

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

CONF 302 - 001 – IDENTITY CONFLICTS & THEIR RESOLUTION

(CRN # 11404)

Prerequisites: CONF 101 – Conflict and Our World; or permission of the instructor.

Spring Semester, 2009

John Dale
Assistant Professor

Office: Robinson Hall B, Room 315 phone: (703) 993-1444
e-mail: jdale@gmu.edu
Office Hours: Mondays Noon-1:00 p.m. and 3:00-4:00 p.m.;
or by appointment.
Classroom: Science & Tech Info 126
Mon and Wed 1:30-2:45 p.m.

Teaching Assistant: Katie Rogers krogers5@gmu.edu

Assignments available on course website:
<https://gmublackboard.com/webct/logon/798136391011>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores “identity” as a social, cultural, historical, cognitive, and emotional phenomenon. It examines how identity shapes the dynamics of violent social conflict, as well as their resolution, mitigation/escalation, and significant transformation into other forms of social conflict. Course materials will address the relationship between identity, self, subjectivity, and self-reflexivity, and their formation, shifting positionality, and change. They will also address particular aspects of identity such as race, ethnicity, gender, kin/family, class, religion, nationalism, transnationalism, citizenship, victim, survivor, and rights-bearer, and the complex dynamics of their overlapping, interpenetrating, mutually mediating, coexistence.

CONF 302 fulfills all of the writing-intensive requirements for the Conflict Analysis and Resolution (CAR) major through the assignments listed on the syllabus. Throughout the semester, class time will be devoted to discussions that focus on improving writing skills. Also, if you are unfamiliar with the University Writing Center, I encourage you to check it out. It is an excellent resource on campus that can provide you with additional assistance. The instructors there can work with you (free of charge) to improve your writing – even if you are already a good writer. They regularly hold workshops on writing research papers in particular. See <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>

(3 Semester Credits).

REQUIRED TEXTS

Melucci, Alberto. *The Playing Self: Person and Meaning in the Planetary Society*. (Cambridge University Press, 1996). ISBN: 0521564824

Volkan, Vamik. *Blood Lines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*. (Westview Press, 1997). ISBN-10: 0813390389

Ross, Marc Howard. *Cultural Contestation in Ethnic Conflict*. (Cambridge University Press, 2007.) ISBN: 0521690323

Ortiz, Laura Velasco. *Mixtec Transnational Identity*. (University of Arizona Press, 2005). ISBN: 0816323274.

Beck, Ulrich. *Cosmopolitan Vision*. (Polity, 2006). ISBN-10: 0745633994

COURSE REQUIREMENTS (AND RELATIVE WEIGHT OF GRADED ASSIGNMENTS)

The course format mixes lectures, group discussion, and film/video presentations. Students should take notes, both on lectures and on the reading, and films, with the intention of addressing the key themes of the course.

Class Participation (10% of your final grade)

Class attendance is required. It is your responsibility to sign the class roster which I will circulate at the beginning of each class. Unexcused absences will lower your participation grade. If you must miss class, be sure to let the instructor know (in advance, if possible), because you may be eligible for an excused absence. Regardless of whether or not your absence is excused, it is your responsibility to arrange to have a classmate brief you on the material in class that you missed. Please do not ask the instructor if you “missed anything important” in your absence. Reality aside, he likes to believe that every class generates something important, and may become very offended when that belief is challenged.

When I communicate with the class by e-mail, I will do so **using your GMU e-mail address only**. It is your responsibility to check your GMU account regularly.

I will distribute a full schedule of assignments for the semester at the beginning of the course. The course requires a healthy dose of reading, and you should keep pace with the scheduled assignments. Class participation starts before you come to class, with having done the readings and thought about what seems useful and illuminating, what seems wrong or unclear. A good practice would be to take brief notes on your day’s reading – indicating what issues you found most interesting or most problematic – and therefore most worth attention during class meetings. Doing so will facilitate not only your comprehension of the lectures, but also regular class discussion, which is a central aspect of the course. Ten percent of your final grade will be based on class participation, measured not only in terms of how often, but how well, you contribute to class discussion and activities.

Active, effective contribution means being attentive to the flow of the class' discussion, and being able to distinguish an apt intervention in an ongoing argument from an attempt to redirect the discussion to a new topic. Students are expected to actively engage with issues raised in classroom discussions and in homework assignments.

