CONF 330:
Community, Group, and Organizational
Conflict Analysis and Resolution
Spring 2011

Tuesdays, 4:30 – 7:10 p.m.
Fine Arts Building, Room B110

Instructor: Gina Cerasani
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Office hours by appointment

Course Overview

This course examines conflict within social structures at the group, organizational and community levels, including governmental, cultural, religious, social and civic groups. The course emphasizes theories of conflict, provides frameworks to analyze conflict, and explores methods for resolving conflict within social organizations.

Groups, organizations and communities are powerful entities that shape the ways we think about ourselves, the ways we see others, and others see us, especially under conditions of interdependency. In this course we will consider the intersection and dynamics between human conflict and group, organizational and community behavior.

Through class discussions, films, case studies, and a simulation of a real-world conflict, you will develop the ability to analyze social group conflicts and consider possible intervention designs.

Course Requirements

Participation (20%)

Regular attendance and consistent participation in class discussions is expected. It is critical to complete the assigned readings prior to each class in order to learn the subject matter and to be prepared to fully engage in discussions.

Throughout the semester, we will discuss current social group conflicts and apply concepts, theories, and frameworks we have learned in class to these conflicts. **To generate these discussions, each student is responsible for sharing an example of one such conflict during the course of the semester**. Appropriate examples will come from recent newspaper or magazine articles, or from a radio or television news story.

In the final four sessions of this course, we will conduct a simulation of a community/group/organizational conflict in which each member of the class will assume a role. **Full participation in the simulation is central to the participation grade**.

Case Study Reflection Papers (20%)

To gain experience applying your theoretical and practical skills to real-life conflicts, you will select a community, group, or organization to study throughout the semester. The purpose of this assignment is to identify conflict and/or conflict prevention within the entity you've selected, and to engage in analysis and critical thinking, applying concepts, theories, and models from class readings. You will write four reflection papers throughout the semester, and each paper is worth 5 % of your grade. A detailed description of this assignment is available on Blackboard.

There are two options for selecting a group, community, or organization to study for this assignment:

1) Join a group to study during the semester, or observe a group or organization to which you already belong. This may be any type of special-interest group (e.g. book or film club, study group), organization (e.g. your workplace), or community-based group (e.g. neighborhood association). Whatever you select, **it must be a group with which you will have weekly contact throughout the semester.**

2) Study a current community conflict. While it is not necessary that the conflict is one in which you are involved, you will need to follow it closely throughout the semester; thus, keep in mind the ease with which you can do that.

Reflection papers are due at the beginning of the class periods on Feb. 8, Mar. 1, Mar. 22, and Apr. 12. The papers may be submitted as a hard copy in class or via e-mail to gcerasa1@gmu.edu. **One point will be deducted for each day a paper is late – no papers will be accepted after 5 days from the original deadline.**

Mid-Term Exam (25%)

This is a take-home essay examination. **You will receive the exam in class on Mar. 1 and will have one week to complete it. It is due no later than Mar. 8 at 5:00 p.m. No late exams will be accepted except in extreme circumstances with the approval of the instructor.** The exam will consist of four essay questions, from which you will select two questions and write a 2-3 page response for each.

Final Exam (35%)

The final exam is also a take-home essay examination. **You will receive the exam in class on May 3 and will have two weeks to complete it. It is due no later than May 17 at 5:00 p.m. No late exams will be accepted except in extreme circumstances with**

the approval of the instructor. The final exam will consist of five essay questions, and you will select three of the five and write a 2-3 page response for each.

Extra Credit Policy

Opportunities for extra credit will be offered occasionally throughout the semester. Such opportunities are available to students who have completed all required assignments and are passing the course. Due dates and other requirements for extra credit assignments will be provided on a case-by-case basis.

Honor Code and Plagiarism

All George Mason University students have agreed to abide by the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code. You can find a copy of the Honor Code at academicintegrity.gmu.edu. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee for review. With specific regards to plagiarism, three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. If you have questions about when the contributions of others to your work must be acknowledged and appropriate ways to cite those contributions, please talk with the professor.

ICAR requires that all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit a student's work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. ICAR's policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace or substitute for it.

Blackboard

This course will utilize Blackboard to house documents pertinent to the course and to provide a space for discussion and collaboration. Students are expected to check the site regularly. Instructions for access will be provided the first day of class.

E-reserves

Readings for this course are available through the university's electronic reserves system. To access e-reserves:
1. Go to http://oscr.gmu.edu
2. Click on the green box "e-reserves"
3. Using the drop-down boxes, select the course (CONF 330-001) and instructor (Cerasani)
4. Enter the password (**group**) and click "submit" to view items. It is case sensitive.

