

**CONF 802: Theories of the Person**  
**Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution**  
**George Mason University**  
**Fall 2009**  
**Mondays, 7:20-10:00 pm**  
**Truland Building #256**

Instructor: Professor Leslie Dwyer

Office Hours: Mondays, 5:30-7 and Wednesdays, 7:30-8:30 p.m. or by appointment

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**Course Description:**

This is a graduate theory course designed primarily for ICAR Ph.D. students. Students should have already taken, or currently be enrolled in, CONF 801 prior to enrollment.

Over the semester, we will be considering an interdisciplinary range of theories of personhood, culture and political subjectivity and their relationship to conflict and its transformation. Some of the key questions we will address include: how can we understand the operation of power and its relationship to subjectivity? How does identity become produced, reified or challenged through conflict? What kinds of social worlds emerge during and after conflict, and how do narrative practices, memory, and cultural work become both challenges and resource for peace-building and reconciliation? What are the politics of biomedical, humanitarian, and human rights approaches to post-conflict trauma, and how do local, lived realities intersect with globalizing discourses of post-conflict justice and psychosocial repair? We will be engaging the works of influential social theorists, and thinking about their application in particular international contexts.

This course is not a lecture course. Rather, it is an intensive graduate seminar designed to promote collaborative, critical dialogue. Participants are expected to arrive in class having thoroughly read and reflected on the week's readings, prepared to actively engage in discussion.

**Course Requirements and Evaluation:**

Grading for the course will be determined as follows:

Participation: 20%

Weekly essays: 40%

Final paper: 40%

**Participation:**

Your grade for participation will be based upon the quality and consistency of your contributions to our class discussions. Each week, you should be prepared not only to summarize what you have read and to discuss the authors' main points, but to provide a critical perspective on our

texts and their relation to other social theories and to issues of conflict analysis and resolution, both broadly and in particular settings. The questions you should be asking yourself as you read for class include: What are the authors' main concerns? How are they framing key theoretical concepts such as power, personhood, culture, identity, etc.? Are their arguments logically compelling? How can we relate their arguments to the field of conflict analysis and resolution? How might they help us to better understand particular conflicts and their transformation? What might be left out of a particular analysis that it would be important to explore? A superlative evaluation for participation will require you to regularly contribute your ideas to our discussion, as well as to serve as a generous interlocutor for your seminar colleagues. In other words, it is not the quantity of your contributions but the quality that matters, as well as your ability to raise issues that spark collaborative consideration, and to listen openly to others' perspectives.

### **Weekly Essays:**

Ten short (approximately 3-4 double-spaced pages) essays will be required over the semester. These essays should critically analyze the readings assigned for the week in which they are being submitted, and discuss their potential relationship to the field of conflict analysis and/or resolution. Essays should briefly lay out the main concerns of the readings, considering their theoretical assumptions and claims. You should be thinking critically about the logic and perspective underlying the readings, as well as how they relate to other theories we are discussing and to our understanding of conflict more generally.

You may choose which weeks you wish to submit essays. As there are fourteen weeks of class, you may either write essays for each week and drop the four lowest grades, or hand in a total of ten essays and not submit for the other four weeks. The essays **MUST** be handed in, in hard copy, before the end of the class period in which the particular readings are being discussed.

### **Final Paper:**

A final paper of 20-25 pages will be due at the conclusion of the semester, on December 18. Course participants will choose their own topics, drawing upon the readings for the course as well as outside sources as relevant. Topics may include a theoretical question/issue that compels you, or the application of particular theories to a form or case of conflict. We will be discussing details and possibilities for this assignment in much greater detail in class.

### **Course Policies:**

Late assignments or "incomplete" grades will be given only in exceptional cases of personal or immediate family crisis. You **MUST** discuss the possibility of such arrangements with me beforehand rather than waiting until an assignment is due. Failure to turn in an assignment on time without prior discussion will result in a failing grade for that particular assignment.

Given the importance of your active, thoughtful participation to the success of the class and your own ICAR career, attendance at all course meetings is expected. If you must miss a class, you should send me your weekly essay by email. Missing more than one or two classes over the course of the semester will inevitably result in a lowered "participation" grade.

All students should familiarize themselves with GMU's Honor Code and the university guidelines for the proper use and citation of sources. See the ICAR handbook ([http://www.gmu.edu/departments/ICAR/newstudent/Appendix\\_L.pdf](http://www.gmu.edu/departments/ICAR/newstudent/Appendix_L.pdf)) for clarification of related issues, or ask me if you have any questions. It is much better to ask prior to turning in an assignment, rather than waiting for a faculty member to notice something that should have been cited.

