

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

SOCI 301 - 001 – RESARCH/INQUIRY IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION

(GRADUATE SEMINAR - CRN # 11320)

Spring Semester, 2010

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Office Hours: Mondays 11 a.m.-1:00 p.m; or by appointment.

Classroom: Enterprise Hall 277, Mondays 1:30-4:15 p.m.

Note: Assignments available on the course website on Blackboard

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to key research questions shaping the field of conflict analysis and resolution, and the contexts in which they have emerged. Under what conditions do different kinds and scales of conflict emerge, and why? How do these conflicts develop and transform over time? Who is impacted by these conflicts, and how? How is the “same” conflict differently experienced by social actors over time and place? Can conflicts be prevented, resolved, or managed, and if so, how? Does the way in which we conduct research on and produce knowledge about conflict influence not only our understanding of conflict, but also the conflict itself? This course surveys and examines the diverse foundational assumptions, patterns of conceptualization and operationalization, project designs, methods of acquiring data, analytical techniques, interpretive strategies, and ethical and political considerations that characterize contemporary research in this field today. Throughout the semester, students develop their critical understanding of the research process in dialogue with case studies of empirical research that raise central questions about contemporary conflict and about methodology. Student also develop their own formal, comprehensive research proposal on a research problem that they themselves develop and situate within the literature on conflict analysis and resolution.

(3 Semester Credits).

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Engage in critical reflection of the goals of research and inquiry, and the production of knowledge, in conflict analysis and its transformation or resolution.
2. Integrate research with theory and practice.
3. Examine the strengths and limitations, and theoretical underpinnings of quantitative, qualitative, comparative, and set-theoretic and fuzzy set analysis in research.
4. Learn how to frame a topic for research, and to develop a research problem.

5. Survey a wide variety of research methods for collecting (or producing) data, and understand the conditions under which to use them (sometimes in combination) to address your research problem.
6. Begin developing the foundations for mapping the key research questions and debates in the field of conflict analysis and resolution.
7. Develop the necessary skills for understanding contemporary research in the field of conflict analysis and resolution, and the competence to develop a formal, comprehensive research proposal.

REQUIRED TEXTS

1. Drucker, Daniel, ed. *Doing Research: Methods of Inquiry for Conflict Analysis*. (Sage, 2005) ISBN: 9780761927792 (paper – New Edition). Amazon: \$57.26
2. Ragin, Charles C. *Redesigning Social Inquiry: Fuzzy Sets and Beyond*. (University of Chicago Press, 2008). ISBN: 978-0226702759 (paper). Amazon: \$11.42
3. Punch, Keith F. *Developing Effective Research Proposals, Second Edition*. (Sage, 2006). ISBN: 978-1412921268 (paper). Amazon: \$38.21
4. Booth, Wayne C. , Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *The Craft of Research, 3rd edition*. (Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing) ISBN: 978-978-0226065663 (paper). Amazon: \$11.56

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Class Participation – (10% of final grade)

Your attendance in class is mandatory unless you have an emergency or make a special arrangement with me prior to missing class. Let me know in advance, if possible, when such an emergency arises. Aside from your attending class, you are expected to come prepared for discussion. You should read assignments prior to class, and contribute to discussion. This is no time to be a “wallflower”. Try be a productive class participant who offers constructive and insightful comments. Avoid dominating discussion, but be sure to voice your interpretations of the readings, or your responses to ideas and points that I and others are offering. This is a chance for me to evaluate how well you are understanding the material.

Critical Essays - Expository Paper: Analysis and Argument (3-4 pages); (50% of final grade)

Focus on one concept and situate it within a brief summary of the author’s main argument and important related key concepts sustaining it. Then offer your critique (appreciation, disappointment, or combination of both) of the argument or one of the key concepts upon which it depends. You can draw upon previous books or articles that we read in class only. Avoid using outside sources or secondary sources on the authors or their work. I want your original thoughts – not someone else’s critique. Graduate school is a critical time for finding your own voice and perspective. Be bold and trust yourself. Included in this syllabus are guidelines and useful tips for writing a brief, critical essay.

You will write five of these essays. Critical essay # 1 is mandatory, and due on February 15th. After that, you must choose an additional **four** from the remaining eight critical essays assignments. Each essay has a specific due date. If you do not submit the essay by its due date, then you have elected to pass on that assignment, and must choose from the remaining assignments and their corresponding due dates.

All critical essays are due at the start of class before we discuss the article that you are critiquing. Submit your essays via the assignment dropbox on our course website on Blackboard. Essays will be graded according to the following scale.

These grades correspond to the following on the grade scale below:

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. Very well-written.

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-. Very well-written.

89 - 87 B+

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

86 - 84 B

Given for work that meets most expectations, but contains some problems relating to the argument and /or writing.

83 – 80 B-

Given for work that meets some expectations, but contains numerous problems relating to the argument and /or writing.

79 – 77 C+

Given for adequate work that satisfies the assignment, but offers a more limited analysis of material explored in class and/or is poorly written.

76 - 74 C

Given for work that is of below average graduate student quality.

73 - 70 C-

Given for work that does not meet basic graduate school expectations.

Below 70 F

Given for unsatisfactory work

Formal Research Proposal (with bibliography) – 10 pages (**40% of final grade**)

Due: **May 03**

You will develop a formal research proposal on a topic that you must situate within the field of conflict analysis and resolution. We will spend a good deal of time this semester discussing how to do this. In

addition to related assignments on the Schedule of Assignments, you will receive several additional handouts on Blackboard that will aid you in this process.

GRADING SCALE FOR FINAL PROPOSALS AND COURSE GRADE

<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:

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 02, 2010

Last Day to Drop: Feb 19, 2010

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.