

CONF 490 – Integration Spring 2009

Dr. Mara Schoeny

Contact: mschoeny@gmu.edu; 703 993-9191

Office hours: Wednesday 4:30-5:30 and by appointment (Robinson B 365, CAR Office)

Class: Wednesday 1:30-4:15, Robinson A249 and online at courses.gmu.edu (Blackboard)

Conflict 490 is a capstone course in which students reflect on what they have learned, integrating and synthesizing knowledge from all their coursework in conflict analysis and resolution courses, as well as related areas of study. Our focus is on both the analysis and resolution of conflict. How do we examine and understand the sources and dynamics of conflicts? What do we know about social change and efforts to constructively work with conflict? The course begins with an overview of the conflict field and continues with attention to key issues in the analysis of conflict and possibilities for intervention.

Conflict 490 is a designated Synthesis Course in the General Education program. Accordingly, the course is interdisciplinary; students will study conflict and specific conflicts by drawing on material and ways of knowing from literature, anthropology, international relations, psychology, policy studies, documentary film, public affairs, as well as conflict analysis and resolution, an interdisciplinary field itself. Two projects focus on different aspects of conflict resolution and are designed to integrate knowledge gained throughout their studies. The first is a case study assessment where students will design conflict interventions intended to have policy and real world implications. The second project is a portfolio demonstrating competencies in writing and presenting about conflict. Throughout the course students will consider their roles, resources and aspirations in relation to the conflict field.

An overall objective is to create a collaborative and constructive learning community where the responsibility for sharing of information, experience, feedback, challenges and insights rests on all members of the course, both instructor and students.

Course Readings

The following books are available from the campus bookstore and online booksellers:

Watching the Wind: Conflict Resolution During South Africa's Transition to Democracy by Susan Collin Marks. United States Institute of Peace Press (2000)

The Little Book of Conflict Transformation by John Paul Lederach. Good Books (2003).

The Dynamics of Conflict Resolution: A Practitioner's Guide by Bernard Mayer. Jossey-Bass (2000).

Additional readings will be provided via the course webpage and handouts. You are responsible for obtaining and reviewing these readings. Selections include journal articles, book chapters, policy papers, background information and news media accounts.

Requirements and assessment

Active Engagement

10 %

There are a variety of ways you can contribute to the class, including sharing ideas, questions, and commentary about assigned readings and projects during class discussion and/or online. To continue the intellectual dialogue between class meetings, we will occasionally use the Blackboard discussion forum. Good postings are characterized by succinct writing, clarity and responsive communication. Class attendance is expected and in-class exercises count toward active engagement.

Short Essay

15%

Short essay that compares and contrasts issues, resources and intervenor approaches in *Watching the Wind*. (5 pages) Due February 25th

Conflict Resolution Perspectives

15%

Class will work with staff from 3D Security to prepare briefing materials regarding current conflict resolution issues on the Hill. Details provided in class. Will require time outside of class. Draft Due: Final due with portfolio.

Conflict Assessment of a Specific Conflict

20% and 15%

Using a conflict case of your choice, you will apply the ideas and theories of conflict and conflict resolution in order to better understanding the dynamics and sources of the conflict and to inform your recommendations regarding possible options for constructive intervention. This assignment requires both a paper (draft 5%, final 15%) and a public poster presentation (15%). Paper: 8-10 pages.

The presentation proposed conflict interventions will occur at a poster session (visual and/or audiovisual) reviewed by a faculty panel. Due: April 22.

Final Portfolio

25%

Constructing this final portfolio requires you to reflect on the work you have done during your undergraduate studies, especially your major coursework, and demonstrate a range of skills and knowledge, progress and achievements in a professional and polished presentation.

Due: Wednesday, May 6 by 5:00 pm, CAR office Robinson Hall.

Further guidelines for each of these assignments will be discussed in class.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

- Jan. 21** **Introductions**
- Jan. 28** **Classic Themes in the Study of Conflict and Overview of Conflict Mapping**
- Reading:**
 Bernard Mayer, Dynamics of Conflict Resolution: Chapters 1 & 2
 Sandole, Dennis. 1998. A comprehensive mapping of conflict and conflict resolution: a three pillar approach. <http://www.gmu.edu/academic/pcs/sandole>
 Begin Susan Collin Marks, Watching the Wind. Prologue, Intro, Chapter 1
- Feb. 4** **Power and Culture in Conflict Resolution**
- Reading:**
 Bernard Mayer, Dynamics of Conflict Resolution: Chapters 3 & 4
 Susan Collin Marks, Watching the Wind. Chapters 2 & 3
 Essays on Neutrality at:
<http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/neutrality/?nid=6713>
<http://www.beyondintractability.org/booksummary/10044/?nid=5396>
 with selected audio interviews (TBA)
- Feb. 11** **Conflict and Change**
- Reading:**
 Bernard Mayer, Dynamics of Conflict Resolution: Chapters 3 & 4
 John Paul Lederach, Conflict Transformation: all
 Christopher Mitchell, Conflict, Social Change and Conflict Resolution at
http://www.berghof-handbook.net/uploads/download/mitchell_handbook.pdf
- Feb. 18** **On the Ground in South Africa**
- Reading:**
 Susan Collin Marks, Watching the Wind. Chapters 4, 6 & 7
 Description of intervenor roles from <http://www.thirdside.org/>
 Thania Paffenholz, Designing Conflict Interventions at
http://www.berghof-handbook.net/uploads/download/paffenholz_handbook.pdf

- Feb. 25** **Intervenor Roles and Reflections**
 Guest Panel: prepare questions
ASSIGNMENT ONE DUE: Comparative essay on resolution roles and resources
- Mar. 4** **Conflict Analysis and Framing: Writing to Inform**
 Guest
Reading:
 TBA
Final Project Topic must be submitted and approved prior to Spring Break
- March 11* *No Class, Spring Break*
- Mar. 18** **Security and Cotemporary Challenges for Conflict Resolution**
Reading:
 Kanji, Omario. "Security." <http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/security/>
 Rice, Susan. "Poverty Breeds Insecurity"
 Clark, Mary. "Meaningful Social Bonding as a Universal Human Need"
 Senator Richard G. Lugar Opening Statement
- Mar. 25** **Oral Presentation of Conflict Maps (final project topic)**
 Using Sandole's 3 Pillar Framework or another comprehensive analysis tool, provide an overview of the key features of your conflict case. In small groups, you will present your conflict map, answer questions, and receive peer feedback. This first step helps structure the final assessment. Ungraded, turn in for participation points.
Reading:
 Handout: C.R. Mitchell "How Much Do I Need to Know?"
- April 1** **Reconciliation, Transformation and Conflict Resolution**
 Video
Reading:
 TBA

Apr. 8 Planning Interventions and Intervenor Roles

Reading:

Mary B. Anderson “Can My Good Intentions Make Things Worse?”

Apr. 15 Assessment and Interventions Continued

Reading: TBA

Bring draft presentation material for in-class feedback

Apr. 22 Poster Session

FINAL Project paper due

Written conflict assessment and poster session presentation

Apr. 29 Last class

Intervenor inventory, wrap-up, evaluations

FINAL Portfolio due on Wednesday, May 6 by 5:00, CAR office Robinson Hall