

**CONF 695-008 - Critical Conflict Resolution - 3 Credits**  
**Fall 2012 - Tuesdays 7:20pm - 10:00pm, Founders Hall Room 207**  
**Instructors: Richard E. Rubenstein, Michael English and Derek Sweetman**  
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**The School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution - George Mason University**

## **Overview**

Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall's (2005), *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, has become a core text for both undergraduate and graduate students seeking to understand both the practice and theory of conflict resolution. The authors describe the work of the rising fifth generation of conflict resolution scholars and practitioners as one of dealing with the true complexities of a globalized world, one which is increasingly interconnected and defined by its relationship to new technologies. The authors task the fifth generation to move beyond the field's early Cold War limitations and to pursue the emancipatory thrust of the conflict resolution enterprise. Theirs is a vision that seeks to transcend the equation of conflict resolution practice as synonymous with the preemptive mindset of the Global War on Terror, as well as, to move beyond the dogmatism that perceives conflict resolution as wholly co-opted by liberal governance seeking to expand markets for global capital.

This course fills a void in conflict resolution education and practice by focusing on the present and the future of conflict resolution and its relation to oppressive systems. We move from contemporary conflict resolution practice, to contemporary social and critical theory, and back to practice, in order to develop a critical conflict resolution better suited for addressing contemporary structural conflicts, oppression, and structural violence. A critical approach illuminates the complex dialectic between theory and practice; we grow to recognize how issues of privilege and power are embedded not only within the parties in conflict, but aspects of ourselves as subjects seeking to engage structures that extend beyond the immediate situation and as possible agents of structural or cultural violence.

Students will be asked to explore a range of materials in order to help them develop the self-reflexive and critical analytic skills essential to any conflict resolution practice. It is evident given the field's difficulty responding to events such as the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street that students of conflict resolution must take the advice of Ramsbotham et al. to heart; the challenges faced by today's generation require an awareness of both global systems and local dynamics. Difficult questions arise as a result. We are asked to consider what lies beyond our own interests and desires to become advocates in a particular conflict, especially those that appear to pit the marginalized against the state or an authoritarian regime. Is there a role for conflict resolution professionals in situations of political upheaval? If so, how does one navigate the terrain of struggle whose aim can range from obtaining basic provisions such as food and shelter to total societal revolutionary change?

We will labor together as a class to explore whether critical conflict resolution is capable of integrating theory, research and practice in a way envisioned by the field's founders to address these contemporary and in some cases, protracted conflicts. We will reconsider Basic Human Needs Theory as an essential component of our project and what the normative implications of such assumptions are. Further, we will contextualize the influence of global capitalism as a catalyst for

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asymmetrical violence and the systemic consequences that result (the prison industrial complex, militarism, persistent poverty, etc...)

### Learning objectives:

- To contribute meaningfully in the development of critical conflict resolution
- To understand the relationship between structures of violence and conflict and the contemporary practice of conflict resolution
- To integrate a wide range of perspectives on violence and conflict within a structural frame that can influence practice and research
- To connect conflict resolution theory, research, practice and education to contemporary structural conflicts
- To appreciate how conflict resolution can contribute to social change

### Prerequisites

Students are expected to have completed a graduate level introductory course to the field of conflict resolution and analysis (CONF 501 or 801). Additionally, it would be beneficial, but not necessary, for students to have completed a graduate seminar focused specifically on theories of conflict (CONF 601, 803, or 804).

### Class Assignments

Final and group papers are to be emailed to Derek Sweetman ([derek.sweetman@gmail.com](mailto:derek.sweetman@gmail.com)). Late papers and posts will not be accepted. Due dates are listed below and in course outline by week.

- *One Theorization Essay + Facilitation* - 1000 words. Each student is responsible for leading one session of class based on the primary reading for the day (the 1st listed reading for the week). The student will post a Theorization Essay (see handout) to the discussion board on the [S-CAR Community Ning](#) site by midnight of Friday. In addition, the student will be responsible for moderating the response posts from their fellow classmates (see below). Finally, the student will facilitate a class discussion based on their original post and the responses to it during class on Tuesday. (20%)
- *Discussion Post Responses* - 100-200 words max. Each student is responsible for responding to the week's **Theorization Essay post**, the **Group Project paper**, and your classmates **Final Paper proposals**. You will have from the time each Theorization Essay is posted until midnight on Monday to respond to issues and ideas presented in the paper. Your classmate's Theorization is not intended to replace your own reading of the material, but instead to help prepare you for the discussion on Tuesday. In addition, you will be responsible for thoughtfully responding to each of the Group Project papers and Final Paper proposals, which are described below. Responses are due by midnight on Monday, 10/15 for the Group Projects and Monday, 11/5 for the Final Paper proposals. (15%)
- *Group Project* - 5-7 page paper, double spaced, 12pt Times Roman Font, 1" margins. Each student will participate in a group project, the aim of which is to produce an in-depth conflict analysis using material from the class and your readings. The group will also be responsible for a short in-class report detailing the findings of their work. Details of this assignment will be handed out in class. Papers due 10/12 and presentations will take place on 10/16. (20%)

