

CONF 900.001
CRN: 74141
Integrating Theory, Practice and Method in Conflict Analysis
Founders Hall 479
Mondays, 4:30-7:10

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Despite its title, this course is not primarily about integration of conflict theory, practice and research, but is primarily about the skill-enhancement in preparation for the upcoming comprehensive exam. We begin with attention to positioning—how each student positions her/himself in the field with respect to their major research topics. Each student will then attend to developing their particular research problem, formulating research question(s), providing a careful review of the relevant literature, and developing a research design that is suitable to address the particular research question(s). Obviously, the development of such skills rests upon the knowledge acquired from prior academic study, knowledge that will be synthesized in the process of developing individual research plans. So, with such synthesis, each student will be engaged indirectly in the integration of theory, practice and research.

Regarding the substantive topics in our field, we will be addressing issues and challenges associated with dynamics of inter-group conflicts—how groups are formed, how they interact in the prelude to conflict and how they are transformed in the wake of violent interactions. But most of the substantive issues in the course will come from students. In that regard this course will be run as a seminar which calls for active participation in and outside of class. In addition to the usual readings and written assignments, students will discuss their work in a climate of mutual support for the purpose of improving each student's research agenda.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Assignment #1: Positioning Yourself in the field

In this assignment you will identify the particular topic that will be addressed in your planned research. Presumably a topic that has garnered some attention by researchers or scholar-practitioners, you should establish your stance—your research position—in relation to the authors cited. You might agree with some authors and disagree with others. Or you might find points of agreement and disagreement for a particular author. Included in your positioning paper is a list of references to the work cited. The length will be 1000 to 1500 words total, including citations. This is due at class-time of Session 3. The grade for this assignment represents 20% of the course grade.

Assignment #2: Problem Statement

The problem statement center on issues that serve as the primary focus on your attention. The issues can be framed as problems that need to be solved. Typically, the problem could be one that is already acknowledged by researchers in our field. But you might consider presenting a problem that is unexamined or under-examined to date in relation to the state of knowledge of CAR. Also, include a statement about the related issues that will not be addressed in your research. The length will be 1500 to 2000 words total, including citations. This is due at class-time of Session 5. The grade for this assignment represents 20% of the course grade.

Assignment #3 Literature review

This literature review represents a summary of the current state of knowledge on the issues to be addressed in your problem statement. Indicate what is known and not known about such issues. Also, include a statement of the theory or theories that underpin your research project, indicating the conceptual grounding to the issues you plan to address. The length will be 2000 to 3000 words total, including citations. This is due at class-time of Session 7. The grade for this assignment represents 30% of the course grade.

Assignment #4: Research Plan

Prepare a research plan that combines the elements of previous assignments, with the addition of a methodology that best fits your project. Your research plan will include the following: problem statement including research questions, literature review, underlying theory, methodologies for data gathering and analysis, and anticipated results. This is due at class-time of Session 9. The grade for this assignment represents 30% of the course grade.

READINGS

Books Required:

Fay, B. Contemporary philosophy of social science: a multicultural approach. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1996. 1-55786-538-8 pbk.

Lester, J. and J. Lester. Writing Research Papers in the Social Sciences, New York: Pearson Education Inc, 2006. 0-321-26763-X pbk.

W. Booth, G. Colomb, and J. Williams, The Craft of Research. Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1995. ISBN: 0-226-06584-7 paper

Hart, C. Doing a Literature Review. London: Sage Publications. 1998
0-7619-5975-0 paper

Articles and Book Chapters [Available in Blackboard]

Avruch, K. 2013. "Does our Field Have a Centre? Thoughts from the Academy." *International Journal of Conflict Engagement and Resolution* 1.1:10-31.

Ramsbotham, O. 2013. "Is There a Theory of Radical Disagreement?" *International Journal of Conflict Engagement and Resolution*. 1.1: 56-82.

Celia Cook-Huffman, "The role of identity in conflict"

A. Veal and A. Stavrou, "Former Lord's Resistance Army Child Soldier Abductees" [Blackboard]

Litzak-Hirsch, et. al. "Whose House is This? Dilemmas of Identity Construction in the Israeli-Palestinian Context?"

Rothbart, D. and T. Bartlett, "Rwandan Radio Broadcasts and Hutu/Tutsi Positioning" (Co-authored) in Global Conflict Resolution through Positioning Theory, Fathali M. Moghaddam, Rom Harré, and Naomi Lee, Eds.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

Session 1 [August 31]: Introduction: Understanding, Thinking and Speaking about Conflicts

Activity: Discuss individual topics of interest

Session 2 [September 14]: Positioning yourself in the Field

Required Reading:

Avruch, K. 2013. "Does our Field Have a Centre? Thoughts from the Academy." International Journal of Conflict Engagement and Resolution 1.1:10-31.

Ramsbotham, O. 2013. "Is There a Theory of Radical Disagreement?" *International Journal of Conflict Engagement and Resolution*. 1.1: 56-82.

Session 3 [September 21]: From Topics to Questions to Problems

Required Reading:

Booth, et.al., The Craft of Research, Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4

Lester and Lester, Writing Research papers in the Social Sciences, Chapter 1 and 2

Assignment #1 due: Positioning Yourself in the field

Session 4 [September 28]: Sources of Information

Required Reading:

Booth, et.al., The Craft of Research, Chapters 5 and 6

Lester and Lester, Writing Research papers in the Social Sciences, Chapters 3, 4, and 5

Optional Reading: Celia Cook-Huffman, “The role of identity in conflict”

Session 5 [October 5]: Literature Review

Required: Hart, C. Doing a Literature Review, Chapters 2 and 4

Optional: Fay, B. Contemporary philosophy of social science, Chapters 1, 2 and 3

Assignment #2 due: Problem Statement

Session 6 [Tuesday, October 13]: Writing Arguments

Required: Booth, et.al. The Craft of Research, Chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10

Optional: Rothbart, D. and T. Bartlett, “Rwandan Radio Broadcasts and Hutu/Tutsi Positioning” (Co-authored) in Global Conflict Resolution through Positioning Theory, Fathali M. Moghaddam, Rom Harré, and Naomi Lee, Eds.

Session: 7 [October 19]: Telling Your Story

Required: Booth, et.al. The Craft of Research, Chapters 11, 12, 13, 14

Optional: A. Veal and A. Stavrou, “Former Lord’s Resistance Army Child Soldier Abductees”

Assignment #3 due: Literature review.

Session 8 [October 26]: Organizing and Expressing Your Ideas.

Hart, C. Doing a Literature Review, Chapters 5, 6 and 7

Fay, B. Contemporary philosophy of social science, Chapters 9 and 10

Session 9 [November 2]: Understanding Others

Required: Fay, B. Contemporary philosophy of social science, Chapter 6 and 7

Optional: Litzak-Hirsch, et. al. “Whose House is This? Dilemmas of Identity Construction in the Israeli-Palestinian Context?”

Assignment #4 due: Research Plan

Session 10 [November 9]: Disseminating Research findings

GMU EMAIL ACCOUNTS

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

HONOR POLICY

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.

Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct.

Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using MLA or APA format. A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me.

GMU E-MAIL ACCOUNTS

Students must use their Mason email accounts—either the existing “MEMO” system or a new “MASONLIVE” account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information. It will not be possible to contact you through another email account, and you should check your email for important course, S-CAR, and Mason information.

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>; Mary Oberlies is S-CAR’s liaison librarian and can be contacted at moberlies@gmu.edu.
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 academic affairs. Other policies are available at <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu>. All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.