I will be communicating with you outside of class by email. Please make sure your GMU email account is activated and that you check it regularly. Should you have questions, concerns or ideas you would like to discuss, feel free to stop by my office hours or to communicate via email. We can also arrange phone conversations as needed to accommodate our respective schedules.

### **Course Materials:**

The following books have been ordered from the Arlington Campus Bookstore. They are also available through the ICAR or GMU libraries.

Agamben, Giorgio 1998. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Bourgois, Philippe and Jeffrey Schonberg 2009. *Righteous Dopefiend*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Butalia, Urvashi 2000. *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Butler, Judith 2006. *Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning and Violence*. New York: Verso.

Das, Veena 2006. *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Fassin, Didier and Richard Rechtman 2009. *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Ghosh, Amitav 2005. *The Shadow Lines*. New York: Mariner Books.

Sanford, Victoria 2004. *Buried Secrets: Truth and Human Rights in Guatemala*. NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy and Philippe Bourgois, 2003. *Violence in War and Peace: A Reader*. NY: Wiley-Blackwell. [This is marked "VWP" on the syllabus.]

All other readings will be available on E-Reserve.

## **Course Schedule:**

### **Week 1, Monday, August 31: Introduction**

Introduction to course aims, processes and expectations.

### **Monday, September 7 – NO CLASS, LABOR DAY**

### **Week 2, Monday, September 14: Conflict and Theories of “Human Nature”**

Thomas Hobbes. “Of the Natural Condition of Mankind as Concerning their Felicity, and Misery,” in *The English Philosophers from Bacon to Mill*, ed. E.A. Burt. (1939) 1967. NY: Modern Library, pp. 159-162.

Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, excerpt.

Karl Marx, “Preface” to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* and “Human Requirements and Division of Labour Under the Rule of Private Property,” from *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*.

Edward O. Wilson. “Aggression,” in *On Human Nature*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978. pp. 99-120.

Elaine Scarry. “The Difficulty of Imagining Other Persons,” In *The Handbook of Interethnic Coexistence*, ed. E. Weiner. 1998. New York: Continuum, pp. 40-62.

Carolyn Nordstrom, “Deadly Myths of Aggression.” *Aggressive Behavior* 24(2):147-159.

### **Week 3, Monday, September 21: Cultural Perspectives on Conflict**

Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” *The Interpretation of Cultures*, NY: Basic Books, 1973.

Alexander Hinton, “Why Did You Kill? The Cambodian Genocide and the Dark Side of Face and Honor,” VWP pp. 157-168.

Michael Taussig, “Culture of Terror – Space of Death: Roger Casement’s Putumayo Report and the Explanation of Torture,” VWP pp. 39-53.

Leslie Dwyer, “A Politics of Silences: Violence, Memory and Treacherous Speech in Post-Massacre Bali.” In Alex Hinton and Kevin O’Neill, eds., *Genocide, Truth, Memory and Representation: Anthropological Approaches*. (2009, Duke University Press).

Jasbir K. Puar, “On Torture: Abu Ghraib,” 2005, *Radical History Review* 93:13-38.

#### **Week 4, Monday, September 28: Personhood and Identity in Conflict**

Paul Ricoeur, "The Narrative Function." In Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics & the Human Sciences*.

Julie Peteet, "Male gender and rituals of resistance in the Palestinian Intifada: a cultural politics of violence," in *Violence: A Reader*, C. Besteman, ed., 2002, New York University Press, pp. 244-272.

Begona Aretxaga, "Dirty Protest: Symbolic Overdetermination and Gender in Northern Ireland Ethnic Violence," in *VWP* pgs. 244-252.

Liisa Malkki, From *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory and National Cosmology Among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania*, *VWP* pp. 129-135.

Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*. 2002, Princeton University Press. Excerpt.

Mahmood Mamdani, *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics, and the War on Terror*. 2009, New York: Pantheon. Excerpt.

#### **Week 5, Monday, October 5: Power and the Production of Self**

Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures," From *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings*, 1972-1977. 1981, New York: Random House, pp. 78-108.

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Excerpts.

Nikolas Rose, *Inventing Our Selves: Psychology, Power and Personhood*. Excerpts.

Teresa Caldeira, *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in Sao Paulo*. 2000, University of California Press. Excerpts.

