

Research & Inquiry in Conflict Resolution

CONF 301 Section 001 – Fall 2012

Class Time: Monday, 10:30 – 1:15 pm

Location: Innovation Hall 206

Instructor: Patricia Maulden, Ph.D.
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Office Hours: By appointment.

Course Description & Objectives

Welcome! This course introduces methods of research and inquiry that can allow the formation of logical arguments, begin the process to answer questions such as how conflicts occur, how conflict dynamics change over time, how individuals and groups engage directly and indirectly with conflict, and how resolution approaches might best be structured. This course examines the kind of activities, procedures, tasks, and goals that are needed for sound research in conflict and resolution. The class centers on skills of research that can be used to analyze many types of conflicts. Throughout the semester, students develop their critical understanding of the research process as they struggle with case studies of empirical research that raise central questions about contemporary conflict, conflict resolution, and methodology. Students will also develop their own comprehensive research proposal on an individually identified research problem situated within the conflict analysis and resolution literature.

Course Objectives

- * Engage in critical reflection of the goals of research and inquiry and the production of knowledge in conflict analysis and resolution
- * Integrate research with theory and practice
- * Examine strengths, limitations, and theoretical underpinnings of quantitative, qualitative, and comparative research analysis
- * Learn how to frame a topic for research and to develop a research proposal

Course Expectations

1. Consistent attendance. Barring exceptional circumstances, you will be expected to attend class.
2. Effective preparation. Students are expected to have read all weekly reading assignments prior to class and come prepared to discuss, question, and engage – the course involves discussion and activities that depend on advance preparation.
3. Classroom etiquette. Come to class on time and prepared. Turn off cell phones, computers, pagers, beepers, etc. Remain in class unless you have an emergency. Allow others and yourself to learn by refraining from side conversations, passing notes, playing video games, instant messaging, reading e-mail, browsing websites, etc. Open discussion and dialogue are class goals but please be mindful of the sensitivities of others.
4. Course completion. In keeping with departmental policy, incomplete grades will be given only in cases of illness, either personal or in an immediate family member. Class assignments that are submitted late will be penalized. If a student has a documented emergency, special arrangements may be made with the instructor.
5. Paper format. Papers should be typed, double-spaced, have 1” margins, and Times New Roman 12-point font. The pages should be numbered and stapled together. Make sure that your name, course number, and paper title is on the first page. Edit your papers carefully as spelling and grammatical errors will lower your overall score. Chicago or Harvard citation styles are preferred.

Course Materials

Required Texts

Barnet, Sylvan and Hugo Bedau. 2011. *From Critical Thinking to Argument: A Portable Guide*. Third Edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Wisker, Gina. 2009. *The Undergraduate Research Handbook*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Additional Required Readings (Available on Blackboard)

Bronéus, Karen. 2008. Analyzing Reconciliation: A Structured Method for Measuring National Reconciliation Initiatives. *In Peace and Conflict*, 14: 291-313.

Cammarota, Julio. 2008. The Cultural Organizing of Youth Ethnographers: Formalizing a Praxis-Based Pedagogy. *In Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, Volume 39, Issue 1, pp. 45-58.

- Dyrness, Andrea. 2008. Research for Change versus Research as Change: Lessons from a *Mujerista* Participatory Research Team. *In Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, Volume 39, Issue 1, pp. 23-44.
- Florez-Morris, Mauricio. 2007. Joining Guerilla Groups in Colombia: Individual Motivations and Processes for Entering a Violent Organization. *In Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 30:615-634.
- Francis, Diana. 2004. *Culture, Power Asymmetries and Gender in Conflict Transformation*. Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management. <http://www.berghof-handbook.net>.
- Lillie, Christine and Ronnie Janoff-Bulman. 2007. Macro versus Micro Justice and Perceived Fairness of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions. *In Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, Volume 13, No. 2, pp. 221-236.
- Malhotra, Deepak and Sumanasiri Liyanage. 2005. Long-Term Effects of Peace Workshops in Protracted Conflicts. *In The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 49, No. 6 (908-924).
- Moynagh, Maureen. 2011. Human Rights, Child-Soldier Narratives, and the Problem of Form. *In Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 42, No. 4(39-59).
- Muldoon, Orla T., Katrina Mclaughlin, Nathalie Rougier, and Karen Trew. 2008. Adolescents' Explanations for Paramilitary Involvement. *In Journal of Peace Research*. Volume 45, No. 5, pp. 681-695.
- Parlevliet, Michelle. 2010. *Rethinking Conflict Transformation from a Human Rights Perspective*. Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management. <http://www.berghof-handbook.net>.
- Reason, Peter. 2004. Critical Design Ethnography as Action Research. *In Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, Volume 35, Issue 2, pp. 269-276.
- Ross, Marc Howard. 2001. Psychocultural Interpretations and Dramas: Identity Dynamics in Ethnic Conflict. *In Political Psychology*. Volume 22, No. 1, pp. 157-178.

