

CONF 210
THEORIES OF CONFLICT AND RESOLUTION

Semester: Fall 2012
Class Time: Thursday 10:30am – 1:10pm
Location: West 1004
Instructors: Dr. Andrea Bartoli & Borislava Manojlovic
Office Hour: By appointment
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Welcome to CONF 210! Building on what students have learned in CONF 101, this course further explores a variety of theories and frameworks for analyzing conflict and understanding resolution possibilities. Theories are basically generalizations about how the world works and why and how behavior occurs under certain circumstances. The understanding and application of theory are essential to glimpsing the ‘big picture’ of conflict and resolution. Course participants will be asked to reflect meaningfully on various theories in order to gain in-depth knowledge and contribute to the advancement of conflict theories.

Course participants will learn how to theorize and explore the ways of systematizing theories before applying them on particular cases and problems. We will look at the genealogy of theories trying to critically evaluate them, and explain their positive and negative sides. To gain better understanding of the basic theoretical concepts and assumptions, we will apply them on large-scale, violent, intergroup conflicts. This course will be run as a seminar with an emphasis on discussion and student participation. It is therefore crucial that students read the assigned books and articles prior to class. Active participation in class discussions and exercises will be expected.

Course Requirements and Evaluation:

In addition to regular attendance, 1) a short written comment on one (or more) of the readings for each session, 2) a group presentation of a case study, and 4) final paper are required.

- 1) Short Written Comment on Readings (25%): You will write short comments, thoughts, reflections etc., on a dedicated Google document shared with the instructor before coming to class (up to 3 paragraphs). You will be assigned to one of the three groups (which will rotate): one group will explore positive points about a theory/theories presented in readings, the second group will critique and explore deficiencies of the theory/theories, and the third group will be expected to reflect on appropriate applications of a certain theory in different conflict situations. These comments need not be a comprehensive coverage of the entire readings for the class, nor should they be summaries of the readings. Rather, this is an exercise to elicit your critical reactions to the readings. The comments therefore should reflect your intellectual engagement with the questions, theories, or cases provided by the readings.

- 2) The group presentation (25%) will be based on your final paper. This would be an opportunity for you to present and get feedback on your arguments and ideas before submitting the final paper.
- 3) The final paper (35%). This paper will be a group assignment (you will be assigned to groups of four). It will be based on a book of students' choice (see list below) and it will include 4 different sections: 1) in the first section you will explore advantages of a theory/ies and concepts discussed in the book, 2) in the second section you will be writing about weaknesses of the given theory/ies, and 3) in the third section you will link the theories from the book to other authors and theories from the readings in order to compare them and identify gaps, 4) in the fourth section you will explore applicability and usefulness of a theory on particular cases or conflict situations. Each group member will be assigned one section. All submissions should be made both in paper to the instructor and by e-mail. **Due: December 10, 2012**

Mitchell, C. R. 1989. *The Structure of International Conflict*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Jabri, Vivienne. 1996. *Discourses on Violence: Conflict Analysis Reconsidered*. Manchester New York: Manchester University Press.

Coleman, Peter. 2011. *The Five Percent: Finding Solutions to Seemingly Impossible Conflicts*. PublicAffairs.

Juergensmeyer, Mark. 2002. *Gandhi's Way: A Handbook of Conflict Resolution*. 1st ed. University of California Press.

Volkan, Vamik. 1998. *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride To Ethnic Terrorism*. Basic Books.

Avruch, Kevin. 2011. *Context and Pretext in Conflict Resolution: Culture, Identity, Power, and Practice*. Paradigm Publishers.

Sharp, Gene. 2005. *Waging Nonviolent Struggle : 20th Century Practice and 21st Century Potential*. Boston: Extending Horizons Books.

- 4) Participation (15%) grade will be based upon the quality and consistency of your contributions to our class discussions and group exercises. Each week, you should be prepared not only to summarize what you have read and to discuss the authors' main points, but to provide a critical perspective on our texts and their relation to other social theories and to issues of conflict analysis and resolution, both broadly and in particular settings. The questions you should be asking yourself as you read for class or prepare a group exercise include: What are the authors' main concerns? Are their arguments logically compelling? How can we relate their arguments to the field of conflict analysis and resolution? How might they help us to better understand particular conflicts and their transformation? What might be left out of a particular analysis that it would be important to explore? A superlative evaluation for participation will require you to regularly contribute your ideas to our discussion, as well as to serve as a generous interlocutor for your colleagues. In other words, it is not the quantity of your contributions but the quality that matters, as well as your ability to raise issues that spark collaborative consideration, and to listen openly to others' perspectives.

