

CONF 302:003
Identity and Conflict
Fridays: Class 10:30 am - 1:10 pm
Nguyen Engineering Building 1107

Daniel Rothbart
Professor of Conflict Analysis and Resolution
Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution
drothbar@gmu.edu
703-993-4474
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Why violence? Why do some communities respond to local skirmishes with a ferocity that seems disproportional to the threat posed by the enemy and spirals out of control, setting in motion a sequence of violence, at multiple levels of society, engulfing large segments of the civilian populations in its wake? Conversely, why do other communities address similar grievances with their neighbors peacefully, containing the potentially damaging impact of their malice, allegedly, and avoiding the kind of self-perpetuating enmity that often fuels the downward spiral of conflictual relations between the conflict parties?

These questions are addressed as primary topics of this course. We examine how, in the prelude to violent conflicts, certain notions about the character, activities and ambitions of an adversary can be elevated to essential “realities” about the Outgroup. The social psychological processes of scape-goating, bigotry, and stigmatization, are examined as resorting to violence as a way to address grievances. In many conflict contexts, these processes represent reactions to a shared sense of peril, intensified by fears that the perceived enemy has the capacity and will to dominate, punish, or vanquish the “good people” at home.

This course is organized around the following major topics:

1. Basic concepts of identity and difference
2. Ethnic Identity and Conflict
3. National Identity and Conflict
4. The “Moral” Lives of Conflict Protagonists

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS:

1. Rabinowitz, D. and K. Abu-Bakr. Coffins on our Shoulders: The Experience of the Palestinian Citizens of Israel. University of California Press. ISBN: 0-520-24557-1 (pbk.)
2. V. D. Volkan, Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. 1997. ISBN: [0-8133-9038-9]
3. Ashmore, R. D., Jussim, L. and Wilder, D. (2001). Social Identity, intergroup conflict and conflict reduction. Oxford: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 0-19-513743-4 [paperback]

4. D. Rothbart and Korostelina, K. (2006). Identity, Morality, and Threat: Studies in Violent Conflict. Lexington Book. ISBN: 10: 0-7391-1618-5 [paperback].

5. Harold Isaacs, (1975) Idols of the Tribe, Harper and Row. ISBN: 0-674-44315-2. [paperback]

Articles:

“Identity Issues” online <http://www.beyondintractability.org/bi-essay/identity-issues>

“The Rwandan Conflict: Origin, Development, Exist Strategies” in Blackboard

Andrew Tudor, “A (macro) sociology of fear?” in Blackboard

Jonathan Haidt, The Divided Self,” in the Happiness Hypothesis in Blackboard

SCHEDULE, READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Week 1 [August 31] Introduction to Course: Topics, Objectives, and Assignments

UNIT I: Ethnic Identity

Week 2 [September 7] Identity Groups Living in Peace and in War

1. Identity Conflicts at <http://www.beyondintractability.org>
2. Harold Isaacs, Idols of the Tribe, pp. 26-46
3. Dennis Sandole, “Identity Under Siege,” in Identity, Morality and Threat, pp. 59-100.

Week 3 [September 14] Israeli and Palestinian Identities

1. Rabinowitz, D. and K. Abu-Bakr. Coffins on our Shoulders: The Experience of the Palestinian Citizens of Israel, pp. 1-140.
2. [Film: West Bank Story]

Assignment #1: Book Review Week 5 [September 28].

Week 4 [September 21] Psycho-cultural Perspective to Ethnic Conflicts

1. Vamik Volkan, Bloodlines, pp. 19-29, 36-49, 81-100.

Week 5 [September 28] The Case of Rwanda

1. “The Rwandan Conflict: Origin, Development, Exist Strategies”
2. Film: Ghosts of Rwanda

Assignment #2: Ethnic identity paper. Due date is: Week 7 [October 19].

Week 6 [October 5] Construction of Group Difference

1. Isaacs, Idols of the Tribe, pp. 46-93, and 115-144.
2. Karina Korostelina, Cultural Difference of Perception of the Other, in Identity, Morality and Threat, pp. 101-126.

Week 7 [October 12] From Difference to Conflict

1. Marilynn Brewer, “Ingroup Identification and Intergroup Conflict” in Social Identity, Intergroup Conflict, and Conflict Reduction, pp. 17-41.
2. Thomas Hylland Eriksen, “Ethnic Identity, National Identity, and Intergroup Conflict,” in Social Identity, Intergroup Conflict, and Conflict Reduction, pp. pp. 42-68.

UNIT III: National Identity

Week 8 [October 19] American Identity

1. Jack Citrin, et. al., “The Meaning of American National Identity,” in Social Identity, Intergroup Conflict, and Conflict Reduction, pp. 71-100
2. Harold Isaacs, Idols of the Tribe, pp. 171-204.

Assignment #3: National identity paper. Due date is: Week 12 [November 16].

