

CONF 393-002: PHILOSOPHY, CONFLICT THEORY, AND VIOLENCE

SPRING 2010

Prof. Richard E. Rubenstein, Instructor

SYLLABUS AND SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

Welcome to the course! This course meets weekly on Tuesdays at 1:30 pm in Innovation Hall 207. The instructor is Prof. Rich Rubenstein, who will be available to meet with students before or after each class and by appointment. He can be reached via email at rrubens@gmu.edu, via telephone at 703-400-7674, or in his Arlington office (Truland 646) at 703-993-1307. Please feel free to come in to talk about course matters or any other matters of interest.

Our **main goal** in this course will be to learn to think more creatively about violence – in particular, violence between groups – in order to understand it better and to equip ourselves to help mitigate or eliminate it. This will mean looking at several types of violence, and studying them from the point of view of diverse disciplines, including philosophy, social sciences, history, literature, and the creative arts.

A secondary goal is develop students' writing skills. We will be doing a number of short writing assignments in the course, as well as a final paper. Finally, we will do some work on developing oral presentation skills. Students will be asked to make brief class presentations on topics of their choosing, as described below

Grades in the course will be based on two short papers (4-6 pages), a group presentation made in class, and a final paper (10-15 pages), all due on the dates indicated in the Schedule of Classes and assignments below. All papers will be take-home assignments offering students a choice of topics to discuss. Class presentations by groups will be made on the dates indicated in the Schedule; students presenting will submit their handouts or notes on the same dates. Each short paper or presentation is worth 20% of the grade, and the final paper is worth 40%.

All papers (including presentation notes) should be submitted via email by the close of business on the due date. Late papers will not be accepted or graded unless the lateness is for documented medical reasons. Final grades of Incomplete will not be given except for documented medical reasons.

Students are expected to attend all classes prepared to discuss the week's reading assignment. Students who miss more than 3 classes (except for documented medical reasons) will not pass the course.

Readings are listed in the Schedule below. One book, *On Violence: A Reader*, edited by Bruce B. Lawrence and Aisha Karim (Duke University Press, 2007) is required and available at the Fairfax Campus Bookstore. Other required readings are posted on e-reserves or available via email or on-line as indicated in the Schedule. A list of Recommended Readings will be distributed in class.

University requirements are listed immediately below in language suggested by the Provost's Office. We will take time in the first class to discuss any questions that you may have about this material, including questions about plagiarism.

Academic integrity

GMU is an Honor Code university; please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

GMU email accounts

Students must activate their GMU email accounts to receive important University information, including messages related to this class.

Office of Disability Services

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. <http://ods.gmu.edu>

Other Useful Campus Resources

WRITING CENTER: A114 Robinson Hall; (703) 993-1200;

<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES "Ask a Librarian"

<http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS): (703) 993-2380;

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<http://caps.gmu.edu>

The UNIVERSITY CATALOG, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university affairs.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND ASSIGNMENTS

Jan. 19: INTRODUCTION TO COURSE. Class and university policies; overview of the course subject matter. General discussion of theories about intergroup violence

Jan. 26: VIOLENCE AND HUMAN NATURE. Discuss Herman Melville's short story, "Billy Budd," available on-line at <http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/MelBill.html> (many print editions also available). You may also want to view the 1962 movie directed by Peter Ustinov and starring Terence Stamp, available in DVD

Feb. 2: VIOLENCE AND PSYCHOPATHOLOGY. Discuss the Columbine High School massacre. Read Jerold J. Block, "Lessons from Columbine: Virtual and Real Rage," *American Journal of Forensic Psychology*, 2007 (PDF) and research the Columbine story and interpretations on-line

Feb. 9: VIOLENCE AND SOCIETY. Discuss Johan Galtung's work on structural and cultural violence. Read "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1969), pp. 167-191. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/422690> and "Cultural Violence," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Aug., 1990), pp. 291-305 Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/423472>

Feb. 16: VIOLENCE AND THE STATE. From *On Violence: A Reader*, discuss essays by Robert M. Cover (pp. 292-313) and Thomas Hobbes, Hannah Arendt, Michel Foucault, and Deleuze/Guattari (pp. 391-471).

FIRST SHORT PAPER ASSIGNMENT GIVEN

Feb. 23: VIOLENCE AND WAR. Discuss Richard E. Rubenstein, "Why Americans Fight: Justifications for Asymmetric Warfare," *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict*, Vol. 2, No. 1, March 2009, 51-68 (PDF). Discuss selection from Chris Hedges, *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning* (2003) on e-reserve. In evening, attend showing of film, "Glory" at Johnson Center Cinema. Those unable to attend, please view film before next class

Mar. 2: FIRST SHORT PAPER DUE. Discuss "Glory." January 16, 20

Mar. 9: SPRING BREAK

Mar. 16: VIOLENCE AND REVOLUTION. From *On Violence: A Reader*, discuss essays by GWF Hegel, Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx, and Franz Fanon (pp. 17-100).

Recommended: Hannah Arendt, "Reflections on Violence" (from *New York Review of Books*, 2/27/69) <http://www.cooperativeindividualism.org/arendt-hanna-reflections-on-violence.html> SECOND SHORT PAPER ASSIGNMENT GIVEN

Mar. 23: VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM. Discuss selections by Ivan Sheehan, Clark McCauley, Richard Rubenstein, and A. Glowacki on e-reserve. Read essay by bin Laden from *On Violence: A Reader* (pp. 540-46) and research al-Qaeda ideology and strategy.

Mar. 30: SECOND SHORT PAPER DUE. View film: "Paradise Now"

Apr. 6: VIOLENCE AND RELIGION. Discuss essays by Rene Girard, James Cone, and Sharon Welch from *On Violence: A Reader* (pp. 334-376) and read Rubenstein's Kirsch Lecture, "Religion and Violence in the 21st Century" (emailed).

PRESENTATIONS BY GROUPS A & B

Apr. 13: THE OTHER OF VIOLENCE. Discuss essays by Mohandas Gandhi, Adolf Hitler, and Malcolm X from *On Violence: A Reader* (pp. 101-157) and read Rubenstein's chapter on "Evil Enemies" from *Reasons to Kill* (emailed).

PRESENTATIONS BY GROUPS C & D

Apr. 20: VIOLENCE AND WOMEN. Discuss essays by Linda Gordon, Del Martin, Bruce B. Lawrence, and Catherine MacKinnon from *On Violence: A Reader* (pp. 245-267, 286-291). PRESENTATION BY GROUPS E & F

Apr. 27: COMBATTING VIOLENCE. Panel discussion by conflict resolution experts. FINAL PAPER ASSIGNMENT GIVEN*