

CONF 709  
WAR, VIOLENCE, AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Semester: Spring 2006  
Class Time: Monday, 4:30-7:10 pm  
Location: Arlington Campus, Truland Bldg., Rm. 333A  
Instructor: Dr. Dennis J.D. Sandole  
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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this course is to examine the theoretical and empirical literature on the causes and conditions of violence and violent conflict at *all* levels. Course objectives are, among others:

[a] to evaluate the "*nature-nurture debate*" with regard to the causes of human violence, with implications for violent conflict prevention, management, settlement, resolution, and transformation at *all* levels; and

[b] to explore to what extent this information, plus theoretical and practical insights from other disciplines, can be used as a basis for better understanding *and* either preventing, managing, settling, resolving and/or transforming violent conflicts at *all* levels in the United States and worldwide (e.g., post-Cold War ethnic conflicts and post-9/11 terrorism).

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Prerequisites:** Acceptance into ICAR's MSc. or Ph.D program and successful completion of CONF 501 or 801, or permission of the instructor.
2. **Class Format:** Classes will follow an *interactive seminar format*. Hence, class attendance, participation, and the *completion of relevant readings prior to class* are highly recommended.
3. **Assessment:**

[a] A *mid-term paper* will be due on 20 March 2006. The assignment is:

Based upon your readings, lectures and class discussions (and if you wish, any other sources as well), discuss and attempt to resolve the "*nature-nurture debate*" on the sources of human aggression. In other words, what does the literature say about the impact of "*nature*" and "*nurture*" on the development of human violence and violent conflict behavior at *all* levels? And *despite what the literature says*, where do you stand in all this, given your religious, cultural, and other "*identities*"? (15-20 double-spaced pages: worth 40% of the final grade.)

[b] Two relatively brief, "*applied*" *papers* in which you will be asked to respond to a select event or development (information about which I will provide) by demonstrating how particular

concepts, theories, and approaches can be used to better understand and deal with the situation. (Each of the two papers should be 10-15 pages in length, with the first due on 10 April and the second on 24 April 2006. Each will be worth 25% of the final grade, for a total of 50%.)

**NOTE:** Since these three papers are meant, among other things, to demonstrate that you have been in the course, *your 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 plagiarism at all costs) -- please feel free to consult with the instructor.

[c] Student presentations: Each student will be invited to lead a discussion on the entirety of, or one or more chapters from the Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, Gilligan, Garbarino, Hedges, Pinker and/or Wrangham and Peterson readings (see "Required Readings," below). *In each case, the rest of the class will be expected to have read the same material to facilitate a rich discussion.* Discussions should be aimed at distilling from the readings *their relevance to the themes of the midterm and two applied papers; e.g., the "nature-nurture debate,"* with implications for dealing with violence and violent conflict, including post-9/11 terrorism (worth 10% of final grade).

Overall in-class participation will determine whether a "borderline" final grade of, for example, B+/A- remains in the B or A category.

**Office Hours:** 7:20 - 8:30 pm following each class and by appointment.

**Withdrawal:** The last day to drop the course without academic liability is 28 February 2006.

#### **REQUIRED READINGS**

Dougherty, James E. and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr. (2001). *Contending Theories of International Relations: A Comprehensive Survey.* 5th Edition [New York and London: Addison Wesley Longman].

Garbarino, James (2000). *Lost Boys: Why Our Sons Turn Violent and How We Can Save Them.* [New York: Anchor Books (Random House)].

Gilligan, James (1996). *Violence: Reflections on a National Epidemic.* [New York: Vintage Books (Random House)].

Hedges, Chris (2002). *War is a Force That Gives Us Meaning* [New York: Public Affairs (Perseus Books)].

Pinker, Steven (2002). *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature* (London and New York: Viking [Penguin Books]).

Sandole, Dennis J.D (1998). "A Comprehensive Mapping of Conflict and Conflict Resolution: A Three Pillar Approach." *Peace and Conflict Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, December, pp. 1-30 ([www.gmu.edu/academic/pcs/sandole](http://www.gmu.edu/academic/pcs/sandole)).

Sandole, Dennis J.D. (2002a). "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](http://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. (2002b). "The Causes of Terrorism," in R. Scott Moore (ed.), *Terrorism: Concepts, Causes, and Conflict Resolution*. A publication of ICAR's Working Group on War, Violence, and Terrorism, published by the U.S. Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), Fort Belvoir, Virginia ([www.gmu.edu/departments/icar](http://www.gmu.edu/departments/icar), then "September 11 crisis resolution" [on right side] followed by "publications" [on left side]. "Sandole" article is first one listed).

Wrangham, Richard and Dale Peterson (1996). *Demonic Males: Apes and the Origins of Human Violence*. [Boston and New York: Mariner Books (Houghton Mifflin)].

In addition to the above *required* readings, the following book will be *recommended* reading (especially for those students who already have it from CONF 610):

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)].

### COURSE SYLLABUS

23 Jan I. Introduction: Course Overview.

30 Jan II. The Problem: Conflict, Violence, and War.

A. The Subject Matter.

1. Latent Conflict.

2. Conflict Processes.

a. *Manifest Conflict Process (MCP)*.

b. *Aggressive Manifest Conflict Process (AMCP)*:

(1) *Postmodern Warfare*.

[a] Post-Cold War Ethnic Conflicts.

[b] Post 9/11 Terrorism.

