

CONF 202 – Dialogue and Difference [Special Topic – Identity Politics]

Semester: Fall 2008
Section/CRN: 001/73713
Class Time: Mondays and Wednesdays 1:30 - 2:45 p.m. [ELI students 3:45]
Location: Robinson A – Room 243
Office Hours: By Appointment
Instructors: Leila Peterson, Undergraduate Program in Conflict Analysis and Resolution lpetersh@gmu.edu
& Michael P. Smith English Language Institute msmit2@gmu.edu

Course Description and Objectives

Communicating effectively across differences of age, gender, language, culture, and political orientation, and in different contextual situations, is a skill useful for every individual. It is also integral to the success of any attempt to resolve conflict, whether individual, group/institutional, or global.

An understanding of culture and its influence on our perspectives is essential for effective communication. An important part of this course is the participation of students from the English Language Institute (ELI). By working closely with individuals from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, we will gain insight into the role of culture in dialogue.

Through experiential learning, students will gain an understanding of the challenges of communicating across differences and the skills required to communicate effectively. As an integral part of the course students will engage in weekly dialogue sessions that explore the meaning and experience of American identity politics. The majority of class time will be spent jointly with the ELI students, first learning the theory and skills that underlie successful participation and facilitation of dialogue and then applying them in the exploration of events and issues at play in the 2008 election.

Course Requirements

A. Participation, Knowledge of Course Materials and Contributions in the Classroom (30%)

Students are expected to participate fully in all exercises and complete all weekly required readings in preparation for class discussion.

B. Reflection on weekly dialogue sessions and completion of associated assignments (35%)

Students will engage in weekly facilitated dialogue sessions. Students will complete a journal entry of 1-2 pages reflecting on the dialogue session. Each student will also be asked to help design 1-2 dialogue session including designing format and preparing questions.

C. Reflection Paper (35%)

Final paper that reflects on the dialogue experience, lectures, class exercises and the readings.

Class Policies and Procedures

Students are responsible for completing individual and group assignments on time. You will be penalized the equivalent of a full letter grade for each day the assignment is late.

Some class assignments and readings will be sent via e-mail and students are responsible for checking GMU email and keeping up-to-date with these. Incomplete grades will not be granted save in cases of personal or immediate family illness or emergency.

Please familiarize yourself with the Honor System and Code, as stated in the George Mason University *Undergraduate Catalog*. When you are given an assignment as an individual, the work must be your own. Some of your work may be collaborative; source material for group projects and work of individual group members must be carefully documented for individual contributions. For an overview of the Honor Code, see: <http://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/plagiarism.htm>

University Resources and Assistance

Writing Center: The Writing Center provides tutors who can help you develop ideas and revise papers at no charge. It can sometimes accommodate walk-ins, but generally it is best to call for an appointment. The services of the Writing Center are also available online.

Location: Robinson Hall A, room 114. **Contact:** (703) 993-1200 or <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

Hours: Monday through Thursday from 9:30 to 7:30. Friday hours are 9:30 to 2:30.

Disability Resource Center: The Disability Resource Center assists students with learning or physical conditions affecting learning. Students with learning differences that require special conditions for exams or

other writing assignments should provide documentation provided by the Disability Resource Center. Please see one of the instructors the first week of classes.

Location: SUB I, Room 222 **Contact:** 703-993-2474 www.gmu.edu/student/drc/

Electronic Reserves

Adobe Acrobat must be installed on your computer to view and print some E-Reserves Readings. E-Reserves permit students to access Course Readings remotely from home or office, and allow students to view and print materials using Adobe Acrobat Reader. All users of the E-Reserves must comply with the University Policy and Copy Right Law (Title 17, United States Code)

Accessing E-Reserves:

1. Go to <http://oscr.gmu.edu>
2. Click on the magnifying glass (Search electronic reserves)
3. Using the drop-down boxes, select the course [CONF 202-001] and instructor [Staff]
 - a. The section and faculty are opposite of what is on the schedule
 - b. Be sure it says "Fall 2008"
4. Enter in the password (**to be given in class**) and click submit to view the item
5. To view and print an article click on the small PDF button or the Link button if available

If you experience problems with an electronic reserve item or need additional help please contact the E-Reserves Coordinator at 993-9043. If you need additional assistance please e-mail ereserves@gmu.edu.

