

CONF 330: Community, Organization, and Group Conflict Analysis and Resolution
School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution - George Mason University
Spring 2015 - Tuesdays and Thursdays - 12:00 to 13:15 - Hanover Hall L002

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Office Hours by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

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. In particular, this course will focus on the community as our unit of analysis and will strive to understand how communities are formed, the various meanings attached to the term community, as well as how communities experience and respond to various forms of violence and conflict. We will use a range of materials from within the field of conflict analysis and resolution, as well as other disciplines to investigate the relationship of theory, research, and practice to group and community settings. This course provides an essential bridge between interpersonal and international conflict work, but is unique in its scope and purpose. It will require you to think critically about your own life experience as a member of various communities and as a person interested in the field of conflict analysis and resolution.

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. Lectures, class discussions, role-plays, student presentations, and small group work are just some of the varied ways in which we will learn over the semester. *Please note in advance that the professor does not regularly use PowerPoint slides or give summaries of missed sessions in person or via email.* Students are responsible for obtaining notes from their classmates. Additionally, students may be called on at random to participate in class discussions. Pop quizzes over required material may also occur.

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 these contexts.
- To reflect critically on your own participation in communities and your own contributions to conflict and its resolution.
- To develop specific insight into community 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.
- Hirsch, Susan and Frank Dukes. 2014. *Mountaintop Mining in Appalachia: Understanding Stakeholders and Change in Environmental Conflict*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.
- Minieri, Joan and Paul Gestos. 2007. *Tools for Radical Democracy*. San Fran., CA: Jossey-Bass
- Additional readings will be linked in the syllabus and/or made available through Blackboard.

BLACKBOARD

This course will include a significant online component through the course Blackboard site. All papers and assignments must be submitted through Blackboard.

IMPORTANT DATES

January 27: Last day to add classes

February 20: 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 Required 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 800 points of required assignments and you can complete up to 225 points of free choice assignments.

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	

Grading Rubric: Your papers are generally accessed using the following criteria.

- A range: Excellent work. Paper is turned in on time, presents a coherent structure, shows careful consideration of assignment in the context of class experience and readings, and/or engages topic in a thoughtful manner. Work also contains no obvious errors.
- B range: Good work. Paper integrates class materials and experience in a sufficient manner. Author follows guidelines on syllabus and demonstrates above average engagement with the assignment. Reflection on class material and experiences moves beyond summarization. Work contains few errors.
- C range: Satisfactory work. Paper does not follow guidelines for assignment, only summarizes or uses minimal class readings or experience, contains frequent errors, and/or fails to meet length requirements.
- D range and below: Unsatisfactory work. This should not be possible for most of the assignments in this class so long as you put in the effort and hand the work in on time. D and below is given for papers that are either unreadable or clearly have nothing to do with the course.

Late Work: Papers and other assignments are to be submitted through Blackboard on their due dates.

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. Email is discouraged, but acceptable in an emergency. Electronic submission is required. Please do not print out your papers and bring them to class.

Format for Assignments: Assignments should be submitted on Blackboard in Word document form.

A cover sheet is not needed. 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>.

REQUIRED ASSIGNMENTS (800 points, all students must complete)

Class Attendance and Participation: (125 points)

Attendance will be taken at the start of each class. If you are not present when your name is called you will not receive points for the day. You are expected to arrive on time for each session having completed the required readings. Participation in class discussions is necessary for you to receive full credit. Failure to contribute meaningfully to the class conversation will impact your grade. More than three unexcused absences over the course of the semester will lower your overall grade by one letter regardless of your point total.

Notes Journal and Question for the Day: (125 points)

Notes Journal: This may come as a surprise, but you are expected to read the assigned material for this class. Additionally, you are required to type up a 1-page summary of your readings prior to the start of each class session. Please note that this is 1 page total, not per reading. I do not care what form your notes take (outline, reflective interaction, summaries of key points, etc....) so long as they clearly demonstrate an effort to engage the assigned material. Notes will be submitted twice during the semester in a combined Word document through Blackboard (03/05/2015 and 04/30/2015).

Question for the Day: You are also responsible for bringing one question you have about the assigned readings to class for each session. I will collect your Question for the Day when I take attendance.

Communities of Fear Project: (150 points)

Watch or listen to a local news broadcast for 5 consecutive days. This can be the same channel or different channels so long as it is a local news broadcast. You may also stream newscasts via the Internet if you do not have access to a TV or radio. You are to write a 1,250-word essay 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). Follow the guidelines for **Reflective Writing** (see below). 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 on 02/17/2015.

Midterm Exam: (150 points)

The midterm involves a take-home essay that will be completed after watching the film, *Fantastic Mr. Fox*. You can watch the film through a streaming service at your own convenience or check it out from the reserves at the Johnson Center Library. The midterm exam question and more details are posted on Blackboard. Your essay is due before class on 03/17/2015. The midterm will require **Analytical Writing** (see below).

Final Exam: (125 points)

The final exam will be completed during the last class session. You must be present to earn points for the final exam. There is no written component.

Final Reflection: (125 points)

After the final exam you will complete a 1,250-word reflection (**using Reflective Writing**) 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 are posted on Blackboard. 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 05/09/2015 and should be the last work you turn in for the class.

FREE CHOICE ASSIGNMENTS

If you would like to earn a grade above a C in this course you will need to complete additional work. 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 (05/02/2015). You can earn up to 225 additional points. Free Choice Assignments are not extra credit; they are essential if you are looking to secure a passing mark in this course. While additional opportunities may be added during the semester, options include:

Case Study Intervention Project: (200 points)

Pick one of the 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. Use Reflective Writing and do not summarize the book.

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. Use Reflective Writing and do not summarize the movie.

The Wire Project: (100 points per season, up to 2 seasons)

The Wire is one of the best depictions of community struggle in the United States. For this assignment, you will choose one season of the show and watch those episodes. Then write a 1,500-word reflection on the experience in the context of our class. You can watch two seasons and turn in two reflections. When analyzing the show, keep in mind that it represents both communities and organizations, so you may want to talk about these separately. Additionally, make use of our class readings for concepts that will help your analysis. Don't forget to talk about instances where conflict is handled well or where a potential for restorative community work is demonstrated. When talking about individual episodes, you just need

to identify them by number (i.e., season 1, episode 1) instead of full citations. If you use any outside material, cite it appropriately.

Build your own project: (Up to 200 points)

You can suggest a project of your choice (no more than 4 people in a group). Please speak with me if you have an idea you are interested in pursuing. You need to be able to clearly state how the project relates to the course and assists in your learning about community conflict.

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. It should go without saying, but I will anyway, that if your papers do not reflect the materials or discussions we are having in class they will not receive favorable grades. It is OK to use supporting material from other courses at Mason so long as you explain how and why that material is relevant to the discussion in your paper. Additionally, be sure to proofread all papers prior to handing them in. Points will be deducted for repeated grammar and spelling issues.

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.

Professional/Analytical 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.

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.

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 (formulated by Derek Sweetman):

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

- **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).