B. Why is a Course on Violent Conflict Necessary?

1. Violent Conflict Trends in the United States.

2. Violent Conflict Trends Worldwide.

a. Domestic: The *spillover potential* of intranational conflicts.

(1) *Functional Spillover*.

(2) *External Intervention*.

[a] Ethnic Kin Intervention.

[b] Humanitarian Intervention.

(3) *Multiplier-Effect Systemic Contagion.*

b. International (including post-911 terrorism and the "Clash of Civilizations").

C. Three Theoretical and Practical Questions:

1. How Can *MCPS* be Prevented from Becoming *AMCPs*?
2. What are the Causes of *AMCPs*? [Status of the "*Nature-Nurture Debate*"?]
3. How Do We Conduct Research on *AMCPs*? (CONF 610)

READ: Gilligan, Prologue (pp. 1-26);  
Garbarino, Preface (pp. ix-xiii) and Ch. 1;  
Sandole, 1999, Chs. 1-5 and pp. 134-150.

6 Feb/  
13 Feb      III. An Enhanced Basis for Understanding and Dealing with the Problem.

A. Three levels of Conflict Reality.

1. *Conflict-as-Symptoms* (Perceptible/Measurable Indicators of Underlying Problems and Causes).
2. *Conflict-as-Process* (Underlying Conflicted Relationships).
3. *Conflict-as-Start-up Conditions* (Underlying Deep-Rooted Causes and Conditions of the Conflicted Relationships).

B. A Comprehensive Mapping of Conflict and Conflict Resolution: A 3-Pillar Approach.

READ: Sandole, 1998.

1. *Pillar 1: Conflict (Dependent Variable).*
  - a. Parties.
  - b. Issues.
  - c. Long-term Objectives.
  - d. Means.
  - e. Conflict-handling Orientations.
  - f. Conflict Environments.

20 Feb/  
27 Feb      2. *Pillar 2: Conflict Causes and Conditions (Independent Variables).*

READ: Sandole, 1999, Ch. 6.

a. *Individual Level (Image I)*

- [1] Biological.
- [2] Physiological.
- [3] Learning.
- [4] Dissonance.

READ: D&P, Chs. 2, 6, 11;

Hedges;  
 Pinker; and  
 Wrangham & Peterson, Chs. 1-9.  
 (Also review Garbarino and Gilligan plus  
 Sandole, 1999, pp. 178-185.)

6 Mar: *Guest Lecture and Mid-Term Course Evaluation*

13 Mar: *Mid-Semester Break: No classes*

20 Mar b. *Societal/National level (Image II).*

- [1] Domestic-Foreign Conflict Nexus.
- [2] Crisis Decisionmaking.
- [3] Action-Reaction Dynamics.
- [4] Power Distance.
- [5] Imperialism (and "Lateral Pressures").

READ: D&P, Chs. 4, 7, 9;  
 Gilligan, Chs. 1-10;  
 Garbarino, Chs. 2-5.

**Mid-Term Papers Due (20 March).**

27 Mar c. *Trans-societal/International level (Image III).*

- [1] [Endogenous vs. Exogenous Systems.
- [2] Bi- vs. Multipolar Systems.
- [3] Tendencies toward the "Unit Veto" System.
- [4] International Distribution of Wealth ("Marxist Delight").

READ: D&P, Chs. 3,8,10.

d. *Global/Ecological Level (Image IV).*

- [1] Environmental Degradation.
- [2] The "Malthusian Nightmare" Revisited.

READ: D&P, pp. 172-174

3 Apr 3. *Pillar 3: Conflict Intervention.*

a. 3rd Party Objectives.

- [1] Violent Conflict *Prevention*  
 [= **Preventive Diplomacy**].
- [2] Conflict *Management*  
 [= **Peacekeeping**].
- [3] Conflict *Settlement*  
 [= **Coercive Peacemaking**].

[4] Conflict *Resolution*  
 [= **Noncoercive Peacemaking**].

[5] Conflict *Transformation* [*Provention*]  
 [= **Peacebuilding**].

b. 3rd Party Approaches for Achieving Goals.

[1] Competitive and/or Cooperative Processes.

[2] Negative and/or Positive Peace  
 Orientations.

[3] Track-1 and/or Multi-Track Actors and  
 Techniques.

10 Apr/  
 17 Nov IV. Integration: Theory as a Basis for Enhanced Practice.

A. Generic Theory or Disparate Bits and Pieces?

B. Resolution of the "Nature-Nurture Debate"?

C. The Need for a "Paradigm Shift": From a One-  
 Dimensional (*Realpolitik-only*) to a  
 Multidimensional (e.g., "4+2") Orientation?

D. Static Conditions vs. Dynamic Processes.

1. *Catastrophe* Theory.

2. *Chaos* Theory.

3. *Complexity* Theory.

READ: D&P, Ch. 12;

Sandole, 1999, pp. 110-113, 128-132, Chap. 8.

**1<sup>st</sup> Applied Papers Due (10 April).**

24 Apr V. Application of Theory: Dealing with Violence and Violent  
 Conflict in the U.S., and Postmodern Warfare Globally.

READ: Gilligan, Epilogue (pp. 241-267);

Garbarino, Chs. 6-8 and Appendix (pp. 239-250);

Sandole, 1999, pp. 150-169;

Sandole, 2002ab;

Wrangham & Peterson, Chs. 10-13.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Applied Papers Due (24 April).**