.

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**Learning Outcomes:**

Students will:

- Familiarize themselves with theoretical and conceptual resources for examining group dynamics including the role of power, context, social structure and intergroup relations in the escalation and de-escalation of social conflict
- Deepen their awareness of the stages and variety of social conflicts
- Further develop critical thinking skills and the ability to communicate in writing analysis of social conflict dynamics
- Strengthen collaborative learning skills and the ability to work together more effectively in groups

- Reflect more deeply on their own reactions, assumptions and tendencies when engaging with conflict dynamics
  - Become more familiar with conflict analysis and resolution (CAR) strategies that focus on group dynamics, exploring both problem-solving and strengths based approaches to CAR practice in group contexts
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## **Course Requirements:**

### **Participation (20%)**

Regular attendance and consistent engagement in class discussions is expected. It is critical to complete the assigned readings prior to each class in order to learn the subject matter and to be prepared to fully engage in discussions and in-class exercises. Two assignments in particular are important contributions to the course:

- During the semester, we will discuss current social group conflicts and apply concepts, theories, and frameworks we have learned in class to these conflicts. To generate these discussions, each student is responsible for sharing an example of one such conflict during the semester and framing the discussion. Appropriate examples will come from recent newspaper or magazine articles, or from a radio or television news story.
- During this course we will conduct a simulation of a community/group/organizational conflict in which each member of the class will assume a role. Full participation in the simulation is essential to the participation grade.

### **Reading Notes (20 %)**

I will ask to collect your reading notes or journal entries occasionally throughout the semester. Reading notes should be a minimum of 250 words and include a summary of the main points of the reading and the relevancy of that reading to class topics as well as include one to three key quotes for that reading. If all three components are present (summary, quotes and brief analysis) you will receive 100% on the assignment. You are expected to do this each week for each of the readings. In other words, if there are three readings you will have three, 250-word entries with summary, quotes and a brief analysis for each. Also please include your name at the top of your notes. I will ask to collect these readings the day of class and so you should either bring printed readings notes with you each week or have them accessible so that you can email them to me should I call for them that day. If you are out of class that week, check Blackboard announcement, as I will post that reading notes were collected and you will have 24 hours to get them to me.

### **Midterm Exam (25%)**

This is a take-home essay examination. The exam will be posted on Blackboard on March 14 under “Safe Assignments” and you will have two weeks to complete it and submit it VIA SAFE ASSIGNMENTS on Blackboard before the start of class on March 28. No late assignments will be accepted. The only exceptions to this policy are for those with a documented learning disability, emergent medical problem or a death in the family. In all cases, I will need to receive written documentation and discuss the issue with you. Your assignments should only

contain your G number and not your name as the assignment will be graded anonymously. You are permitted to go to the writing center to seek feedback on your writing in advance and this is highly recommended. Remember it is advisable to make an appointment with the writing center well in advance of the due date.

### **Case Study Analysis and Reflection Papers (35%)**

To gain experience applying your theoretical and practical skills to real-life conflicts, you will select a community, group, or organization to study throughout the semester. The purpose of this assignment is to identify conflict and/or conflict prevention within the entity you've selected, and to engage in analysis and critical thinking, while applying concepts, theories, and models from class readings. This paper will be (6-8) pages and the due May 8<sup>th</sup> 2016. There are two options for selecting a group, community, or organization to study:

1. Identify a group to study during the semester, or observe a group or organization to which you already belong. This may be any type of special-interest group (e.g. book or film club, study group), organization (e.g. your workplace), or community-based group (e.g. neighborhood association).
2. Study a current community conflict. While it is not necessary that the conflict is one in which you are involved, you will need to follow it closely throughout the semester; thus, it will be important to keep in mind the ease with which you can access new and relevant information as the semester progresses.

**Due: May 8<sup>th</sup> 2016**

### **Required Texts:**

Kriesberg, Louis. Constructive conflicts: from escalation to resolution. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012. Fourth Addition

Block, Peter. Community: the structure of belonging. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2008.

Sampson, Cynthia. 2009. Positive Approaches to Peacebuilding: A Resource for Innovators. The Taos Institute Publications, ISBN No. 0981907636

### **Suggested Reading:**

Bernstein, Nell. Burning down the house: the end of juvenile prison. New York: The New Press, 2014

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\*Please note additional readings will be announced through Blackboard throughout this course and it is **IMPERATIVE** that you check the announcements and **your GMU email regularly as the schedule for course readings will change**. Also if readings are missing on Blackboard, or

you have trouble accessing them or an existing link on Blackboard is not functioning inform the instructor ASAP so changes can be made.

