

Derek Sweetman, Graduate Lecturer

dsweetma@gmu.edu

(703)389-1677: mobile/SMS

Office Hours by appointment

This course examines conflict within social structures at the group, organizational, and community levels, as well as the ways that conflicts affect groups, organizations, and communities. This will be achieved through the interdisciplinary investigation of theory, research, and practice in group/community settings. This course both provides a bridge between interpersonal and international conflict work as well as illuminating the ways in which conflict at this level differs from micro or macro work. The course will follow a learning community model, where all members of the class, including the professor and any guests, embark on a cooperative learning experience. This involves preparation by all involved and a commitment to different learning and participation styles.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To understand the relationship of social groups *to* conflict and to understand the relationship of social groups *and* conflict.
- To develop the skills necessary to begin to consider interventions in this context.
- To reflect critically on your own participation in groups and you own contributions to conflict and its resolution.
- To develop specific insight into community and organizational conflict in the American context.
- To understand how group, organizational, and community work can contribute to a career in conflict resolution.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Block, Peter. 2009. *Community: The Structure of Belonging*. San Francisco, CA: Barrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.
- Minieri, Joan and Paul Gestos. 2007. *Tools for Radical Democracy*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass
- Additional readings will be linked or available through Blackboard.

BLACKBOARD

This course will include a significant online component through the course Blackboard site. You will have weekly discussion assignments on the site. You will also use it to submit your assignments and to find the weekly reading assignments

IMPORTANT DATES

September 2: Last day to add classes

September 26: Last day to drop classes

COURSE ASSESSMENT

This course includes assignments that everyone is required to complete (required assignments) and a list of assignments from which you can pick and choose what you want to do (free choice assignments). You will need to complete the universal assignments and at least some of the free choice assignments to pass the class. Your grade will be computed out of 1000 points, adding the points you have earned from both types. There are 840 points of required assignments and you can complete up to 200 points of free choice assignments.

Late Work: Papers and other assignments are to submitted through Blackboard before the start of class. **Late work will be reduced one letter grade per day.** No work will be accepted over one week late without a valid written medical excuse or notice of death in the family. The instructor does not have a mailbox at CAR. Email is discouraged, but acceptable in an emergency. Electronic submission is required. Do not print out your papers and bring them to class.

Format for Assignments: Assignments should be submitted on Blackboard. You must correctly and consistently use a recognized citation style, such as MLA, APA, Chicago Manual, etc. For a summary of the styles, visit <http://infoguides.gmu.edu/content.php?pid=289805&sid=2455080>.

UNIVERSAL ASSIGNMENTS (840 points, all students must complete)

Being Prepared = 10 points per class. You will receive 10 points for every class session you attend, and:

- Arrive on time (before the end of the music),
- Complete the readings, and
- Bring a 1-page summary of all readings, including at least one question you have about each article or chapter. [Note: this is 1-page total, not one per reading]

I will collect these sheets at the beginning of class. If you are not there or you do not turn in a sheet, you will not receive points for the day.

Mid-term and final exam = 150 and 150 points. Both exams will have in-class components. The mid-term will also involve a take-home essay. Details will be provided in class. The mid-term essay is due before class on Week 8 (10/21/2014). The final exam will be completed during the last class (12/2/2014). The mid-term will require Analytical Writing (see below) and there will be no written component to the final exam.

Communities of Fear Project = 200 points. Watch a local news broadcast each night for 5 days. This can be the same or different channels. Write a 1,250-word reflection on the experience, focusing specifically on the contributions the broadcasts made to a culture of fear and a stuck community (if they focus on restorative communities, talk about that, too). When you turn in the paper, include a list of the broadcasts you watched. This project works best with the 10/11pm news, but any version you can watch is acceptable as long as the broadcast is local (community or city-based). This reflection is due before class in Week Six (9/30/2014)

Final Reflection = 100 points. At the end of class, you will complete a 1,250-word reflection on the course, the topic of group/organizational/community conflict, how your work has related to your education, and how it relates to your expected future work. Details will be provided in class. This is not intended to be a paper where you summarize the topics we have covered, but instead an integrated essay about your educational experience. This reflection is due 12/9/2014 and should be the last work you turn in for the class.

FREE CHOICE ASSIGNMENTS

The remaining points (using a grading scale of 1000 points as the maximum) will be completed by selecting from a list of free-choice options. Free-choice assignments can be turned in anytime during the semester, as long as they are received prior to the finals period for the class (12/9/2014). While additional opportunities may be added during the semester, options include:

Case Study Intervention Project = 200 points. Pick one of the four case studies we examined in class and plan an intervention into the community. This paper is intended to be reflective and oriented toward practice, so you will focus on your response to the case, how you would use your skills and earlier coursework to analyze conflict in the community, and how you would begin to think about an intervention in the community. This project should integrate what you have learned in the course with your other experiences and coursework. The paper should include reflective elements, but be professional in format.

Students have the option of completing this on their own and producing a 2,000-word essay or working in small groups (no more than 4). If you choose to work in groups, you need to notify your instructor of the members of your group and the case you will be writing on by 4/18. Groups are expected to produce longer essays (3,000 words for 2 members, 4,000 words for 3 and 5,000 words for 4) and these essays should take into account that you are approaching the conflict as a group, utilizing all members as resources.

Book Analysis = 50 points (each, up to 4). You can read a book related to the course and write a 750-word reflection on the book. All books must be approved before you can start this project. You can turn in as many as four of these during the semester. I will post approved books to Blackboard, but feel free to ask about others you want to read or a topic you want to pursue.