The readings are demanding and require intensive examination of a broad variety of issues and modes of thought. We will be discussing contentious political issues in this course. Students are encouraged to express diverse perspectives. You are likely to encounter strong opinions and it is inevitable that at least some of these opinions will make you or your colleagues uncomfortable. You will be expected to strike a healthy balance in conference between arguing your own position on these issues, listening to others, and helping the class as a collectivity to explore how the sociologists you read defend their approaches. Students and the instructor should interact with each other in a mutually respectful manner. They should articulate their ideas, concerns, arguments, critical questions and responses without alienating, marginalizing, or humiliating anyone. (For example, please avoid disrespectful *ad hominem* arguments, slanderous statements, hurtful stereotyping, or intentionally offensive non-verbal gesturing.) I am not requiring you to be "PC" (politically correct), but rather "BC" (basically civil).

Written Assignments

Details on each assignment will be handed out in class.

Assignment # 1 (10% of your final grade): Your Self: A Reflective Personal Essay (2-3 pages) –
Due: **Mar 02**

Assignment # 2 (10% of your final grade): Writing an Op-ed (750 words or less) –
Due: **Mar 23**

Assignment # 3 (20% of your final grade): Expository Paper: Analysis and Argument (4-5 pages)
–
Due: **April 20**

Assignment # 4 (40% of your final grade): Research Paper (10 pages) - Due: **May 6**

Assignment # 5 (10% of your final grade): Rewrite one assignment (#1- #3 only) by **May 4**.

- Rewriting #1: The re-write could also take the form of a daily journal or blog.
- Rewriting #2 : Anyone who gets their Op-ed published gets an automatic 10/10 for both Assignments #1 and #5.
- Rewriting #3: This paper will be a critical review of Ortiz' *Mixtec Transnational Identities*. Assignment #3 is due on April 20, the rewrite is due two weeks later on May 4. In choosing this option, you should consider that this is a quick turn around given that you have your research paper (Assignment #4) due on May 6. Plan accordingly. The rewrite should address comments and suggestions that the instructor raises concerning your first draft.

GRADING SCALE

<u>Letter Grade</u>	<u>Range of Number Grades</u>
A	100-94
A-	93-90
B+	89-87
B	86-84
B-	83-80
C+	79-77
C	76-74
C-	73-70
D	69-60
F	Below 60

Late Assignments

Late assignments will not be accepted for a grade unless authorized by the instructor prior to the due date.

Incomplete Grades

The instructor discourages incomplete grades and will give them only in unusual circumstances and, even then, only when formally arranged in advance between the student and the instructor.

The following grade scales should help you to assess your grade on various assignments throughout the quarter:

Grading Scale

Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D	F
100 Points	100-94	93-90	89-87	86-84	83-80	79-77	76-74	73-70	69-60	Below 60
40 Points	40.0-37.6	37.2-36.0	35.6-34.8	34.4-33.6	33.2-32.0	31.6-30.8	30.4-29.6	29.2-28.0	27.6-24.0	Below 24.0
20 Points	20.0-18.8	18.6-18.0	17.8-17.4	17.2-16.8	16.6-16.0	15.8-15.4	15.2-14.8	14.6-14.0	13.8-12.0	Below 12.0
10 Points	10.0-9.4	9.3-9.0	8.9-8.7	8.6-8.4	8.3-8.0	7.9-7.7	7.6-7.4	7.3-7.0	6.9-6.0	Below 6.0

PERCENTAGE RANGE LETTER GRADE COMMENTS

100 - 94 A

Given for work that meets all expectations, and also goes beyond an analysis of course material to develop new, creative, and unique ideas. An A is rarely given.

93 - 90 A-

Given for work that meets all expectations, and also contains some unique elements of insight and effort. You will have to work very hard to receive an A-.

89 - 87 B+

Given for very good to excellent work that analyzes material explored in class and is a reasonable attempt to synthesize material.

86 - 84 B

Given for work that meets most expectations, but contains some problems.

83 - 80 B-

Given for work that meets some expectations, but contains numerous problems.

79 - 77 C+

Given for adequate work that satisfies the assignment, but offers a more limited analysis of material explored in class.

76 - 74 C

Given for work that is of average quality.

