

**CONF 330:
Community, Group, and Organizational
Conflict Analysis and Resolution
Fall 2009**

Tuesdays, 1:30 – 4:15 p.m.
Enterprise Hall, Room 278

Instructor: Gina Cerasani
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Office hours by appointment

Course Overview

This course examines conflict within social structures at the group, organizational and community levels, including governmental, cultural, religious, social and civic groups. The course emphasizes theories of conflict, provides frameworks to analyze conflict, and explores methods for resolving conflict within social organizations.

Groups, organizations and communities are powerful entities that shape the ways we think about ourselves, the ways we see others, and others see us, especially under conditions of interdependency. In this course we will consider the intersection and dynamics between human conflict and group, organizational and community behavior.

Through class discussions, films, case studies, and a simulation of a real-world conflict, you will develop the ability to analyze social group conflicts and consider possible intervention designs.

Course Requirements

Participation (20%)

Regular attendance and consistent participation in class discussions is expected. It is critical to complete the assigned readings prior to each class in order to learn the subject matter and to be prepared to fully engage in discussions.

Your participation grade is based on two components: 1) Contribution to class discussions, and 2) Completion of reflective writing assignments in your “journal” (a blue book).

In the final three sessions of this course, we will conduct a simulation of a racial conflict in which each member of the class will assume a role. **Full participation in the simulation is central to the participation grade.**

Case Study Fieldwork (30%)

To gain experience applying your theoretical and practical skills outside the classroom, you are required to join a group to study during the semester. This may be any type of special-interest group (e.g. book or film club, study group), organization (e.g. your workplace), or community-based group (e.g. neighborhood association). Whatever you select, **it must be a group with which you will have weekly contact**. Every two weeks you will submit a one-page reflective paper in which you will apply recent class readings and other theoretical and practical insight you have gained from this course to the group you are observing. Through the semester, you will write six reflective papers and each is worth 5% of your grade. Each paper is due at the beginning of the class period.

Mid-Term Exam (25%)

This will be a take-home essay examination. **You will receive the exam in class on Oct. 20 and will have one week to complete it. It is due no later than Oct. 27 at 1:30 p.m.** The exam will consist of five essay questions, from which you will select three questions and write a 1-2 page response.

Final Exam (25%)

The final exam will also be a take-home essay examination. **You will receive the exam in class on Dec. 8 and will have one week to complete it. It is due no later than Dec. 15 at 4:15 p.m.** As with the mid-term exam, the final exam will consist of five essay questions, and you will select three of the five and write a 1-2 page response for each.

Honor Code

All students are bound by the George Mason University Honor System and Code. Please review the code and become familiar with it:
<http://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/plagiarism.htm>

Blackboard

This course will utilize Blackboard to both house documents pertinent to the course and to provide a space for discussion and collaboration. Students are expected to check the site regularly. Instructions for access will be provided the first day of class.

E-reserves

All readings for this course are available through the university's electronic reserves system.

To access e-reserves:

1. Go to <http://oscr.gmu.edu>
2. Click on the green box "e-reserves"
3. Using the drop-down boxes, select the course (CONF 330-001) and instructor (Cerasani)
4. Enter the password (**group**) and click "submit" to view items. It is case sensitive.

Required Reading (all on e-reserves)

Baron, Robert S and Norbert L. Kerr, (2003) "Introduction" chapter 1 in *Group Process, Group Decision and Group Action*. Open University Press, p. 1-19

Baron, Robert S and Norbert L. Kerr, (2003) "Intergroup Conflict and Aggression" chapter 9 in *Group Process, Group Decision and Group Action*. Open University Press, p. 155-174

Carter, Gregg Lee and Joseph F. Byrnes (1994) "Conflict in Organizations" chapter 1 in *How to Manage Conflict in the Organization*. Watertown, MA: American Management Association, p 1-24

Cheldelin, Sandra I. and Ann L. Lucas, (2004) "A Framework for Conflict Analysis" chapter 2 in *Conflict Resolution*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, p 13-24

Cloke, Kenneth and Joan Goldsmith, (2000) "Stories That Hold Organizations Hostage" chapter 5 in *Resolving Personal and Organizational Conflict*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, p 124-129

Constantino, Cathy and C. Merchant, (1996) "Design Architecture: Constructing Conflict Management Models" chapter 7 in *Designing Conflict Management Systems: A Guide to Creating Productive and Healthy Organizations* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, p 117-133

D'Estree, Tamra Pearson (2003) "Dynamics" chapter 5 in *Conflict: From Analysis to Intervention*, Cheldelin, Sandra, Daniel Druckman and Larissa Fast (eds.), pages 68-87, London and New York: Continuum

Dugan, Maire, (2001) "Imaging the Future: A Tool for Conflict Resolution" in *Peacebuilding: A Field Guide*, Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Reiner Publishing p 365-372

Dukes, Frank (1990) "Understanding Community Dispute Resolution" in *Mediation Quarterly* vol 8 no. 1 Fall 1990, San Francisco: Jossey Bass

Dukes, Frank, Marina Pischolish and John Stephens (2001) “Beyond Boundaries: Bringing Higher Ground to Whole Communities” chapter 9 in *Reaching for Higher Ground in Conflict Resolution*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, p 191-215

Harre, Rom and Nikki Slocum (2003) “Disputes as Complex Social Events: On the Uses of Positioning Theory” in *Common Knowledge* vol. 9 no. 1 Winter 2003, Duke University Press.