Week 9 [October 26] National Conflicts

1. David Alpher and D. Rothbart, “‘Good Violence’ and the Myth of the Eternal Soldier” in Identity, Morality and Threat, pp. 241-278.
2. Edward Tiryakian, “Coping with Collective Stigma: the Case of Germany” in Identity, Morality and Threat, pp. 59-100.

[Film: A Class Divided]

UNIT IV: The “Moral” Lives of Conflict Protagonists

Week 10 [November 2] Identity Under Threat

Rothbart and Korostelina, "Moral Denigration of the Other," in Identity, Morality and Threat, pp. 29-58.

Week 11 [November 9] Religious Identity

1. Harold Isaacs, Idols of the Tribe, pp. 144-170.
2. S. Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana, "Islamic Tradition of Nonviolence," in Identity, Morality and Threat, pp. 211-237.

Week 12 [November 16] "Moral" Emotions of Conflict Protagonists

1. Jonathan Haidt, "The Divided Self," in The Happiness Hypothesis.
2. Andrew Tudor, "A (macro) sociology of fear?"

Week 13 [November 30] Conflict Resolution

1. Herbert Kelman, "The Role of National Identity in Conflict Resolution" in Social Identity, Intergroup Conflict, and Conflict Reduction, pp. 187-212.
2. Joseph Montville, "Reconciliation as *Realpolitik*: Facing the Burdens of History in Political Conflict Resolution," in Identity, Morality and Threat, pp. 367-391.

Week 14 [December 7] Summation

1. Ashmore, et. al., in Social Identity, Intergroup Conflict, and Conflict Reduction, pp. 213-250.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Participation.

Each class session will include a discussion-component that calls for active participation. Of course, you are expected to attend each of the fourteen sessions of this course. Each session that is missed will result on a reduction of the participation grade, according to the following matrix:

Out of a maximum of 100 points for the participation grade:

One unexcused absence results in 10 point reduction in participation grade
Two unexcused absences results in 20 point reduction in participation grade
Three unexcused absences results in 30 point reduction in participation grade
Four unexcused absences results in 40 point reduction in participation grade
And so on...

An unexcused absence is one in which I do not receive an adequate explanation for absence on or before the class session. The best means for communication is email: drothbar@gmu.edu.

The participation score represents 20% of course grade. So, for example, if your participation score is 80, as a result of two unexcused absences, then you this score will be factors into 20% of the course grade.

2. **Assignment #1: Book Review**

For this assignment, you are to write a review of the book by Rabinowitz and Abu-Bakr. Coffins on our Shoulders, pp. 1-140. This review will be assessed according to the following objectives and criteria: (1) an accurate summary of the major themes of the assigned reading, (2) a summary of each of the four chapters plus the introduction, (3) at least one relatively detailed encounter, episode, or experience that is specified in the reading, (4) clarity of writing in your own words, (5) proper citation of quoted material and cited information. While you can rely on class discussion for guidance, your review must be written in your own words and from your own constructions. Verbatim repetition will not be accepted.

The paper should be between 5 and 6 pages double spaced. The grade for assignment #1 represents 20% of the course grade. Due: Week 5 [September 28].

3. **Assignment #2: Ethnic identity paper.**

Write a paper analyzing ethnic identity of your choice (identity of your own ethnic group or any other ethnic group) based on theoretical ideas of V. Volcan. You can gather information about the ethnic group from your research—books, articles, chapters by researchers. You may choose to interview representatives of the group. In your paper should address the following topics: (1) past episodes of chosen trauma, (2) past or present examples of chosen glory, (3) the normative implications of trauma and glory—what should be done regarding relations with an adversary group? The paper should be between 4 and 5 pages double-spaced.

Stages:

- a. The first draft of the paper is due Week 7 [October 12]. The grade comprises 10% of the course grade.
- b. You will receive feedback--comments, recommendations, advice for improving this draft.
- c. The second draft of the paper is due Week 10 [November 2]. The grade comprises 10% of the course grade.

4. **Assignment #3: National identity paper.**

Write a paper in which you provide an in-depth analysis of national identity of Americans living in the U.S. The analysis must include a summary and use of the central categories and doctrines of identity-formation as presented in the readings above, especially from the work of Thomas Eriksen, Marilyn Brewer, and Jack Citrin. The paper should be between 5 and 6

pages double-spaced. Due date is: Week 11 [November 16]. The grade for this assignment will comprise 20% of the course grade.

5. Assignment #4: Final Exam:

The final exam will comprise cover the major themes of the class, which serves as a relatively comprehensive review of the course material. This will be a take home exam, distributed Week 14 [December 7] and due December 14. The grade comprises 20% of the course grade.

WRITING INTENSIVE COURSE:

This course fulfills the writing intensive requirement for majors in conflict analysis and resolution. It does so through a sequence of assignments that totals 5000–6250 words. The sequenced assignments include drafts and revisions of

Assignment #1: Book Review [1250-1500 words].

Assignment #2: Ethnic identity paper [1250-1500]

Assignment #3: National identity paper [1250-1500]

Assignment #4: Final Exam [1600-2000 words].

HONOR POLICY 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. 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.