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### **Class Schedule:**

#### **January 25: Welcome, overview of the class**

Develop class norms, review syllabus, grading policy and initial exploration of group, organization and community dynamics.

**Weekly Questions:** What is community? Can it be built? By what criteria can we determine if a community is healthy or functioning well?

#### **February 1: Introduction to the study of group dynamics--definitions and analysis of group dynamics.**

**Weekly Questions:** What constitutes a group? What are group dynamics? Are groups, organizations and communities different? What are the most effective ways to study groups? Why are group dynamics important in the field of Conflict Resolution? What is the role of social conflict in shaping group dynamics?

#### **To complete for class:**

- Forsyth, Donelson. *Group Dynamics*. 6 edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 2013. Ch. 1 – 2 (On Blackboard)
- Lederach, John Paul. *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*. Reprint edition. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. Ch. 2 (On Blackboard)
- Kriesberg, Chapter 1

#### **February 8: Group Dynamics: Group formation and inclusion: getting groups started**

**Weekly Questions:** What is Community? Are communities different than groups? What are some of the major challenges to building and maintaining communities and organizations over time? How do you bring groups together? How do you build and maintain group identity across lines of difference?

#### **To complete for class:**

- Forsyth, Donelson. *Group Dynamics*. 6 edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 2013. Ch. 3 (On Blackboard)
- Wheatley, Margaret. Walk out walk on a learning journey into communities daring to live the future now. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2011. (On Blackboard)
- Sampson, Cynthia. 2009.

<b>February 15: Why place matters: the role of social context in conflict dynamics</b>
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**Weekly Questions:**

What is social structure? What is a structure of belonging? What is a structure of inclusion? How do social structures generate or maintain exclusion? In what ways are processes of inclusion and exclusion relevant to CAR?

**To complete for class:**

- Dreier, Peter, John Mollenkopf, and Todd Swanstrom. *Place Matters : Metropolitcs for the Twenty-First Century*. Third edition, revised. 2014. Studies in Government and Public Policy. Ch. 3 – 4 (On Blackboard)
- Video: A Dream Foreclosed <http://live.huffingtonpost.com/r/segment/laura-gottesdiener-a-dream-foreclosed-black-america-homeownership/525d9a4d2b8c2a4a560000ed>
- Exit Zero Trailer based on the book by the same name by Christine Walley <https://youtu.be/2RWNi-NVbMw>

<b>February 22: Social Conflicts: Definitions and analysis of power and the challenges of differences in power and status</b>
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**Weekly Questions:**

What is a social conflict? How is a social conflict different than an interpersonal conflict? What contributes to the escalation of social conflicts?

**To complete for class:**

- Kriesberg, Ch. 2
- Okonta, Ike. Where vultures feast : shell, human rights, and oil in the Niger Delta. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2001. Chapter 3

- Forsyth, Ch. 8
- Discuss “Getting into character” assignment for Mountain Top simulation (posted on Blackboard).

**February 29: Conflict-decision making, participation and negotiating differences**

\**Mountain Top Coal Mining Simulation*

**To complete for class:**

- Sampson, Cynthia. 2009.
- Hirsch, Susan F., and E. Franklin Dukes. *Studies in Conflict, Justice, and Social Change : Mountaintop Mining in Appalachia : Understanding Stakeholders and Change in Environmental Conflict*. Athens, OH, USA: Ohio University Press, 2014. ebrary. Web. 28 Aug. 2015. Ch. 2 – 3. (Available online at Mason Library site on ProQuest)
- Review four resources from the WV resources, check list of links on Blackboard. (simply list which resources you reviewed on your reading notes and add a two sentence summary-250 words for each is not required.)

**March 7: No Class - Spring Break**

**March 14: The commons, shared resources and approaches to collective stewardship**

**To complete for class:**

- Kriesberg, Ch. 3 – 4
- Wall, Derek. *The Commons in History : Culture, Conflict, and Ecology*. MIT Press, 2014. History for a Sustainable Future. Ch. 1

**March 21: Conflict escalation, strategies adopted by groups in conflicts**

**To complete for class:**

- Kriesberg, Ch. 5 – 6
- Flint, Julie *The Other War: Inter-Arab Conflict in Darfur*
- Albaqir Alafif Mukhtar, “Beyond Darfur: Identity and Conflict in Sudan