Required Readings

Intergroup Dialogue: Deliberative Democracy in School, College, Community, and Workplace, edited by David Schoem and Sylvia Hurtado (Available in the Bookstore)

Course packet available through electronic reserve

Weekly Themes, Readings and Assignments

WEEK 1 MONDAY AUGUST 25

Introduction to Dialogue

Introductions and expectations; Group norms; Overview of course and syllabus; The principles of dialogue

Week 1 Wednesday August 27

Theories of Dialogue

The role of dialogue in conflict resolution and social change; philosophical and theoretical approaches to dialogue

Readings:

“Dialogue: Something Old; Something New” by Glenna Gerard and Linda Ellinor:

<http://www.thedialoguegrouponline.com/whatsdialogue.html>

“Intergroup Dialogue: Democracy at Work in Theory and Practice”, in *Intergroup Dialogue*, pp. 1-21.

WEEK 2 MONDAY SEPTEMBER 1

Labor Day – No Class

WEEK 2 WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 3

Culture and Communication Workshop – Part I

Speakers: Michael P. Smith, English Language Institute and Dr. Susan Trencher, Dept. of Sociology and Anthropology

Readings:

“Shakespeare in the Bush.” Bohannon, Laura (1971), from *Conformity and Conflict: Readings in Cultural Anthropology*, eds. James P. Spradley and David W. McCurdy Boston: Little Brown and Company.

“Body Ritual Among the Nacirema”

WEEK 3 MONDAY SEPTEMBER 8

Dialogue Skills Workshop: Suspension of Judgment & Identification of Assumptions

Dialogue skills exercises

Readings:

“The Living Technology of Dialogue: Suspension of Judgment; Identification of Assumptions” by Linda Ellinor and Glenna Gerard, in *Dialogue: Rediscovering the Transforming Power of Conversation*, pp. 59-97. (38 pages)

“The Complexity of Identity: ‘Who am I?’” by Beverly Daniel Tatum, p. 9-14 & “The Cycle of Socialization” by Bobbie Harro, p. 15-21. *Readings for diversity and social justice: An Anthology on Racism, Sexism, Anti-semitism, Heterosexism, Classism and Ableism*, Edited By Maurianne Adams, et al

Speaker: Leila Peterson & Michael P. Smith

WEEK 3 WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 11

Dialogue Skills Workshop: Listening & Inquiry and Reflection

Dialogue skills exercises

Readings:

“The Living Technology of Dialogue: Listening; Inquiry and Reflection” by Linda Ellinor and Glenna Gerard in *Dialogue: Rediscovering the Transforming Power of Conversation*, pp. 98-127. (29 pages)

Speaker: Leila Peterson & Michael P. Smith

WEEK 4 MONDAY SEPTEMBER 15 (MEET SEPERATELY)

The Construction of Difference

Readings: Selection from *The Meaning of Difference: American Constructions of Race, Sex, Gender, Social Class and Sexual Orientation* (TBD)

WEEK 4 WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 17 (MEET SEPERATELY)

Techniques for Group Dialogue

Facilitators: Leila Peterson

Readings:

“Café to Go” <http://www.theworldcafe.com/articles/cafetogo.pdf>

“A Brief User’s Guide to Open Space Technology”, http://www.openspaceworld.com/users_guide.htm

“Facilitation Skills for Interpersonal Transformation” by Ron Kraybill, http://www.berghof-handbook.net/uploads/download/kraybill_handbook.pdf

WEEK 5 MONDAY SEPTEMBER 22

The Role of Dialogue in Conflict Situations

“Encounter Point” Movie Screening [Dialogue in the Middle East Conflict]

Readings:

Broome, B. J. and Jakobsson Hatay, A. (2006). Building Peace in Divided Societies: The Role of Intergroup Dialogue, in John Oetzel and Stella Ting-Toomey (eds), *Handbook of Conflict Communication*, pp. 627-662, Sage Publications.

