

**CONFLICT 490 – INTEGRATION**  
**School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution -- George Mason University**  
**Spring 2012; Friday 10:30-1:10**  
Nguyen Engineering Building 1108  
Dr. Vandy Kanyako ([vkanyako@gmu.edu](mailto:vkanyako@gmu.edu))  
Office hours: by appointment.

Conflict 490 is a capstone course in which students reflect on what they have learned, integrating and synthesizing knowledge from all their coursework in conflict analysis and resolution, as well as related areas of study. The course begins with an overview of the conflict field. Course readings focus on the human side of a notoriously intractable conflict and the challenges of setting up deliberative processes. Throughout the course students engage in two projects—one small group and one individual--that emphasize and encourage the integration of theory with practice.

Conflict 490 is a designated Synthesis Course in the General Education program. Accordingly, the course is interdisciplinary; students will study conflict, conflict resolution and specific conflicts by drawing on material and ways of knowing from multiple fields, as well as conflict analysis and resolution, an interdisciplinary field itself. Students will also develop skills in a technique useful in conflict research and practice, examine writings about the technique, and reflect on the experience, thus engaging in critical thinking about the integration of theory and practice. As a final project each student will map a conflict, present the map as a poster, and write a paper that includes a plan for intervention intended to have policy and real world implications. Throughout the course, culminating in a portfolio, students will consider their individual roles and aspirations in relation to the conflict field.

Upon completing this synthesis course, students will be able to:

1. Communicate effectively in both oral and written forms, applying appropriate rhetorical standards (e.g., audience adaptation, language, argument, organization, evidence, etc.)
2. Connect issues in a given field to wider intellectual, community or societal concerns using perspectives from two or more disciplines
3. Apply critical thinking skills to:
  - a. Evaluate the quality, credibility and limitations of an argument or a solution using appropriate evidence or resources, OR,
  - b. Judge the quality or value of an idea, work, or principle based on appropriate analytics and standards 2

## Course Materials

The following books are required and are available from the GMU campus bookstore:

- Coleman, Peter: *The 5 percent: Finding solutions to seemingly impossible conflicts*
- Lederach, John Paul: *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation*.

Other readings will be available on-line and/or through the course Blackboard site (courses.gmu.edu). Password: will be provided in class

Students are expected to attend all class sessions and to come prepared to participate in class. The instructor will facilitate discussions in class based on the assumption that all students have read and reflected on all the required reading. Assignments turned in late will be graded down, unless the student furnishes written documentation of the medical or family emergency which made timely completion of the work impossible. Please note that it is S-CAR policy to refuse to grant grades of Incomplete for reasons other than documented medical or family emergencies. Group collaboration is an integral part of this course. Students will be required to work in groups both in and out of class. Some group work may need to be conducted electronically. Students are also required to use Blackboard, which will be the repository for most assignments.

## Assignments and grade allocation

### 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 6 pages in length **due March 9**. This paper 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.

### Group Project 20%

Students will be divided into groups of three. Each group will analyze and critique a conflict-related academic journal of their choice. You can use concepts discussed in class to explain how the article advances our understanding of the issues and dynamics of conflict resolution. The group will make a presentation to the class on the following days: Group 1, 2 3, (April 6 and groups 4, 5, 6, April 13). Additional information on project requirements will be provided in class.

Poster project 20%

Individually students will put together an analytic map of a specific issue/ conflict that they are passionate about to be presented on April 27 at Career/ poster session **in Sub. II Ballroom**. The final product will be reviewed by a faculty panel.

Final Written Exam 30%

The written exam for this course will be an open-book, take home essay exam, distributed in class. Further details about length, format, etc. will be provided in due course. ***The final paper is due Friday May11 by 2:00 pm in Robinson B 365.***

### 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. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. 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."*

Another aspect of academic integrity is the free flow of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt, please ask for guidance and clarification.

### GMU E-MAIL ACCOUNTS

Students must use their Mason email accounts—either the existing “MEMO” system or a new “MASONLIVE” account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information. It will not be possible to contact you through another email account, and you should check your email for important course, S-CAR, and Mason information.

### OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. <http://ods.gmu.edu>

## OTHER USEFUL CAMPUS RESOURCES:

WRITING CENTER: A114 Robinson Hall; (703) 993-1200; <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

## UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

“Ask a Librarian” <http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>; Gretchen Reynolds is S-CAR’s liaison librarian and can be contacted at [greynol3@gmu.edu](mailto:greynol3@gmu.edu).

## COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS):

(703) 993-2380; <http://caps.gmu.edu>

## 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. S-CAR hosts a variety of activities during the semester, such as films, talks, seminars, and social events. You are encouraged to attend these and to offer reflections on them in class and/or on our Blackboard site.

## **Schedule of Topics and Readings**

### **Section 1: Overview of conflict and conflict resolution (The 5 percent problem)**

#### **Week 1: (January 27) Introductions, Course Overview**

Readings: Part 1: The Problem: Impossible conflicts

1. Conflict resolution methods that work and why they do not help with the 5%
  2. The 5 percent problem
- All in Peter Coleman

#### **Week 2: (February 3) Part II: The Approach: The Attraction of impossible conflicts**

1. The Big Idea: Complexity, Coherence and Conflict
2. The Model: Intractable Attractors

#### **Week 3: February 10 Part III: The Model: Resolving intractable conflicts**

1. Getting unattracted to conflicts: Three practices

Practice I: Complicate to Simplify

Practice II: Build Up and Tear down

#### **Week 4: (February 17): The three practices (continued)**

Practice III: Change to stabilize

Part IV: The 5 percent solution: Putting it all together

1. Realizing the impossible in Mozambique and beyond

## **Section 2: Theory and practice**

### **Week 5: (February 24): Mapping**

Sandole, "A comprehensive mapping of conflict and conflict resolution: a three pillar approach." Access at <http://www.gmu.edu/academic/pcs/sandole>  
Cashman, What is theory? Chapter 1 (on E-reserve)

### **Week 6: (March 2): Using Theory to Conduct Analysis and Plan Conflict**

Intervention: Readings: *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation (Lederach)*

*SHORT ESSAY HANDED OUT*

## **Section 3: Research Methods**

### **Week 7: (March 9): Conflict Research Methods Review (Proposal development)**

SHORT ESSAY DUE

### **Week 8: (March 16): SPRING BREAK (NO CLASS)**

### **Week 9 (March 23): Planning and conducting Research**

Selected readings about focus groups (ELS)

### **Week 10: (March 30): Analyzing Research Data/ Presenting research findings**

ELS

## **Section 4: Presentations**

### **Week 11: (April 6):) Journal article Analysis presentation (groups 1, 2, 3)**

### **Week 12 (April 13) Journal article Analysis presentation (groups 4, 5, 6)**

### **Week 13 (April 20) Intervention Models: Capacity Building and Conflict Prevention**

### **Week 14 (April 27) Poster Display and Career Panel – Held in Sub. II Ballroom**

(Lunch Provided. Plan to stay through the afternoon.)

### **Week 15 (May 3) Final Class: Course Summary**

Wrap-up, Evaluations, and Next Steps/ Final exam questions handed out

**\*\*EXAM finals DUE ON May 10 AT NOON\*\***