Film Reflection = 25 points (each, up to 4). You can watch a film related to the course and write a 750-word reflection on the book. All films must be approved before you can start this project. You can turn in as many as four of these during the semester. I will post approved film to Blackboard (with links when possible), but feel free to ask about others you want to read or a topic you want to pursue.

Attend events = 50 points (each, up to 4). Approved events will be posted on Blackboard.

The Wire project: 100-200 points

Community conflict analysis: 100 points

Organizational conflict analysis: 100 points

More information on these and other opportunities will be presented in class.

GRADING SCALE

Your grade will be computed out of 1000 points.

A = 1000-930	A- = 929-900	
B+ = 899-870	B = 869-830	B- = 829-800
C+ = 799-770	C = 769-730	C- = 729-700
D = 699-600	F = 599-0	

TYPES OF WRITING

This course involves significant writing, in multiple styles. Every assignment will include a designation indicating what type of writing is expected. This guide should be understood as both a guide for students and the rubric used for the assignments.

Reflective writing assignments give you a chance to work with ideas and concepts from class in the context of another experience. In general, it is best to follow a What?, So What?, Now What? Format for these papers:

- **What?** Describe your experience. This may include some summary, but should be focused more on your experience as a viewer/reader/actor/participant. Do not simply summarize a text.
- **So What?** Incorporate the concepts and ideas from class into your experience. Did you see examples of these? Did the experience encourage you to think differently about them? What can these ideas and concepts tell us about the subject of your experience? What connections do you see?
- **Now What?** Contextualize the experience. How does it relate to your other work in the class, your other classes, or your future plans? Where are you going to take this knowledge?

Reflective writing should always be in an “I” voice, since you are writing about yourself. You can introduce the text or film you are discussing, but do not simply summarize it. The reflection is about you and your learning experience.

Research writing assignments give you a chance to work outside of class on a question that specifically interests you and to arrive at your own answer to a research question. Research assignments will often include specific requirements and instructions, but in each case:

- Develop a good **research question**.
- Answer this question with an **argument**. You are not simply writing a report about what other people think.
- Use **evidence** that supports your argument, and explain how it does.
- **Cite** quotations, ideas, and data with a formal citation system.
- Write in a **formal style**, avoiding contractions and slang. Be precise.
- Papers may utilize and “I” voice, if it is appropriate to the topic.

Professional/policy writing assignments give you a chance to practice writing for a professional audience, such as in a company or governmental organization. Although the requirements for these assignment can vary,

- Develop a good **thesis statement**.
- Develop your thesis through an **argument**.
- Use **evidence** that supports your argument, and explain how it does.
- **Persuade** your reader that your argument is sound and considers alternatives.
- Write in a **formal style**, avoiding contractions and slang. Be precise.
- In most cases, an “I” voice will be appropriate, but think about this before starting.

Informal writing assignments are just for the class. These could include discussion posts or in-class writing. You are writing so that your fellow students will be able to understand, but without formal requirements. This is not an excuse to avoid proofreading.

MASON HONOR CODE

To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the University Community, have set forth this: Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, and/or lie in matters related to academic work.

A note on the Honor Code. When you enrolled in this course you agreed to abide by the university's Honor Code. The Honor Code does not preclude collaborative work, such as informal discussions and studying in communities. Nor does it preclude assigned group work. The Honor Code does require that work you, as an individual, turn in ultimately be the product of your own individual synthesis or integration of ideas, and that the work a group turns in ultimately be the product of the group's collective ideas. If you are uncertain of the line between collaboration and cheating, see an instructor. As always, cite your sources. If you do not, it is plagiarism. Plagiarism means lifting someone else's ideas or words and presenting them as your own without proper attribution of the source. This is all sources, including the Internet. Use an approved citation method, such as MLA, APA, etc.

Commitment to Diversity Statement. S-CAR 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.

Disability Services. If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703.993.2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office. If you have learning differences, but have not sought support through Disability Services, you are welcome to describe these to me. I will attempt to make class as accessible as possible to different learning styles.

SOMEWHAT IDIOSYNCRATIC TIPS FOR WRITING:

This is a general list of suggestions that will improve your writing or, in some cases, at least avoid annoying me (Ghandi):

- **Word economy:** use the words you need, and no more.
- **Precision:** make sentences that have few possible interpretations. Counterexample: "You can't put too many meanings into one sentence."
- **Introductions/conclusions:** are largely unimportant in this class. Tell me what you are doing and in what context, but I do not care whether or not the phenomenon you are describing "has been around since the beginning of time" or what Webster's Dictionary might say about something. You can restate your findings in a conclusion, but please avoid trying to get poetic.
- **Don't raise the stakes unnecessarily:** If you are writing about something specific, don't spend time trying to claim that your analysis or opinion applies to all possible cases. If something is relevant, mention it. If not, don't.
- **Proofread:** Yes, I know what I did there.
- **Cite like your life depends on it:** If you borrow ideas, information, or words from someone else, cite them. Do so using an accepted academic format (Chicago, APA, etc.) and remember that this applies to exact quotations as well as paraphrasing. Include a bibliography or reference list.
- **Gandhi:** is not "Ghandi."
- **Novel/book:** A work of fiction over about 75,000 words is called a "novel." That nonfiction work you read for class is just a "book."
- **1980s, not 1980's:** If you are speaking of a decade, it is simply plural. The apostrophe only shows up if you leave something out, like '80s or the 1980s are possessing something.
- **Avoid "throughout":** Don't use "throughout" unless you are actually claiming something happens through the entirety of something. You probably mean "in" or "during."
- **Your mother is "she," your country is "it.":** Countries, organizations, and other collections of people have no gender, so don't try sneaking one in. If a group of them do something, "they" do it. If only one, "it" does. In no cases can they be "who" (or "whom," but that's another issue and doesn't particularly bother me one way or the other).