

Theories of Conflict and Resolution

CONF 210 Section 001 – Fall 2012

Class Time: Wednesdays: 4:30 to 7:10

Location: Innovation Hall 137

Instructor: Vandy Kanyako, Ph.D.
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Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description & Objectives

Welcome! 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. Students will also explore the role of levels and units of analysis as they increase not only theoretical awareness but also theoretical implementation.

The design of CONF 210 helps students understand and appreciate the various theoretical frameworks regarding the causes and management of conflicts at various levels – individual, community, national, and international. The multi-disciplinary focus of the course provides students with a broad approach to understanding conceptual explanations for the causes, courses, and management of conflict.

During the course class participants will:

- ★ Develop an appreciation of the dynamic relationship between conflict and resolution theories.
- ★ Gain an increased knowledge and understanding of theories of conflict and resolution.
- ★ Explore conceptual frameworks and theory clusters as exploratory and explanatory approaches to understanding contextual variables.
- ★ Increase critical thinking abilities.

Course Expectations

1. Consistent attendance. Barring exceptional circumstances, you will be expected to attend class on a regular basis.
2. Effective preparation. Class involves discussion and activities that depend on advance preparation. All assigned readings should be completed PRIOR to class.
3. Classroom etiquette. Please come to class on time and prepared. Turn off cell phones, pagers, beepers, etc. Remain in class unless you have an emergency. Allow others and yourself to learn by refraining from side conversations, passing notes, playing video games, instant messaging, reading e-mail, browsing websites, etc. Students who persistently violate this policy will receive a warning. Open discussion and dialogue are class goals but please be mindful of the sensitivities of others.
4. Course completion. In keeping with departmental policy, incomplete grades will be given only in cases of illness, either personal or in an immediate family member. Class assignments that are submitted late can be penalized by one point for each day thereafter. If a student has a documented emergency, special arrangements can be made with the instructor.
5. Paper format. Papers should be typed, double-spaced, have 1” margins, and use Times New Roman 12-point font. The pages should be numbered and stapled together. Headers should include only the course number and section (CONF 210), your name, and paper title. The first page of the paper should have the title. Edit your papers carefully as spelling and grammatical errors will lower your overall score.

Course Materials

Required Texts

1. Barthos, Otomar J. and Paul Wehr. 2008. *Using Conflict Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2. Cashman, Greg, What causes war? 1999. An introduction to theories of international conflict, Lexington Books.
(supplemental materials will be provided by email or e-reserve)

Academic Policies & Information

Academic Integrity

George Mason University has an Honor Code with guidelines regarding academic integrity and which is designed, “to promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community” (www.gmu.edu/catalog/policies). The Honor Code lays out strict penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

Plagiarism is a serious offense, and all written work for this course should include proper citations in a standard citation format (MLA, APA, etc.). *If you are unsure about how to cite a direct quotation or concept from course or outside readings, then ask for help.* “I wasn’t sure how to cite a source, so I left out the reference,” is not an acceptable defense for plagiarism. Copies of common style manuals are available at the GMU library reference desk or online at <http://library.duke.edu/research/citing/workscited/>.

For individual class assignments, you may discuss your ideas with others or ask for feedback; however, you are responsible for making certain that there is no question that the work you hand in is your own. You may not submit papers or presentations from other courses to fulfill assignments for this class.

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

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 S-CAR library liaison is Gretchen Reynolds (greynol3@gmu.edu). 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.

Assessments and grading

Participation 10%

Because much of this course involves in-class, experiential learning, participation is a significant course grade. Course attendance is expected and is part of your participation grade. *Just showing up for class does not represent ‘A’ participation work.* Students are expected to complete their reading assignments on time and to participate in class discussions and exercises.

Take home essay 20%

Students will be responsible for the submission of 1take home reflection paper about 5 pages in length. This paper, **due November 7**, will correspond to the course themes covered up to that period and should draw from course discussions, in-class exercises, and course readings. Essay prompts will be distributed in class. One of the formal citation styles mentioned earlier should be used for these papers.

In-class test 20%

There will be one in-class test which will cover the core issues discussed in class. Students should bring a ‘Blue Book’ to class on the day of the test, scheduled for **September 26**.

Group Project 20%

Students will be divided into groups of three. Each group will analyze a conflict of their choice using a specific theory learnt in class to explain how it advances our understanding of the issues and

dynamics of the chosen conflict. The group will make a presentation to the class on the following days: **Group 1, 2, 3, 4 (November 28) and groups 5, 6, 7 and 8, (December 5).** Additional information on project requirements will be provided in class.

Final Written Exam **30%**

The written exam for this course will be an open-book, take home essay exam, distributed in class. ***The final exam is due Thursday December 12 by 5:00 pm in Robinson B 365.***

Course Agenda

Week 1: August 29 What are Theories and why study them?

Course Overview

Readings: Understanding and using conflict theory

- Bartos and Wehr: Chapters 1 and 2
- Cashman: Chapter 1

Week 2: September 5 Causes and Nature of conflict and theories

Readings: Bartos and Wehr: Chapters 3 and 4

Edward Azar, Theory of Protracted social conflict

Week 3: September 12 Courses of conflict and theories

Readings: Bartos and Wehr: Chapters 5 through 7

Week 4: September 19: Individual level of analysis

Human aggression and the Psychological explanations for War

Readings: Cashman pages 14-77

IN CLASS TEST

Week 5: September 26: Communal levels of analysis (in-group vs. out-group)

Readings: Social identity theory (Tajfel) (E-reserve)

Week 6: October 3 National levels of analysis

- Government and Decision making
- The state and International Conflict

Readings: Cashman, pages 78-159

Week 7. October 10 International levels of analysis (I)

International interaction Game Theory and Arms races and Deterrence Theory

Readings: Cashman, pages: 193-223

Week 8: October 17 Experiential Learning Activity (ELA) More later

Week 9: October 24 International Levels of analysis (II)
The International System Cyclical Theories and Historical Structural Theories of War

Readings: Cashman 254-288

TAKE HOME ESSAY HANDED OUT

Week 10: October 31 (Documentary)

TAKE HOME ESSAY DUE

Week 11: November 7 Predations theory (Paul Collier)

Week 12: November 14 Paradigms and theory clusters
John Paul Lederach (Structuration triangle)

Week 13: November 21: NO CLASS THANKSGIVING RECESS

Week 14: November 28: Group Presentations (groups 1, 2, 3)

Week 15: December 5: Group presentations (groups 4, 5 6) Course Synthesis
Final Exam Distributed

Final Exam Due: Thursday December 12 by 5:00 pm at Robinson B 365

Grading Scale

Points Accumulated	Letter Grade
94-100	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-
77-79	C+
74-76	C
70-73	C-
60-69	D
0-59	F

