

CONF 610 -- Philosophy and Methods of Conflict Research
Fall 2011

7:20 pm - 10:00 pm Thursdays
Arlington: Truland Bldg 647

Instructor: Karina Korostelina,
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Truland Room 632;

Office hours: 2.30- 4 pm Mondays, 6-7pm Thursday or by appointment

This course explores the philosophies behind social science research, theoretical and ethical foundations of quantitative and qualitative research, research design, various quantitative and qualitative methodologies, the process of case selection, as well as issues likely to emerge in the process of conducting research. The course rests on the continuity of *ontology* (the nature of the world and causation of conflicts), *epistemology* (nature of valid knowledge about conflict), and *methodology* (the means by which we conduct research to test existing knowledge or generate new knowledge about conflicts and conflict resolution).

Assigned reading includes methodological texts as well as articles that represent research with a particular method. Class discussion of these texts will focus on how the authors generated a research question; how they set up their research designs; what methods they employed and why to answer their research questions; whether they achieved their goals; and the benefits, limitations, ethics, and politics of each approach. Throughout the course class sessions will include attention to hands-on research activities and students will have an opportunity to conduct small scale conflict research.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

GMU is an Honor Code university; please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

GMU EMAIL ACCOUNTS

Students must activate their GMU email accounts to receive important University information, including messages related to this class.

OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. <http://ods.gmu.edu>

OTHER USEFUL CAMPUS RESOURCES:

WRITING CENTER: A114 Robinson Hall; (703) 993-1200;
<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES “Ask a Librarian”
<http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS): (703) 993-2380;
<http://caps.gmu.edu>

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

The University Catalog, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university affairs.

ASSIGNED READINGS

The following books are available for purchase at the Arlington Campus Bookstore:
Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (3rd ed). Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications.

Robson, C. (2011). *Real World Research: A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-Researchers* (3rd ed). Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers

All additional readings should be accessible through the GMU’s blackboard at <https://gmu.blackboard.com/>. To use the blackboard, allow pop ups, enter you GMU e-mail username and password and choose CONF610 from the menu.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINES

Course Participation: 20%

The emphasis in this class will be on an intellectual give and take among us all. Class meetings will be in seminar form rather than lecture. This requires students to be responsible for completing all the readings prior to class, preparing to engage in class discussion, and actively participating. Assessment will be based on both frequency and quality of participation; high quality participation promotes and deepens class discussion and offers evidence of significant engagement with the readings. **Participation will be assessed throughout the term.**

Research Design: 30%

To write this paper you should pick a research area of interest to you. Research design paper (5-8 pages) will include:

- 1) *Statement of the problem and research question* (this part will identify a problem or puzzle that intrigues you, research question and the aims or purpose of the research project you hope to carry out in order to answer the question or solve the puzzle. You will need to refer to the literature that gives rise to this puzzle/question and discuss the contribution you hope to make through research. You have to present the draft of your

research question and present hypothesis as a possible answer (s) for your research question);

2) *Research design*

This part follows on the previous and describes in detail the qualitative or/and quantitative methods to be used to investigate the research question underpinning the project and should pay particular attention to how you selected your sample and methods. Discuss why you chose particular methods as well as their relevance to your research question. You also have to identify sample for your research, method of sampling as well as possible ethical issues connected with your research and discuss how you are going to address them.

3) A description of the portion of the research design you intend to pilot for the purposes of producing your final Research Report.

4) Draft research instruments for your pilot study. Depending on your study design these may include interview questionnaires, survey instruments, focus group guides and questionnaires, observation protocols, and/or document collection protocols.

Due date: November 15th

Research Portfolio: 50%

At the end of the term you will submit a portfolio of materials that reflect your progress during the class. The portfolio will consist of two items:

1. Short (5 minutes!) power point presentation of your paper to discuss in class. The presentation's aims are to get feedback for the final paper.
2. Final paper (15-20 pages) that includes:
 - 1) Revised statement of the problem and research question;
 - 2) Revised research design;
 - 3) Description of research and data analysis.

Each student will complete a *pilot study* based on developed research design. The pilot study may include several interviews or survey conducted on the small scale sample available for a student (through direct contact or internet).

Due dates are as follows: Part 1: November 29th

Part 2— December 13th

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS, READINGS, ACTIVITIES, AND ASSIGNMENTS

August 30- Introduction. Conducting qualitative research in the field of conflict analysis and resolution

September 6 – Foundations of social science research

Creswell, Chapter 1

Robson, Part One—Chapters 1 & 2

September 13 – Problems & questions in conflict analysis & resolution. Ethics and objectivity in research

Creswell, Chapters 2, 3 (up to page 62) & 4, pp. 87-92, 162-165, 190-193
Robson, Chapter 3 & 4, pp.100-110, 168-177 (pp.85-93,154-160,197-208)

Each student has to bring one article representing research in conflict analysis and resolution field and be ready to present problem and research question stated in this article.

September 20 – Flexible design

Creswell, pp.61-69,112-116,129-131
Robson, Chapter 6

September 27 – Interviews and observations

Creswell, pp.173-183
Robson, Chapters 9, 11 & 12 (11&13)
John Johnson, "In-Depth Interviewing," In Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein, editors, *Handbook of Interview Research*, Sage, 2002, pp.103-119

September 29- Analysis of qualitative data

Robson, Chapter 14 (17)
Creswell:183-190
Marlene Pomrenke (2007). Using Grounded Theory to Understand Resiliency in Pre-Teen Children of High-Conflict Families, *The Qualitative Report*, Volume 12 Number 3, 356-374
Aspinall, Edward. (2007). The Construction of Grievance: Natural Resources and Identity in a Separatist Conflict, *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 51, Iss. 6; p. 950-973
Hardy, Cynthia and Nelson Phillips. *Discourse Analysis: Investigating Processes of Social Construction*
Oren, Neta, Rothbart, Daniel and Korostelina, Karina V.(2009) 'Striking Civilian Targets During the Lebanon War—A Social Psychological Analysis of Israeli Decision Makers', In *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*,15:3,281 — 303
Catherine Kohler Riessman, "Introduction: Locating Narratives" and "Theoretical Contexts" (1-24) in *Narrative Analysis: Qualitative Research Methods Series*, Sage, 1993.
Argiris Archakis and Angeliki Tzanne (2005). Narrative positioning and the construction of situated identities. Evidence from conversations of a group of young people in Greece, *Narrative Inquiry* 15:2 267-291

October 4– Fixed design I (experimental design)

Creswell, pp.155-162
Robson, pp. 110-154 (93-122)
Robb Willer & Nick Adams The threat of terrorism and support for the 2008 presidential candidates: results of a national field experiment

October 25 – Fixed design II

Creswell, pp.49-61, 116-120,131-136

Robson, pp.98-100, 154-162 (123-130, 81-85)

November 1 - Surveys and questionnaires

Creswell, pp.145-155

Robson, Chapters 8 & 10 (10)

November 8– Analysis of quantitative data

Robson, Chapter 13 (16)

Creswell: 151-153

November 15 – Action and evaluation design

Robson, Chapter 6 (8)

November 22- no classes

November 29 - Research Project Presentations

Robson: Chapter 15 & Appendix A

December 6– Research Project Presentations

Robson: Chapter 15 & Appendix A

December 13: Final Research Project Proposals Due by 5:00 pm