- *Proposal for Final Term Paper* - 3-4 pages (5%)
- *Final Term Paper* - 15 to 20 pages, double spaced, 12pt Times Roman Font, 1" margin (25%)
- *Participation and showing up for class* (15%)

### **Participation**

This is a reading and discussion intensive graduate level seminar; it is not a lecture. Students are expected to complete all readings and assignments for a given session prior to their arrival at class. Students are expected to participate in class discussions and activities. Students may be called upon at random to share with the class, present a reading in an upcoming session, and work in groups. The use of electronic devices (computers, ipads, etc...) for the purposes of note taking and readings is permitted. Students are asked to respect their peers by refraining from surfing the Internet, checking Facebook, and responding to emails during class time.

Participation makes up 20% of this course. Attendance is for class sessions is mandatory and considered part of a student's participation. Students are allowed to miss one session without impact to their grade. For each additional missed class session students will lose 5% of their participation grade. Graduate students must receive a B (85%) or above to receive passing credit for the course. Incompletes will be given only in the exception of a medical emergency and with the appropriate paperwork from a licensed medical doctor.

### **Academic Integrity**

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](http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu). All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee for review. With specific regard 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.

### **University Policies**

The University Catalog, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university academic affairs. Other policies are available at <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/>. All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.

### **Accommodations for Disabilities**

If you have a documented learning disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with [Office for Disability Services](#) (SUB I, Rm. 4205; 993-2474;<http://ods.gmu.edu>) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) talk with us to discuss your accommodation needs. This can be done by approaching us during a break or after class, or via email.

### **Privacy**

Students and instructors are encouraged to respect each other's privacy both in the classroom and in digital communication. This means that information shared amongst the class should remain in confidence unless permission has been granted by the individual or group to share that information with others. In addition, students must use their MasonLIVE email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information.

### **Commitment to Diversity Statement**

GMU is an intentionally inclusive community that celebrates diversity and strives to have faculty, staff and students who reflect the diversity of our plural society. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, class, linguistic background, religion, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, or physical ability.

### **Emergency Alerts**

In the event of an emergency a telephone and exit strategy are located in this classroom. In addition, I am registered to receive University emergency alerts. It is suggested that two or more students do the same. To receive emergency alerts, register at [alert.gmu.edu](http://alert.gmu.edu)

## Required Texts to Purchase

All required texts will be available for purchase at the Arlington Campus Bookstore located in Founders Hall. Students may purchase or obtain texts from their preferred vendor and should not feel obligated to purchase materials from the campus bookstore. Please note that required texts may be placed on reserve at the Arlington Campus Library, but do not depend on them to be so.

- Ahrens, L. (2008). *The real cost of prisons comix*. Oakland, Calif.: PM Press.
- Curle, A. (1995). *Another Way: Positive Response to Contemporary Violence*. Oxford: J. Carpenter.
- Fanon, F. (2004). *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: [Berkeley, Calif.]: Grove Press; Distributed by Publishers Group West.
- Freire, P. (1993). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Hooks, B. (1994). *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge.
- Howe, S. (2002). *Empire: A Very Short Introduction*. Very short introductions. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sacco, J. (2003). *The Fixer: A Story from Sarajevo*. Montréal, Quebec, Canada: San Francisco, CA: Drawn & Quarterly..
- Sharp, G. (1973). *The Politics of Nonviolent Action, Part One: Power and Struggle*. P. Sargent Publisher.

Other texts and articles are available online by following the links provided in the syllabus. Links for book content will expire at the end of the semester so it is recommended that you download these files to your desktop for future use. If you have a problem obtaining any of the linked readings please email Michael at [english.md@gmail.com](mailto:english.md@gmail.com) or Skype at mdenglish.

## Recommended Readings

The material listed below covers readings you have most likely encountered in other S-CAR classes. Please review these readings or read what you can of the selections if you have not encountered them before.

