

## **CONF 720: ETHNIC AND CULTURAL FACTORS IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

Spring 2011 (Section 001)

Monday 4.30-7.10 p.m., ARLFH 207

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Office Hours: Monday 3.00-4.00 p.m. and by appointment (Truland Rm. 604)

### **Course Description**

This course explores the role of culture in the genesis, structuring, and resolution of conflict within and between groups. We will pay special attention to ethnicity and other markers of identity in complex social systems as both generators and outcomes of conflict. Analysis will proceed through consideration of case-studies drawn from a variety of cultural and social settings. We will also discuss some critiques of the culture concept with reference to third party roles in conflict analysis and resolution.

The goal of the course is to introduce students to the importance of understanding culture and social identity dynamics, in addition to material, structural and institutional factors, for the analysis of social conflict and the possibilities for ethical conflict resolution across cultural boundaries.

### **Course Requirements**

*Required Readings (available at the GMU Arlington Bookstore or through E-reserve\*):*

\*Kevin Avruch, "Type I and Type II Errors in Culturally Sensitive Conflict Resolution Practice," Conflict Resolution Quarterly 20(3):351-371, 2003 (*on E-reserve*)

\*Kevin Avruch, "Culture, Relativism, and Human Rights" in Human Rights and Conflict, (J. Mertus & J. Helsing, eds.) USIP Press, 2006 (*on E-reserve*)

Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations" Foreign Affairs 72.3 (1993): 22-49 (*on E-reserve*)

Raymond Cohen, Negotiating Across Cultures, Revised Edition

John Conley & William O'Barr, Just Words: Law, Language and Power, 2nd ed.

Harold Isaacs, Idols of the Tribe: Group Identity and Political Change

Thomas Kochman, Black and White Styles in Conflict

Liisa Malkki, Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology  
Among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania

Lawrence Rosen, Bargaining for Reality: The Construction of Social Relations  
in a Muslim Community

Marc Howard Ross, Cultural Contestation in Ethnic Conflict

Tamara Wittes, How Israelis and Palestinians Negotiate

*The following book, also available at the Bookstore, is optional:*

Kevin Avruch, Culture and Conflict Resolution

The first requirement of this class is that you come prepared to discuss the readings. Also required is a term paper, on a topic of your choice, relevant to the (broad!) concerns of the class. This is due in class, Monday, April 25, 2011. I'll have more to say on this in a hand-out later, but you might start thinking about possible topics; and you will need to talk with me when you decide on one.

### **Course Program**

#### **Part I: Culture**

**Week 1 (1/24):** Course Orientation: What Is Culture? Why Study It?

**Week 2 (1/31):** How to Study Culture? How Not to Study It:  
Read: Huntington, Clash of Civilizations  
Culture, Self and Constructing Social Networks: A  
Moroccan Case-Study  
Rosen, pp. 1-92

**Week 3 (2/7):** Negotiating Conflict and Reality: Ethnic and Religious  
Relations in Sefrou, Morocco  
Read: Rosen, pp. 93-192

#### **Part II: Ethnicity & Other Identities**

**Week 4 (2/14):** Psychosocial Approaches to Basic Group Identity:  
Body, Names, and Language  
Read: Isaacs, pp. 1-114

**Week 5 (2/21):** Basic Group Identity-II: History, Religion, Nationality  
Read: Isaacs, pp. 115-219

**Week 6 (2/28):** Interpersonal Conflict, Culture, and “Sub-Culture”:  
American “Racial Styles” and Problems of  
Interpretation in Cultural Analysis  
Read: Kochman, all

**Week 7 (3/7):** Understanding Discourse: Class, Gender, and  
Cultures of Law and Mediation  
Read: Conley & O’Barr, pp. 1-97, 129-160

**Week 8 (3/14):** Mid-Semester Recess: No Class

**Week 9 (3/21):** Ethnicity, the State and Nationalism: Making “Culture”  
and its Costs  
Read: Malkki, pp. 1-152

**Week 10 (3/28):** Memory, History, and Genocide: Making Conflict --  
and its Costs  
Read: Malkki, pp. 153-297

### **Part III: The Uses of Culture in Ethnic & Identity Conflicts**

**Week 11 (4/4):** Psychocultural Dramas, Narratives, and the  
Performance of Identity  
Read: Ross, pp.1-126

**Week 12 (4/11):** The Uses of Culture in Political Conflict:  
Case Studies in Cultural Contestation  
Read: Ross, pp. 127-328

### **Part IV: Using the Culture Concept in Conflict Resolution**

**Week 13 (4/18):** International Conflict Resolution, Diplomacy, and  
Negotiation  
Read: Cohen, all

**Week 14 (4/25):** Culture and Cross-Cultural Conflict Resolution?  
An Oslo Case-Study  
Read: Wittes, all  
**Term paper due in class**

### **Part V: Cautions and Critiques**

**Week 15 (5/2):**

Dilemmas of Power: Misusing Culture in Conflict  
Analysis and Resolution: Culture, Ethnicity, and  
Identity Reconsidered

Read: Avruch, "Type and Type II Errors..." and  
"Culture, Relativism, and Human Rights," (*E-reserve*)