Herman, David (2009) “Positioning Theory” and “Narrative Told during Face-to-Face Communication: *UFO or the Devil*” in *Basic Elements of Narrative*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, p 55-59 and 166-72

McIntosh, Peggy (1988) “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” in *Staff, Family and Community*, p 79-82

Mor-Barak, Michalle (2005). “Defining Diversity in a Global Context: Prejudice and Discrimination” chapter 6 in *Managing Diversity: Toward a Globally Inclusive Workplace*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publication, p 121-145

Rubenstein, Richard E. (2003) “Sources” chapter 4 in *Conflict: From Analysis to Intervention*, Cheldelin, Sandra, Daniel Druckman and Larissa Fast (eds.), London and New York: Continuum, p 55-67

Schirch, Lisa and David Campt (2007) “Defining Dialogue” chapter 1 and “How Does Dialogue Work?” chapter 2 in *The Little Book of Dialogue for Difficult Subjects*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books, p 5-22

Warfield, Wallace (1992) “Triggering Incidents for Racial Conflict: Miami, Florida Riots of 1980 and 1982” chapter 13 in *Community Disorders and Policing*, Tony F. Marshall (ed), London: Whiting and Birch, p 169-174

Watkins, Jane Magruder and Bernard J. Mohr (2001) “Appreciative Inquiry: History, Theory, and Research” chapter 2 and “Appreciative Inquiry As a Process” chapter 3 in *Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey – Bass/Pfeiffer, p 13-51

Supplemental readings (strongly recommended for students who have not taken any prior CAR courses):

Ramsbotham, Oliver, Tom Woodhouse and Hugh Miall, “Introduction to Conflict Resolution: Concepts and Definitions,” Chapter 1 in *Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The Prevention, Management and Transformation of Deadly Conflicts*, 2nd edition, Malden, MA: Polity Press

Windmueller, John (2001) “What It Means to Come from a Conflict Resolution Perspective,” unpublished manuscript

INTRODUCTION

September 1: Introduction to the course

- Welcome and introductions
- Review syllabus
- Develop discussion guidelines and other class protocol

Assignments for Sep. 8:

- Select group or organization for case study fieldwork
- Complete a brief “lifeline” of important groups, organizations, and communities in your life

September 8: Frameworks for Conflict Analysis

- Identify group or organization for case study
- Introduction to frameworks for conflict analysis
- Small group exercise: Find themes in lifelines

Readings to be completed for class:

- Cheldelin and Lucas, pages 13-24

Assignments for Sep. 15:

- First case study reflection paper due
- Prepare to share initial observations and reflections of case study in small groups

GROUP CONFLICT

September 15: Dynamics of group conflict

- Overview of group formation and group dynamics
- Analysis of group dynamics in student reports of case study reflections
- Discussion of initial observations and reflections from case studies

Readings to be completed for class:

- D’Estree, pages 68-87
- Baron and Kerr, pages 1-19

September 22: Sources of group conflict

- Intergroup conflict
- The role of culture in social conflicts
- Film: “Postville: When Cultures Collide”

Readings to be completed for class:

- Baron and Kerr, pages 155-174
- Rubenstein, pages 55-67
- http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/culture_conflict/?nid=1186

Assignments for Sep. 29:

- Second case study paper due
- Prepare to share observations and reflections of case study in small groups

September 29: Group conflict intervention models

- Nested Model of Conflict/Envisioning Process
- Exercise: Application of Nested Model to student cases
- Discussion of observations and reflections from case studies

Readings to be completed for class:

- Dugan, pages 365-372

ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT

October 6: Dynamics of organizational conflict

- Models and stories of organizational conflict
- Guest speaker: Samantha Levine-Finley, ICAR MS, Associate Ombudsman, National Institutes of Health Center for Cooperative Resolution/Office of the Ombudsman

Readings to be completed for class:

- Cloke and Goldsmith, pages 124-129
- Carter and Byrnes, pages 1-19

Assignments for Oct. 20:

- Third case study paper due
- Prepare to share observations and reflections of case study in small groups

October 13: NO CLASS

October 20: Sources of organizational conflict

- Issues of difference: gender, race, sexual orientation, etc.
- Diversity and multiculturalism in organizations
- Class exercises: Silently Standing in the Face of Oppression and Privilege Matrix
- Discussion of observations and reflections from case studies

Readings to be completed for class:

- Mor-Barak, pages 121-145
- McIntosh, pages 79-82

October 27: Organizational conflict intervention models

- Systems approaches: Conflict Management Systems, Appreciative Inquiry
- Principled Negotiation
- Discussion of observations and reflections from case studies

Readings to be completed for class:

- Carter and Byrnes, pages 19-24
- Constantino and Merchant, pages 117-133
- Watkins and Mohr, pages 13-51

Assignments due Nov. 3:

- Fourth case study paper due
- Prepare to share observations and reflections of case studies in small groups

COMMUNITY CONFLICT

November 3: Dynamics of community conflict

- Narrative analysis and positioning theory
- Film: “The Garden”
- Class exercise: Create a ‘positioning triangle’ from the conflict portrayed in “The Garden”

Readings to be completed for class:

- Harre and Slocum, pages 100-118
- Herman, pages 55-59 and 166-172

November 10: Sources of community conflict

- Discussion of observations and reflections of case studies
- Triggering incidents in community conflict
- Film: “Crown Heights”

Reading to be completed for class:

- Warfield, pages 169-174

Assignments for Nov. 17:

- Fifth case study paper due
- Prepare to share observations and reflections of case studies in small groups

November 17: Community conflict intervention models

- Dialogue as intervention
- Discussion of observations and reflections of case studies

Readings to be completed for class:

- Dukes, pages 27-37 and 191-215
- Schirch and Campt, pages 5-22

Assignment for Nov. 24:

- Sixth case study paper due

November 24: Racial Conflict Simulation

December 1: Racial Conflict Simulation

December 8: Evaluation of simulation, wrap-up and course evaluation