- Burton, J. W. (1997). *Violence Explained: The Sources of Conflict, Violence and Crime and Their Prevention*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Burton, J. W., & Sandole, D. J. (1986). *Generic theory: The basis of conflict resolution*. *Negotiation Journal*, 2(4), 333–344.
- Burton, J.W. (1993). *Conflict Resolution as a Political Philosophy*. In D. J. D. Sandole & H. van der Merwe (Eds.), *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice: Integration and Application* (pp. 3–24). Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.
- Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, Peace, and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6(3), 167-191. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/422690>
- Galtung, J. (1990). Cultural Violence. *Journal of Peace Research*, 27(3), 291-305. <http://jpr.sagepub.com/content/27/3/291.abstract>
- Mayer, B. S. (2004). *Beyond Neutrality: Confronting the Crisis in Conflict Resolution*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

## Outline of Course by Week

The following presents an outline of the course by week. The instructors reserve the right to make revisions to the syllabus, including assigned readings and due dates for course assignments.

### Week One (8/28) - Introductions - Overview of Course - Framing the Discussion

#### Q: Why critical conflict resolution?

No readings

Work on assignment to be presented in class next week. Handout will be given in class.

### Week Two(9/4) - Structure, Conflict, and Conflict Resolution

#### Part I - Q: What does structure mean for conflict resolution?

Galtung, Johan (1964). "A Structural Theory of Aggression." *Journal of Peace Research* 1, no. 2: 95-119. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/423250>

Liebkecht, Karl (1917). Militarism ([Chs 1 and 2](#)).

#### Part II - Q: What are the weaknesses of our traditional approach?

Burton, J. (1993). *Conflict Resolution as a Political System*. Working Paper. Fairfax, VA: Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution. [http://icar.gmu.edu/wp\\_1\\_burton.pdf](http://icar.gmu.edu/wp_1_burton.pdf)

Roy, B., Burdick, J. and Kriesberg, L. (2010), A conversation between conflict resolution and social movement scholars. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, 27: 347–368. doi: 10.1002/crq.20002 <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/crq.20002/abstract>

### Week Three (9/11) - We begin again from the beginning

#### Q. How do we arrive at our object of analysis?

Howe, S. (2002). *Empire: A Very Short Introduction*. Very short introductions. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press.

Rubenstein, R. (2008). [Conflict resolution in an age of empire: New challenges to an emerging field](#). In D. J. D. Sandole & S. Byrne (Eds.), *Handbook of conflict analysis and resolution*. New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.

Sandole, D. J. D. (1993). [Ch 1: Paradigm, theories, and Metaphors in Conflict and Conflict Resolution](#). In D. J. D. Sandole & H. van der Merwe (Eds.), *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice: Integration and Application* (pp. 3–24). Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.

### Week Four (9/18) - Imperialism and Empire

#### Q: How does conflict resolution relate to systemic struggle?

Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1968). Manifesto of the Communist Party. *Selected Works [of] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels* (pp. 98–137). New York: International Publishers. Retrieved from [www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/)

Lenin, V. I. (1970). *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism, a Popular Outline*. Scientific socialism series. Moscow: Progress Publishers. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/>

### Week Five(9/25) - Hegemony and Ideology

#### Q: How do we determine what conflicts are and decide which ones need resolution?

Gramsci, A. (1971). [The Intellectuals and On Education](#). in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. (pp. 131-190). New York: International Publishers.

Hebdige, D. (1991). [Culture and Hegemony](#). *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, New accents (pp. 5–19). London ; New York: Routledge.



Althusser, L. (1970). Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses. "Lenin and Philosophy" and Other Essays. Retrieved from <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1970/ideology.htm>

**Week Six (10/2) - No Class - Time for group project work and reading - Group Papers Due 10/12**

**Week Seven (10/9) - No Class - Columbus Day - Reminder Group Papers Due 10/12!**

**Week Eight (10/16) - Revisiting Basic Human Needs - Group Presentations - Midterm Eval  
**Q: What can we draw from our traditions for critical conflict resolution?****

Rubenstein, R. E. (2001). Basic Human Needs: The Next Steps in Theory Development. *The International Journal of Peace Studies*, 6(1). Retrieved from [http://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/iips/vol6\\_1/Rubenstein.htm](http://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/iips/vol6_1/Rubenstein.htm)