**March 28: Restorative Justice: Community approaches to addressing harm**

**To complete for class:**

- Sampson, Cynthia. 2009.
- Bolton, Robert. *People Skills: How to Assert Yourself, Listen to Others, and Resolve Conflicts*. New York: Touchstone. 1986
- Boyes-Watson, Carolyn. *Peacemaking Circles and Urban Youth: Bringing Justice Home*. First edition. St. Paul, Minn: Living Justice Press, 2008. Chapter 2
- Bernstein, Nell. *Burning Down the House: The End of Juvenile Prison*. New York: The New Press, 2014. Print. Chapter 3, 4

**April 4: Grassroots Peacebuilding. Focus on gang truce in El Salvador and peace education work in the US**

**To complete for class:**

- Kriesberg, Ch. 7
- TAGGSPPEs. *A Window of Hope: El Salvador's Opportunity to Address History of Violence* (Letter for the One Year Anniversary of Salvadorian Gang Truce). 2012. (On Blackboard)
- Sampson, Cynthia, Mohammed Abu-Nimer, and Claudia Liebler, eds. *Positive Approaches to Peacebuilding: A Resource for Innovators*. Chagrin Falls, OH: The Taos Institute Publications, 2009. Ch. 5 (On Blackboard)
- Bernstein, Nell. *Burning Down the House: The End of Juvenile Prison*. New York: The New Press, 2014. Chapter 5

**April 11: Models for understanding organizational conflicts and the stories that hold organizations hostage.**

\* *In Class Conflict Presentation*

**To complete for class:**

- Brubaker, David. *Little Book of Healthy Organizations: Tools For Understanding And Transforming Your Organization*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2009. (entire book)
- “Stories that Hold Organizations Hostage” in Cloke, Ken, and Joan Goldsmith. *Resolving Personal and Organizational Conflict : Stories of Transformation and Forgiveness*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000. Ch. 5
- Case Study to be posted

### **April 18: Introduction to Social Movements.**

*\*In Class Conflict Presentation*

**To complete for class:**

- Meyer, David S. “How Social Movements Matter.” *Contexts* 2.4 (2003): 30–35. (On Blackboard)
- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., “My Pilgrimage to Nonviolence,” 1958. (On Blackboard)
- Additional Readings TBA

### **April 25: In-Class Presentations, conversational leadership and the importance of dialogue.**

*\*In Class Conflict Presentation*

**To complete for class:**

- Sampson, Cynthia, Mohammed Abu-Nimer, and Claudia Liebler, eds. *Positive Approaches to Peacebuilding: A Resource for Innovators*. Chagrin Falls, OH: The Taos Institute Publications, 2009. Ch. 14 (On Blackboard)

### **May 2: Closing Reflections, Summary and Integration**

Closing, Evaluation and Appreciations

**Readings TBA**



## 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 I may **deduct points** after reviewing it again.

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## 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 result 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 where 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 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. These activities are disruptive to others and will negatively affect your participation grade.
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## Student Resources:

### 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 the 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 such topics 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>). **I have found that 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>).

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### **Sexual Misconduct and Interpersonal Violence**

George Mason University is committed to providing a safe learning, living and working environment free from discrimination. The University’s environment is meant to be experienced as vibrant and dynamic, and one that includes ample opportunities for exploration of self, identity and independence. Sexual misconduct and incidents of interpersonal violence deeply interrupt that experience, and George Mason University is committed to a campus that is free of these types of incidents in order to promote community well-being and student success.

George Mason University encourages individuals who believe that they have been sexually harassed, assaulted or subjected to sexual misconduct to seek assistance and support. Confidential resources are available on campus at Counseling and Psychological Services ([caps.gmu.edu](http://caps.gmu.edu)), Student Health Services ([shs.gmu.edu](http://shs.gmu.edu)), the University Ombudsman ([ombudsman.gmu.edu](http://ombudsman.gmu.edu)), and Wellness, Alcohol and Violence Education and Services ([waves.gmu.edu](http://waves.gmu.edu)).

All other members of the University community (except those noted above) are not considered confidential resources and are required to report incidents of sexual misconduct to the University

Title IX Coordinator.

For a full list of resources, support opportunities, and reporting options, contact the University Title IX Coordinator at [integrity.gmu.edu](http://integrity.gmu.edu) and/or at 703-993-8730. Our goal is to create awareness of the range of options available to you and provide access to resources.

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### **Counseling and Psychological Services!**

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) provides a wide range of free services to students, faculty, and staff. Services are provided by a staff of professional clinical psychologists, social workers, counselors, learning specialists, and psychiatric providers. CAPS individual and group counseling, workshops, and outreach programs are designed to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance.

To inquire about psychological services visit <http://caps.gmu.edu/> or call 703 993-2380

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### **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.

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