Student Resources

GMU Writing Center
"The Writing Center seeks to foster a writing climate on campus and beyond by offering free writing support to George Mason students, faculty, staff and alumni. No matter what your writing abilities are, writing specialists can help you develop the skills you need to become a successful writer. Free services include: One-on-one 45 minute sessions with a writing specialist; online writing lab; one-on-one sessions with an ESL specialist; workshops on such topics as documenting sources, grammar and punctuation; writing handouts on a variety of subjects; a library of handbooks and writing manuals; [and an] online chat with a tutor about papers submitted to the Online Writing Lab" (http://writingcenter.gmu.edu).

Disability Support Services
Any student with documented learning disabilities or other conditions that may affect academic performance should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with the Office of Disability Support Services (993-2474) to determine the possible accommodations you might need; and 2) contact her or his instructor to discuss reasonable accommodations. "George Mason University is committed to providing appropriate services and accommodations that allow self-identified students with disabilities to access programs and activities at the university as stated in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. To achieve this goal, the university maintains and supports the Disability Resource Center Office, which is responsible for assuring that students receive the services and accommodations to which they are entitled. The professional staff of the Disability Resource Center Office coordinate services for students with disabilities, determine reasonable services and accommodations on the basis of disability, and act as a liaison between students and faculty/administration on concerns relating to services and accommodations" (http://www.gmu.edu/departments/advising/dss.html).

Library Services
The CAR library liaison is Melissa Johnson (703.993.2212). Do not hesitate to contact her with specific questions about holdings and research in these areas or whom to contact for materials still in the Fenwick Library on the Fairfax Campus.

Required Reading

Textbooks:

Brubaker, David R. and Ruth Hoover Zimmerman (2009) *The Little Book of Healthy Organizations: Tools for Understanding and Transforming Your Organization*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books.

Kraybill, Ronald S. (2001) *Peace Skills: Manual for Community Mediators*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

E-reserves:

Abramson, Lauren and Donald Moore. 2002. "The Psychology of Community Conferencing." In: *Repairing Communities through Restorative Justice*. J. Perry, ed. Lanham, MD: American Correctional Association, p. 123-139

Baron, Robert S and Norbert L. Kerr, (2003) "Introduction" chapter 1 in *Group Process, Group Decision and Group Action*. Open University Press, p. 1-19

Baron, Robert S and Norbert L. Kerr, (2003) "Intergroup Conflict and Aggression" chapter 9 in *Group Process, Group Decision and Group Action*. Open University Press, p. 155-174

Carter, Gregg Lee and Joseph F. Byrnes (1994) "Conflict in Organizations" chapter 1 in *How to Manage Conflict in the Organization*. Watertown, MA: American Management Association, p 1-24

Cheldelin, Sandra I. and Ann L. Lucas, (2004) "A Framework for Conflict Analysis" chapter 2 in *Conflict Resolution*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, p 13-24

Cloke, Kenneth and Joan Goldsmith, (2000) "Stories That Hold Organizations Hostage" chapter 5 in *Resolving Personal and Organizational Conflict*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, p. 124-129

Cobb, Sara (2004) "Fostering Coexistence in Identity-Based Conflicts: Toward a Narrative Approach" chapter 14 in *Imagine Coexistence*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, p 294-310.

Constantino, Cathy and C. Merchant, (1996) "Design Architecture: Constructing Conflict Management Models" chapter 7 in *Designing Conflict Management Systems: A Guide to Creating Productive and Healthy Organizations* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, p 117-133

D'Estree, Tamra Pearson (2003) "Dynamics" chapter 5 in *Conflict: From Analysis to Intervention*, Cheldelin, Sandra, Daniel Druckman and Larissa Fast (eds.), p. 68-87, London and New York: Continuum

Dugan, Maire, (2001) "Imaging the Future: A Tool for Conflict Resolution" in *Peacebuilding: A Field Guide*, Paffenholz, Thania and Luc Reychler (eds.), Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Reiner Publishing p 365-372

Dukes, Frank (1990) "Understanding Community Dispute Resolution" in *Mediation Quarterly* vol 8 no. 1 Fall 1990, San Francisco: Jossey Bass, p 27-37
Gadlin, Howard (1994) "Conflict Resolution, Cultural Differences, and the Culture of Racism" in *Negotiation Journal* vol 10 no. 1 January 1994, p 33-47

Harre, Rom and Nikki Slocum (2003) "Disputes as Complex Social Events: On the Uses of Positioning Theory" in *Common Knowledge* vol. 9 no. 1 Winter 2003, Duke University Press, p 100-118

McIntosh, Peggy "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack."