Bay, C. (1990). Taking the Universality of Human Needs Seriously. In J. W. Burton (Ed.), *Conflict: Human Needs Theory*, The Conflict series (pp. 235-256). Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Christie, D. J. (1997). Reducing Direct and Structural Violence: The Human Needs Theory. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 3(4), 315-332. [doi:10.1207/s15327949pac0304\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327949pac0304_1)

**Week Nine (10/23) - Neoliberalism**

**Q: What is the nature of our current condition?**

Bourdieu, P. (1998). The essence of neoliberalism. *Le Monde diplomatique*. Retrieved August 25, 2011, from <http://mondediplo.com/1998/12/08bourdieu>

Zizek, Slavoj. (2010). "A Permanent Economic Emergency." *New Left Review*. 64. [http://newleftreview.org/?page=article&view=2853%23\\_edn1%23\\_edn1](http://newleftreview.org/?page=article&view=2853%23_edn1%23_edn1)

Hickle, Jason. (2012) "A Short History of Neoliberalism (and how we can fix it). New Left Project [http://www.newleftproject.org/index.php/site/article\\_comments/a\\_short\\_history\\_of\\_neoliberalism\\_and\\_how\\_we\\_can\\_fix\\_it](http://www.newleftproject.org/index.php/site/article_comments/a_short_history_of_neoliberalism_and_how_we_can_fix_it)

\*Article on Bosnia - TBA

In class, David Harvey, "Crisis of Capitalism" RSA [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qOP2V\\_np2c0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qOP2V_np2c0)

**Week Ten (10/30) - Representations of Structural Conflict - Final Paper Topics Due**

**Q: How can we represent/discuss/teach structural conflict?**

Ahrens, L. (2008). *The real cost of prisons comix*. Oakland, Calif.: PM Press.

Sacco, J. (2003). *The Fixer: A Story from Sarajevo* (1st Drawn & Quarterly ed.). Montréal, Quebec, Canada: San Francisco, CA: Drawn & Quarterly; Distributed in the USA by Chronicle Books.

**Week Eleven (11/6) - Simulation**

Watch video in class - [Consensus](#)

**Week Twelve (11/13) - Violence**

**Q: How does violence shape conflict and our responses to it?**

Fanon, F. (2004). *The Wretched of the Earth* (1st ed., New ed.). New York: [Berkeley, Calif.]: Grove Press; Distributed by Publishers Group West.

Be sure to focus on the following chapters: Concerning Violence & Spontaneity

The Invisible Committee (2008). *The Coming Insurrection*. <http://tarnac9.wordpress.com/texts/the-coming-insurrection/>

**Week Thirteen (11/20) - Nonviolence**

**Q: What is an “intervenor” in structural conflict? Can there be a 3rd party in structural conflict?**

Sharp, G. (1973). *The Politics of Nonviolent Action, Part One: Power and Struggle*. P. Sargent Publisher.

King, Jr., M. L. (1969). Beyond Vietnam. *Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Global Freedom Struggle*. [http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/documentsentry/doc\\_beyond\\_vietnam](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/documentsentry/doc_beyond_vietnam)

Weber, T. (2004). The impact of Gandhi on the development of Johan Galtung’s peace research. *Global Change, Peace & Security*, 16(1), 31-43. [doi:10.1080/1478115042000176166](https://doi.org/10.1080/1478115042000176166)

Watch in class: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GcGA1a4bmrY&feature=youtu.be>

**Week Fourteen (11/27) - Praxis and Pedagogy**

**Q: What do we need for critical conflict education?**

Freire, P. (1993). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.

Hooks, B. (1994). *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge.

In class: Sir Ken Robinson, “Changing Education Paradigms” RSA

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDZFcDGpL4U>

Critical Pedagogy <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=4776643631355467650>

**Week Fifteen (12/4) - Praxis and Pedagogy con’t. - Conflict Actors as Political Actors**

**Q: What is the relationship of critical conflict resolution to revolutionary politics?**

Curle, Adam (1995). *Another Way: Positive Response to Contemporary Violence*. Oxford.

Rubenstein, R.E. - [Conflict Resolution & Distributive Justice: Reflections on the Burton-Laue Debate](#).

Rubenstein, R. E. (1993). [Chapter 10: Analyzing and resolving class conflict](#). In D. J. D. Sandole & H. van der Merwe (Eds.), *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice: Integration and Application* (pp. 146-157). Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.

Richmond, O. P. (2011). Critical agency, resistance and a post-colonial civil society. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 46(4), 419 -440. [doi:10.1177/0010836711422416](https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836711422416)

**Week Sixteen (12/11) - Finals Week**