

CONF 302

IDENTITY CONFLICTS AND THEIR RESOLUTION

Conflict Analysis and Resolution Program, George Mason University

Fall 2008

Prof. Kevin Avruch

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Class: **Enterprise Hall 176**, Thursday 4:30-7:10

Office: **Robinson B365**, x 3-3607

Office hours: **Thursday 3:00-4:00**

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course explores the role played by identity in causing serious social conflicts, in influencing their dynamics, and in resolving, mitigating, or transforming them, and will highlight major theorists who have examined identity and conflict. Course materials will address the question of how identity/self/subjectivity are constituted, as well as aspects of identity such as race, ethnicity, gender, religion, class, and nationalism. Special emphasis will be placed on the relationship of identity to violence. Readings, films, class discussions, and assignments are designed to help students: 1) become better conflict analysts and resolvers; 2) gain awareness of the role played by their own identities in analyzing conflicts; and 3) write clear and cogent papers.

CONF 302 fulfills all of the writing-intensive requirements for the Conflict Analysis and Resolution (CAR) major through the assignments listed on this syllabus. Throughout the semester class time will be devoted to discussions that focus on improving writing skills. As well students are encouraged to visit the Writing Workshop for additional assistance.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance in class is crucial to success in this course. Some material relevant for completing assignments will be discussed only in class, not in the readings. You should complete the assigned readings prior to each class. Ask in class if you have not understood a term or idea. Come prepared to participation in classroom discussion. I will communicate with the class using your **GMU email addresses only**. It's your responsibility to check your GMU account regularly.

Classroom etiquette: Come to class on time and prepared. Turn off cell phones, pagers, beepers, iPods, etc. Use laptops, if you use them, only for class-related work.

You are expected to abide by George Mason University's **Honor Code** in preparing all work for this class. If you have questions about Honor Code issues or are uncertain about how to cite a source, or if you have observed Honor Code violations, please contact me.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

Class Participation: 20%

Written Assignments: 80%

Details on each assignment will be handed out in class

Assignment # 1: Your Self: A Reflective Personal Essay
2-3 pp., 5%

Assignment # 2: Writing an Op Ed
2 pp., 10%

Assignment #3: Short Paper: Analysis and Argument
4-5 pp., 20%

Assignment #4: Research Paper
10 pp., 40%

Assignment #5: Rewrite: You must rewrite one assignment (1-3 only) in a timely way
(*no later than 12/4/08*), 5%

READINGS

The following required books are available in the GMU Bookstore:

Ishmael Beah, *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*

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

Marc Howard Ross, *Cultural Contestation in Ethnic Conflict*

Vamik Volkan, *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*

The following additional required readings are available through E-Reserves (others may be added later):

Kevin Avruch, "Culture Theory, Culture Clash, and the Practice of Conflict Resolution"

Peter W. Black, "Identities"

Samuel R. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations"

Howon Jeong, "Sources of Social Conflict"

Daniel Rothbart and Karina Korostelina, "Moral Denigration of the Other"

COURSE PROGRAM

- 8/28:** Course Orientation. The Concept of Identity: An Introduction
- 9/4:** Theories of Identity, Self, and Subjectivity
Read: Isaacs, pp. 1-45; Volkan, pp. 19-35, Black (E-reserve)
- 9/11:** “Basic Group Identities”-I: The Body, Names, and Language
Read: Isaacs, pp. 46-114
- 9/18:** “Basic Group Identities”-II: History, Religion, Nationality
Read: Isaacs, pp. 115-219
Assignment #1 Due
- 9/25:** Identity and Social Conflict: Selves and Others
Read: Ross, pp. 1-29; Jeong (E-reserve); Rothbart & Korostelina (E-reserve)
- 10/2:** Guest, Topic TBA
- 10/9:** A Special Case? “The Clash of Civilizations”
Read: Huntington (first; E-reserve); Avruch (E-reserve)
- 10/16:** Narrating Collective Identities-I, Cultural Performances and Parades in Northern Ireland
Read: Ross, pp. 30-126
- 10/23:** Narrating Collective Identities-II, Case Studies in Nationalism, Memory, Flags And Dress
Read: Ross, pp. 127-223, 280-328
Assignment #2 due
- 10/30:** Narrating the Self (In Times of Trouble)
Read: Beah, pp. 5-125
- 11/6:** Traumatized Identities-I, Enemy Images and Chosen Traumas
Read: Volkan, pp. 3-18, 36-115
- 11/13:** Traumatized Identities-II, Trauma, Victimhood, and Violence
Read: Volkan, pp. 166-201
- 11/20:** Trauma Recovery and Reconstructing Identities
Read: Beah, pp. 126-218; Ross, pp. 224-279
Assignment #3 due
- 11/27:** **Thanksgiving: No Class**

12/4 Identity Conflict and Conflict Resolution
Read: Volkan, pp. 202-227; E-reserve reading TBA
(Don't Forget Assignment #5 due by today!)
(Last Class)

12/11 **Research Paper (Assignment # 4) Due:**
Hardcopy delivered to Robinson B365 by 4:30 p.m.
Only early submissions accepted by e-mail