George Mason University

Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (ICAR)

CONF 900: Integrating Theory, Practice, and Methods in Conflict Analysis

Semester: Spring 2008
Class Time: Wednesday, 4:30-7:10 pm
Location: Arlington Campus, Truland Building, Rm. 666B
Instructor: Dennis J.D. Sandole, Ph.D.
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

CONF 900 is the "capstone course" for students participating in ICAR's Ph.D. program. Its ambitious agenda includes providing doctoral students with *conceptual* and *dynamic* opportunities to facilitate efforts to "bring together" into a *coherent whole* all the courses, lab/sim exercises, internships, and practica (APT) to which they have been exposed during their time at ICAR, before starting research leading to their dissertations.

As means to this end, students examine (1) different philosophical framings of the "real world" (*ontology*); (2) different philosophical approaches to gaining knowledge about that world (*epistemology*); (3) different disciplinary-based framings of *explanations* of behavior; (4) different orientations toward *research*; plus (5) a *research question* about the **origins of cooperation** that cuts across philosophical and disciplinary boundaries.

Against this *conceptual* background, students are exposed to a motion picture film (*Joyeux Noel* [2005]), which deals with the December 1914 Christmas Eve Truce entered into by French, German, and Scottish troops during the first year of World War 1, as one example of the *dynamic* forces at play in conflict parties' decision to shift from hostilities to cooperation, and then back to hostilities again. Finally, students participate in a *scenarios development exercise* as an exemplar operating model of a decisionmaking process to experience the application of theory to practice in complex conflict situations.

The objective of the course is *not* to reduce the complexity of the *theory-research-practice nexus* in conflict and conflict resolution (CAR) to a few simplistic talking points. Instead, the goal is to facilitate management of the dynamic moving target of applied knowledge in the multidisciplinary field, by examining *frames* that can enhance students' prospects for developing and, through select research methods, advancing theory; applying theory to practice and feeding the results of theory-based

practice back to theory, for   reinforcement, refinement, or refutation and replacement in whole or part.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1.   **Prerequisites**: CONF 801 and 802, plus at least 9 additional credits in ICAR's core doctoral program.

2.   **Student Assignments**:

(a) Students are required to complete a **midterm paper** in which they examine *all course readings* for potential relevance to the:

-- Development of conflict theory (*Theory 1*).

-- Development of conflict resolution theory (*Theory 2*).

-- Testing of hypotheses distilled from Theory 1 or Theory 2. And

-- Evaluation of findings generated by theory-based practice.

Specifications: 20-25 double-spaced pages; **due: Wednesday, 2 April 2008** (40% **of final grade**).

(b) All students are required to complete a **final integrative paper** in which they:

-- Select an *intractable conflict* (past, present, developing, likely).

-- Analyze the conflict in terms of relevant *theories of conflict initiation and escalation (Theory 1)*.

-- Analyze the conflict in terms of relevant *conflict-handling methods* (e.g., prevention, management, settlement, resolution, transformation [*provention*]) (*Theory 2*).

-- Construct a *research design* to test hypotheses derived from any of the above theories (1 and/or 2). And

-- Construct an *intervention design* to achieve select 3rd party goals (e.g., prevention, management, settlement, resolution, and/or transformation) via specific methods (e.g., confrontational and/or

collaborative methods; *negative peace* and/or *positive peace* orientations; and track-1 and/or multi-track methods).

Specifications: 20-25 <u>double-spaced pages</u>; **due: Wednesday, 7 May 2008** (**40% of final grade**).

NOTE: Since these two papers are meant, among other things, to demonstrate that students have been in the course, the *papers should contain appropriate references to course concepts and the corresponding readings*. For further clarification -- including about the GMU Honor Code (e.g., avoiding any hint of <u>plagiarism</u> at all costs) -- please feel free to consult with the instructor.

(c) Students will be invited to make presentations on the class readings (listed below), in which they will:

-- *summarize* the contents of select readings;
-- *analyze* how well authors achieved their goals;
-- *assess* the readings for their utility
-- for the course; and
-- for the students personally.
(10% of final grade).

In addition:

(d) Students will be encouraged to participate actively in class discussions, *including discussions on class readings led by others,* and other activities; e.g., a *scenarios development exercise* (see below)(**10% of final grade**).

Office Hours: After class (7:30-8:00 pm) and by appointment.

Withdrawal: The last day to drop the course without incurring academic liability is 22 February 2008.

REQUIRED READINGS

Axelrod, Robert (2006). *The Evolution of Cooperation (Revised Edition).* New York: Perseus Books Group.

Brewer, John and Albert Hunter (2006). *Foundations of Multimethod Research: Synthesizing Styles*. Thousand Oaks [CA] and London: Sage.

Moses, Jonathon W. and Torbjorn Knutsen (2007). *Ways of Knowing: Competing Methodologies in Social and Political Research*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire [UK] and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ramsbotham, Oliver, Tom Woodhouse, and Hugh Miall (2005). *Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The Prevention, Management and Transformation of Deadly Conflicts (2nd Edition).* Cambrdige [UK] and Malden [MA]: Polity Press.

Sandole, Dennis J.D (1999). *Capturing the Complexity of Conflict: Dealing with Violent Ethnic Conflicts of the Post-Cold War Era* London and New York: Pinter/Cassell (Continuum International).