Mor-Barak, Michalle (2005). "Defining Diversity in a Global Context: Prejudice and Discrimination" chapter 6 in *Managing Diversity: Toward a Globally Inclusive Workplace*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publication, p 121-145

Rubenstein, Richard E. (2003) "Sources" chapter 4 in *Conflict: From Analysis to Intervention*, Cheldelin, Sandra, Daniel Druckman and Larissa Fast (eds.), London and New York: Continuum, p 55-67

Warfield, Wallace (1992) "Triggering Incidents for Racial Conflict: Miami, Florida Riots of 1980 and 1982" chapter 13 in *Community Disorders and Policing*, Tony F. Marshall (ed), London: Whiting and Birch, p 169-174

Watkins, Jane Magruder and Bernard J. Mohr (2001) "Appreciative Inquiry: History, Theory, and Research" chapter 2 and "Appreciative Inquiry As a Process" chapter 3 in *Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination*. San Francisco: Jossey – Bass/Pfeiffer, p 13-51

INTRODUCTION

January 25: Introduction to the course

- Welcome and introductions
- Review syllabus
- Develop discussion guidelines and other class protocol
- Introduce frameworks for analysis

Reading to be completed for class:

- Cheldelin and Lucas, pages 13-24

<u>GROUP CONFLICT</u>

February 1: Dynamics of group conflict

- Identify group or organization for case study
- Small group exercise: Find themes in lifelines
- Overview of group formation and group dynamics

Readings to be completed for class:

- D'Estree, pages 68-87
- Baron and Kerr, pages 1-19

Assignments to be completed for class:

- Select a group, organization or community for case study reflection papers
- Complete a brief "lifeline" of important groups, organizations, and communities in your life.

February 8: Sources of group conflict

- Intergroup conflict
- The role of culture in social conflicts
- Film: "Postville: When Cultures Collide"
- Discussion of initial observations and reflections from case studies

Readings to be completed for class:

- Baron and Kerr, pages 155-174
- Rubenstein, pages 55-67
- LeBaron, http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/culture_conflict/?nid=1186

Assignment to be completed for class:

- First case study reflection paper due

February 15: Group conflict intervention models

- Nested Model of Conflict/Envisioning Process
- Exercise: Application of Nested Model to student cases

Readings to be completed for class:

- Dugan, pages 365-372

ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT

February 22: Dynamics of organizational conflict

- Models and stories of organizational conflict
- Guest lecturer: Samantha Levine-Finley, ICAR MS, Associate Ombudsman, National Institutes of Health Center for Cooperative Resolution/Office of the Ombudsman

Readings to be completed for class:

- Cloke and Goldsmith, pages 124-129
- Carter and Byrnes, pages 1-19
- Brubaker and Zimmerman, pages 7-84

March 1: Sources of organizational conflict

- Issues of difference: gender, race, sexual orientation, etc.
- Diversity and multiculturalism in organizations
- Class exercises: Silently Standing in the Face of Oppression and Privilege Matrix
- Discussion of observations and reflections from case studies

Readings to be completed for class:

- Mor-Barak, pages 121-145
- Gadlin, pages 33-47
- McIntosh, http://www.nymbp.org/reference/WhitePrivilege.pdf

Assignment to be completed for class:

- Second case study reflection paper due

March 8: Organizational conflict intervention models

- Systems approaches: Conflict Management Systems, Appreciative Inquiry
- Principled Negotiation
- Discussion of observations and reflections from case studies

Readings to be completed for class:

- Carter and Byrnes, pages 19-24
- Constantino and Merchant, pages 117-133
- Watkins and Mohr, pages 13-51

Assignment to be completed for class:

- Mid-term exam due by 5:00 p.m.

March 15: Class does not meet. Enjoy Spring Break!

COMMUNITY CONFLICT

March 22: Dynamics of community conflict

- Narrative analysis and positioning theory
- Film: "The Garden"

Readings to be completed for class:

- Harre and Slocum, pages 100-118
- Cobb, pages 294-310

Assignment to be completed for class:

- Third case study reflection paper due

March 29: Sources of community conflict

- Discussion of observations and reflections of case studies
- Triggering incidents in community conflict

Readings to be completed for class:

- Warfield, pages 169-174

April 5: Community conflict intervention models

- Community Mediation
- Community Dispute Resolution
- Community Conferencing

Readings to be completed for class:

- Abramson and Moore, pages 123-139
- Dukes, pages 27-37
- Kraybill, pages 25-84

April 12: Community Conflict Simulation Preparation

Reading to be completed for class:

- Kraybill, pages 87-117

Assignment to be completed for class:

- Fourth case study reflection paper due

April 19: Community Conflict Simulation

April 26: Community Conflict Simulation

May 3: Community Conflict Simulation

May 17: Final exam due by 5:00 p.m.