Delays, deferrals, or a grade of “incomplete” for the course will be given only in cases of personal or immediate family crisis. Late papers will receive penalized points. Students should also read the statement of SCAR’s Academic Standards and the University’s Honor Code.

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.

S-CAR 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. SCAR’s policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace or substitute for it.

English Language Institute:

The English Language Institute offers free English language tutoring to non-native English speaking students who are referred by a member of the GMU faculty or staff.

For more information contact 703-993-3642 or malle2@gmu.edu.

The Writing Center:

The Writing Center is a free writing resource that offers individual, group, and online tutoring. For general questions and comments please contact us at wcenter@gmu.edu or call: 703-993-4491.

Readings:

The following books will be available for purchase at the bookstore. All other readings are on reserve in the Library, available through the library’s electronic journals, or can be found online.

Required:

Demmers, Jolle. 2012. *Theories of Violent Conflict: An Introduction*. Taylor & Francis.

Redekop, Vernon Neufeld. 2002. *From Violence to Blessing: How an Understanding of Deep-rooted Conflict Can Open Paths to Reconciliation*. Novalis.

Melchin, Kenneth, and Cheryl Picard. 2008. *Transforming Conflict Through Insight*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Course Schedule:

Session 1 (Thursday, August 30): Introduction

No readings assigned

Session 2 (Thursday, September 6): Theorizing conflict

Demmers Jolle, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, Introduction

Deutsch, Morton, *The Resolution of Conflict*, Ch. 5

Melchin, Kenneth, and Cheryl Picard, Ch. 1

Session 3 (Thursday, September 13): Basic human needs theory

Redekop, Vernon Neufeld. *From Violence to Blessing: How an Understanding of Deep-rooted Conflict Can Open Paths to Reconciliation*, Ch. 1, 2

Rubenstein, Richard. Basic Human Needs: The Next Steps in Theory Development
Available at: http://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/ijps/vol6_1/Rubenstein.htm

Burton, John "Conflict Resolution as a Political Philosophy" *George Mason University, Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution*, [1988]: 55-64.

Melchin, Kenneth, and Cheryl Picard, pp. 37-38

Session 4 (Thursday, September 20): Social identity approaches to conflict

Demmers Jolle, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, Ch. 1, 2

Redekop, Vernon Neufeld. *From Violence to Blessing: How an Understanding of Deep-rooted Conflict Can Open Paths to Reconciliation*. Ch. 6, 7

Session 5 (Thursday, September 27): Conflict and structures

Demmers Jolle, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, Ch. 3

Redekop, Vernon Neufeld. *From Violence to Blessing: How an Understanding of Deep-rooted Conflict Can Open Paths to Reconciliation*. Ch. 5

Galtung, Johan. 1990. "Cultural Violence." *Journal of Peace Research* 27 (3) (August): 291–305.

Session 6 (Thursday, October 4): Multi-causal approaches

Demmers Jolle, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, Ch. 4

McAdam, D., S. Tarrow, and C. Tilly. 2007. "Comparative Perspectives on Contentious Politics." *Comparative Politics Second Edition*: 260. AVAILABLE ONLINE:
<http://www.cjsonline.ca/pdf/contentiouspolitics.pdf>

Session 7 (Thursday, October 11): Rational choice and interest theories

Demmers Jolle, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, Ch. 5

Varshney, Ashutosh, "Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict, and Rationality," *Perspectives on Politics* 1:1 (March 2003), pp. 85-99.

Melchin, Kenneth, and Cheryl Picard, pp. 35-37

Session 8 (Thursday, October 18): Discursive and narrative approaches to conflict

Demmers Jolle, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, Ch. 6

Cobb, S. 2008. "Narrative Analysis." In *Conflict: From Analysis to Intervention*, ed. Sandra Cheldelin, Daniel Druckman, and Larissa Fast, 97–118. 2nd ed., Updated and rev. ed. New York: Continuum.

Session 9 (Thursday, October 25): Positioning theory and conflict

Moghaddam, Harre, Lee. *Global Conflict Resolution through Positioning Analysis*, Ch. 1, 2, 12

Session 10 (Thursday, November 1): Non-violence and the new world of power

Jurgensmeyer, Mark. *Gandhi's way*, Section 1

Ackerman, Peter and Jack Duvall, *A Force More Powerful*, Ch 14, Conclusion

Session 11 (Thursday, November 8): Insight theory: Transformation through learning

Melchin, Kenneth, and Cheryl Picard, Ch. 3, 4

Session 12 (Thursday, November 15): Group Presentations

NO CLASS (Thursday, November 22): Thanksgiving recess

Session 12 (Thursday, November 29): Group Presentations

Session 13 (Thursday, December 6): Summation