WEEK 5 WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 24

1st Dialogue Session – Muslim World and the West

WEEK 6 MONDAY SEPTEMBER 29

Race, Ethnicity and Nationalism

Readings:

“Introduction” and “Paradigms of Race: Ethnicity, Class, Nation” in Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960’s to the 1990’s, by Michael Omi and Howard Winant, pp. 3-48

WEEK 6 WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 1

2nd Dialogue Session – Race, Ethnicity and Nationalism

Facilitators: Leila Peterson & Michael P. Smith

WEEK 7 MONDAY OCTOBER 6

Religion and Politics

Readings:

“The Interaction between Religion and Culture in Peace and Conflict” (p.3-7) and “The Use of the Word and Its Limits: Dialogue as Peacemaking” (p. 144-160 in *Holy War, Holy Peace: How Religion can Bring Peace to the Middle East* by Marc Gopin

GUEST LECTURE: DR. MARK GOPIN, INSTITUTE FOR CONFLICT ANALYSIS AND RESOLUTION

WEEK 7 WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 8

3rd Dialogue Session – Religion and Politics

Facilitators: Leila Peterson & Michael P. Smith

WEEK 8 MONDAY OCTOBER 13 (COLUMBUS DAY – CLASS MEETS TUESDAY)

Immigration in America

“Liberty 9500” Movie Screening

WEEK 8 WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 15

4th Dialogue Session – Immigration

Facilitators: Leila Peterson & Michael P. Smith

WEEK 9 MONDAY OCTOBER 20

Democracy and the American Political System

Guest Lecture: Dr. Solon Simmons, Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution

Readings: TBD

WEEK 9 WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 22

5th Dialogue Session – Election

Facilitators: CAR Faculty and Michael P. Smith

CONF 202 and ELI students explore the US election process.

Minimum of ½ hour per day exploring election coverage in the media (print, internet, tv)

WEEK 10 MONDAY OCTOBER 27

2008 Presidential Election

Guest Speaker: College Republicans

Readings:

Minimum of ½ hour per day exploring election coverage in the media (print, internet, tv)

WEEK 10 WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 29

6th Dialogue Session - Election

Facilitators: Leila Peterson & Michael P. Smith

WEEK 11 MONDAY NOVEMBER 3

2008 Presidential Election

Guest Speaker: College Democrats

Readings:

Minimum of ½ hour per day exploring election coverage in the media (print, internet, tv)

WEEK 11 WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 5

7th Dialogue Session - Election

Facilitators: Leila Peterson & Michael P. Smith

WEEK 12 MONDAY NOVEMBER 10 (MEET SEPARATELY)

Media Bias/Role in constructing social discourse

Readings:

“Media Bias” on Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media_bias (spend approximately 1 hour exploring the content and links)

WEEK 12 WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 12

8th Dialogue Session – Media and Coverage of the Election

Facilitators: Leila Peterson & Michael P. Smith

WEEK 13 MONDAY NOVEMBER 17

Dialogue and Action

Readings:

“Extending Intergroup Dialogue: From Talk to Action”, in Schoem and Hurtado *Intergroup Dialogue*

Speaker: Leila Peterson & Michael P. Smith

WEEK 13 WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 19

Dialogue process design

Readings:

“Design consideration in Intergroup Dialogue” p. 306-327 and “Adapting Intergroup Dialogue Processes for Use in a Variety of Settings, p. 328-344 in Schoem and Hurtado *Intergroup Dialogue*

WEEK 14 MONDAY NOVEMBER 24

Critique of Dialogue

Readings:

“From Resolution to Transformation: The Role of Dialogue Projects” by Norbert Ropers. Available at http://www.berghof-handbook.net/uploads/download/ropers_handbook.pdf

WEEK 14 **WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 26 --THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS)**

WEEK 15 **MONDAY DECEMBER 1**

Dialogue Panel – CONF 202 and ELI students will form a panel to discuss the dialogue experience. Members of the George Mason community will be invited to join us.

WEEK 15 **WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 3**

Celebration!!!

Reflection Paper Due