#### **Week 6, Tuesday, October 13 [NOTE: CLASS MEETS TUESDAY DUE TO COLUMBUS DAY HOLIDAY]: Political Subjectivity**

Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*

Pandolfi, Mariella, "Laboratory of Intervention: The Humanitarian Governance of the Postcommunist Balkan Territories." In Mary-Jo Good, Sandra Hyde, Sarah Pinto and Byron Good, eds. *Postcolonial Disorders*, ch 5.

### **Week 7, Monday, October 19: Structural/Symbolic Violence and Social Inequality**

Pierre Bourdieu, "Gender and Symbolic Violence," in VWP pp. 339-342.

Paul Farmer, "On Suffering and Structural Violence: A View from Below," in VWP pp. 281-289.

Philippe Bourgois and Jeff Schonberg, *Righteous Dopefiend*.

### **Week 8, Monday, October 26: Narrating Experiences of Conflict**

Butalia, Urvashi 2000. *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*.

Ghosh, Amitav 2005. *The Shadow Lines*

### **Week 9, Monday, November 2: Social and Political Life in the Aftermath of Conflict**

Sanford, Victoria 2004. *Buried Secrets: Truth and Human Rights in Guatemala*.

Kay Warren, "'Each Mind is a World': Person, Authority and Community." In *Indigenous Movements and their Critics: Pan-Maya Activism in Guatemala*. 1998, Princeton University Press.

### **Week 10, Monday, November 9: Theorizing Social Landscapes of Violence**

Das, Veena 2006. *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*.

### **Week 11, Monday, November 16: Post-Conflict Trauma and the Social Self**

Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence – From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*. 1997, Basic Books. Excerpt.

DSM IV-R, "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder."

Allan Young, "America's Transient Mental Illness: A Brief History of the Self-Traumatized Perpetrator." *Subjectivity: Ethnographic Investigations*, ch 6.

Arthur Kleinman, "Violence, Culture and the Politics of Trauma," In *Writing at the Margins: Discourse Between Anthropology and Medicine*, pp. 173-189.

Janis Jenkins and Michael Hollifield, "Postcoloniality as the Aftermath of Terror among Vietnamese Refugees." In M. Good, S. Hyde, S. Pinto and B. Good, eds., *Postcolonial Disorders*. 2008, University of California Press.

Erica Caple James, "Haunting Ghosts: Madness, Gender and *Ensekirite* in Haiti in the Democratic Era." In M. Good, S. Hyde, S. Pinto and B. Good, eds., *Postcolonial Disorders*. 2008, University of California Press.

### **Week 12, Monday, November 23: Post-Traumatic Politics**

Leslie Dwyer and Degung Santikarma, "Posttraumatic Politics: Violence, Memory and Biomedical Discourse in Bali," in *Understanding Trauma* (2006: Cambridge University Press.)

Rosalind Shaw, "Memory Frictions: Localizing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Sierra Leone." *International Journal of Transitional Justice*. 2007; 1: 183-207.

Fassin, Didier and Richard Rechtman 2009. *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood*.

### **Week 13, Monday, November 30: Representing the Suffering of Other Persons**

Arthur Kleinman and Joan Kleinman, "The Appeal of Experience; The Dismay of Images: Cultural Appropriations of Suffering in Our Times," From *Social Suffering*, eds. A. Kleinman, V. Das and M. Lock (1997: University of California Press).

Philip Gourevitch, "Among the Dead," In *Disturbing Remains: Memory, History and Crisis in the Twentieth Century*, Michael Roth and Charles Salas, eds. (2001, Getty Research Institute Publications).

Mark Pedelty, From *War Stories: The Culture of Foreign Correspondents*, in VWP, pp. 402-409

Diana Taylor, "Lost in the Field of Vision: Witnessing September 11," from *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (2003: Duke University Press).

News clippings about Cambodia:

National Geographic News, "Killing Fields Lure Tourists to Cambodia," 1/10/2003

Sydney Morning Herald, "Pol Pot to Return as Tourist Attraction," 9/3/2003

The New York Times, "Poignant Faces of the Soon-to-be-Dead," 6/20/97

### **Week 14, Monday, December 7: Conclusion: Power, Mourning and Hope**

Judith Butler, *Prekarious Life: The Power of Mourning and Violence*

Dec. 18: Final papers due by close of business at ICAR office. Please place hard copies in my mailbox, and keep a backup copy in case of any problems.