73 - 70 C-

Given for work that does not meet basic expectations.

69 - 67 D+

Given for unsatisfactory work; but which nevertheless reflects a high degree of participation and effort.

66 - 60 D

Given for unsatisfactory work; and reflects a low degree of participation and effort

59 - 0 F

Given for unsatisfactory work; and reflects unsatisfactory participation and effort.

CONTESTING GRADES

I strongly encourage you to talk to me about any grade I give you in this course. The best time for this is during my office hours or by appointment. While there is no guarantee that I will change your grade, at the very least you will get a better sense of what my expectations are - and this may help you on future assignments.

GETTING ASSISTANCE DURING THE COURSE

I strongly encourage you to contact me if you want to discuss or clarify any course material. I check my email regularly, and am also willing to chat any time I am in my campus office. Please do not hesitate to let me know if there is anything I can do to make your experience in this course more positive for you.

MASON EMERGENCY INFORMATION!!!

To provide by e-mail and/or text message all members of the University community with emergency information relating to our safety and security, you are encouraged to sign up for the Mason Alert System, available at <https://alert.gmu.edu>.

Also, every classroom on campus has an emergency poster explaining what to do in the event of crises, and further information exists about emergency procedures at <http://www.gmu.edu/service/cert>.

ARRANGING SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

I am very happy to work with students in need of special accommodations in order to ensure that everyone is able to learn and participate fully in the course. If you need disability-related accommodations in this class, or if you have emergency medical information, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please see me privately after class or at my office. The Disability Resource Center is the campus office responsible for verifying that students have disability-related needs for academic accommodations, and for planning appropriate accommodations in cooperation with the students themselves and their instructors. The Disability Resource Center is located in SUB I, Room 222, where you can make an appointment, or call 703-993-2474 or 703-993-2476 (TDD/TTY). A web page describing the Center's resources and policies regarding accommodations is available at <http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc/>.

HONOR CODE POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

I expect you to understand and abide by the University's policy regarding the Honor Code, which may be found at <http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#Anchor12> . In short, the University's policy regarding the Honor Code prohibits any form of cheating on exams or written assignments. It also prohibits plagiarism, so be certain to properly cite all information that you use in your papers. Also, make extensive, very specific references to our course materials in your papers. Cheating and plagiarism are very serious infractions, and I deal with them severely in this course. If I receive a paper that has few specific references to our course materials, I will be inclined to assume that you have downloaded it off the Internet. If I determine that the paper has been plagiarized, then I will give you a failing grade. I will also likely report this alleged violation to the Honor Committee, who will consider further sanctions. If you have any questions about this policy I encourage you to come and talk with me about it. For more information or assistance, visit <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/>. You can find information and forms pertaining to the Honor Code and Committee at <http://honorcode.gmu.edu>. Also, you can always consult the Student Academic Affairs Ombudsman Dolores Gomez-Moran, who provides students with a neutral, independent, informal, and confidential resource for resolving academic concerns fairly. Her office is located at the Johnson Center, Room 245. Phone: 703-993-3306; E-mail: ombuds@gmu.edu; Web: www.gmu.edu/departments/ombudsman .

GUIDELINES FOR WRITTEN WORK

Always put your name on your paper. Give your paper a title and page numbers. Do not insert double-returns between paragraphs. Unless I request it, do not turn assignments in with report covers. Use 1 inch margins, a normal font size, and double-spacing on each page. Please do not use small fonts or single spacing, as this makes it hard to insert comments.

****KEEP MULTIPLE COPIES OF ALL YOUR WORK****

Always keep a duplicate copy of your paper or any other course work in a safe place, in case the original gets lost or you run into computer problems. Save a copy of your paper on a separate computer diskette, and update frequently as you are writing. Keep extra copies of all your assignments until after the semester ends and you have received your official grades from the

Registrar's Office. This is a crucial point: *No credit can be given for papers that are lost (by you or me) or rendered un-retrievable because of computer problems.* There are no exceptions to this rule, so be extremely careful to keep a backup copy of all your work!

ENROLLMENT STATEMENT

Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes.

Last Day to Add: Feb 04, 2009

Last Day to Drop: Feb 20, 2009

After the last day to drop a class, withdrawing from this class requires the approval of the dean and is only allowed for nonacademic reasons.