Sandole, Dennis J.D. (2002). "Virulent Ethnocentrism: A Major Challenge for Transformational Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding in the Post-Cold War Era." *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, vol. 1, no. 4, June, pp. 4-27 (**www.ethnopolitics.org**, then "archive" [on left side] followed by "volume I" and "issue 4." "Sandole" article is the first one listed).

Sandole, Dennis J.D. (2007). *Peace and Security in the Postmodern World: The OSCE and Conflict Resolution.* London and New York: Routledge (Taylor & Francis Group).

Sandole, Dennis J.D. (2008). "Critical Systemic Inquiry in Conflict Analysis and Resolution: An Essential Bridge Between Theory and Practice" (Ch. 32). In *A Handbook of Conflict Analysis and Resolution*, Dennis J.D. Sandole, Sean Byrne, Ingrid Sandole-Staroste, and Jessica Senehi (eds.). London and New York: Routledge (Taylor & Frances). ***To be provided by instructor.***

Wilson, Edward O. (1998). *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

COURSE STRUCTURE

23 Jan: Introduction.

      A.   Student Expectations.
      B.   Course Overview.
      C.   Assignments for Presentations on Course Readings.

30 Jan: The Unifying Subject Matter of the Field: *Conflict* (Latent [*pre-MCP*], Manifest [*MCP*], and/or Violent [*AMCP*]).

      A.   Conflicts Likely to Characterize the 21st Century.

         1.   The US: Likely to remain the most violent country in the *industrialized world*?

         2.   Worldwide: Anticipated trends in *identity-based* conflicts; e.g., ethnic, racial, religious conflicts? Terrorism?

"Clashes of Civilization"?

3. Other Components of the *"Global Problematique"* ("Unintended Consequences" of *Interaction-Effects*):

Environmental Degradation and Resource Scarcities, plus Natural Disasters (e.g., tsunamis, hurricanes, and mud slides): "New frontiers" of conflict?

B. The Moral and Practical Need to "Do the Right Thing": the Raison d'etre for *Conflict Analysis and Resolution* (CAR).

(Read Ch. 1 in Sandole [1999], *Capturing the Complexity of Conflict;* Ch. 1 in Sandole [2007], *Peace and Security in the Postmodern World;* and Chs. 1-3 in Ramsbotham et al.)

6 Feb: An Overarching *"Kuhnean Framework"*.

A. Framing the "Real World" (*Metaphysical* Component of **Paradigms**).

(Read Sandole [2002],"Virulent Ethnocentrism," and Moses & Knutsen.)

13 Feb: "Real World", continued.

20 Feb: B. Framing *Explanations* of the "Real World" (*Theoretical Component*).

1. *Theory (1)*: Causes and Conditions of Conflict at <u>All</u> Levels **(Conflict Theory)**.

2. *Theory (2)*: Hypothesized Approaches and Processes for Dealing with Conflicts at <u>All</u> Levels (Conflict ***Conflict Resolution Theory)***

vs.

3. *Practice*: Actual Approaches and Processes For Dealing with Conflicts at <u>All</u> Levels.

(Read Wilson; Ramsbotham, et al.; Sandole [2007], Chs. 2-3; and Sandole [1999], Ch. 6.)

27 Feb: Explanations, continued.

5 Mar: C. Framing *Research* on the "Real World" (*Instrumental*

Theory   Component}:   *Research Methods* for Applying

To **Practice** and for Feeding the Results of
Practice Back to Theory.

1.   "*Quantitative*" Research.

     (Read Sandole [1999].)

2.   "Qualitative" Research.

     (Read Sandole [2007].)

3.   "*Mixed Methods*" in Search of *Triangulation*.

     (Read Sandole [2008],"Critical Systemic
     Inquiry in CAR"; and Brewer & Hunter.)

12 Mar: **Semester Break.**

19 Mar: Research, continued.

26 Mar: Research, continued.

 2 Apr: D.   Framing *Research Questions* (*Methodological*
          Component): On the Origins of *Cooperation*.

          (Read Axelrod; and Sandole [1999], Ch. 8.)

 2 Apr: **Midterm Papers Due**

 9 Apr: "*Putting It All Together*" Through **Film**: *Joyeux Noel*
          (2005): The Christmas Eve Truce (1914) Between French,
          German and Scottish troops on the Western Front.

16 Apr: "*Putting It All Together*" Through **Process**: *Scenarios
          Development Exercise*: Core Elements.

          A.   Identify a *Conflict* (Current, Developing, or
               Likely) that Could Worsen during the Next 10 Years
               (*Pillar 1 of the 3PF*).

          B.   Explore Conflict Trajectories:

               1.   Identify the Factors (*"Drivers"*) that
                    Could Make the Conflict Worse or Better
                    (*Pillar 2 of the 3PF*).

               2.   Construct a *Scenario* Indicating How
                    these Factors Could Combine to Make the
                    Conflict Worse (Worst-Case Scenario=Negative
                    Trajectory) or Better (Best-Case Scenario=

Positive   Trajectory) (*Pillar 2 of the 3PF*).

        C.   Design a *Strategy* for Responding to these Factors ("Drivers") to Either Undermine their Potential Negative Impact or Enhance their Positive Impact on the Conflict (*Pillar 3 of the 3PF*).

            (NOTE: For 3PF, review Sandole [2007], Chs. 2-3.)

23 Apr: Scenarios Development Exercise, continued.

30 Apr: Course Conclusion.

        A.   Course Review.
        B.   Students' Evaluations.
        C.   Recommendations for Course Improvement.

7 May: Final Papers Due.