Academic Policies & Information

Academic Honesty and Collaboration

George Mason University has an Honor Code with guidelines regarding academic integrity and which is designed, “to promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community” (www.gmu.edu/catalog/policies). The Honor Code lays out strict penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

Plagiarism is a serious offense, and all written work for this course should include proper citations in a standard citation format (MLA, APA, etc.). *If you are unsure about how to cite a*

direct quotation or concept from course or outside readings, then ask for help. “I wasn’t sure how to cite a source, so I left out the reference,” is not an acceptable defense for plagiarism. Copies of common style manuals are available at the GMU library reference desk or online at <http://library.duke.edu/research/citing/workscited/>.

For individual class assignments, you may discuss your ideas with others or ask for feedback; however, you are responsible for making certain that there is no question that the work you hand in is your own. You may not submit papers or presentations from other courses to fulfill assignments for this class.

While it is fine for groups to divide project work among team members, the final product submitted should represent a single, conceptually linked piece of work. Group members are expected to be in class as the projects are completed. Absences during group work affect individual group members’ scores. *If a group is having trouble with a member not fulfilling their work obligation, then the group needs to bring the problem to the instructor’s attention immediately.*

Student Resources

GMU Writing Center

“The Writing Center seeks to foster a writing climate on campus and beyond by offering free writing support to George Mason students, faculty, staff and alumni. No matter what your writing abilities are, writing specialists can help you develop the skills you need to become a successful writer.

Free services include: One-on-one 45 minute sessions with a writing specialist; online writing lab; one-on-one sessions with an ESL specialist; workshops on such topics as documenting sources, grammar and punctuation; writing handouts on a variety of subjects; a library of handbooks and writing manuals; [and an] online chat with a tutor about papers submitted to the Online Writing Lab” (<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>).

Disability Support Services

Any student with documented learning disabilities or other conditions that may affect academic performance should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with the Office of Disability Support Services (993-2474) to determine the possible accommodations you might need; and 2) contact her or his instructor to discuss reasonable accommodations.

“George Mason University is committed to providing appropriate services and accommodations that allow self-identified students with disabilities to access programs and activities at the university as stated in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

To achieve this goal, the university maintains and supports the Disability Resource Center Office, which is responsible for assuring that students receive the services and accommodations to which they are entitled. The professional staff of the Disability Resource Center Office coordinate services for students with disabilities, determine reasonable services and accommodations on the basis of disability, and act as a liaison between students and

faculty/administration on concerns relating to services and accommodations”
(<http://www.gmu.edu/departments/advising/dss.html>).

Library Services

The ICAR library liaison is Gretchen Reynolds (greynol3@gmu.edu). Do not hesitate to contact her with specific questions about holdings and research in these areas or whom to contact for materials still in the Fenwick Library on the Fairfax Campus.

Assignments

Participation 20%

You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings and to engage in working group activities. Active participation based on thoughtful consideration of the reading materials is expected. If you do not attend you cannot participate.

Assignment 1 20%

An essay prompt will be distributed asking you to choose a particular topic. You will be asked to develop a research question or hypothesis, propose a theoretical framework, decide on a research method, and prepare a short bibliography. **Due in class October 1.**

Assignment 2 20%

Building on Assignment 1 and the instructor feedback, you will further develop your previous work into a research proposal. **Due in class November 12.**

In-Class Group Projects 15%

Student groups will practice research methods and analyze research articles, presenting and their findings to the class. Additional details will be handed out in class.

Critical Reflection Paper 25%

Reflection questions will be handed out toward the end of the semester. Each student will engage the questions that will require a synthesis and critical analysis of course topics. Additional information will be given later in the course. **Due via email to pmaulden@gmu.edu & memagellan@gmail.com December 14.**

Course Agenda

Part I. Beginning Research

Week 1. August 17 Introduction to Research & Inquiry
Overview of course; exploring research in theory and practice

Week 2. September 3 Labor Day Holiday (No class)

Week 3. September 10 Critical Thinking
Readings: Wisker Chapters 1 & 2
Review Barnet & Bedau Chapters 1 - 3

Week 4. September 17 Research Essentials
Readings: Wisker Chapters 3 & 4
Review Barnet & Bedau Chapters 4 – 7

Week 5. September 24 Research Paradigms
Readings: Wisker Chapter 5
Ross Article

Week 6. October 1 Research Proposal
Readings: Wisker Chapters 6 & 7
Proposal Frameworks on Blackboard
Assignment 1 Due

Week 7. October 9 (Tuesday) Sources
Readings: Wisker Chapter 7
Review Barnet & Bedau Chapter 7

Part II. Conducting Research

Week 8. October 15 Research Methods I
Readings: Wisker Chapters 8 & 11
Malhotra & Liyanage Article

Week 9. October 22 Research Methods II
Readings: Wisker Chapter 11 & 12
Reason Article

Week 10. October 29 Research Methods III
Readings: Wisker Chapter 13
Dryness Article

Part III. Practicing Research

Week 11. November 5 Reconciliation
Readings: Bronéus Article
Lillie & Janoff-Bulman Article

Week 12. November 12 Conflict Transformation
Readings: Francis Article
Parlevliet Article
Assignment 2 Due

Week 13. November 19	Militarized Youth
Readings:	Moynagh Article Florez-Morris Article
Week 14. November 26	Reconsidering Research
Readings:	Cammarota Article Group Projects Presented
Week 15. May 3	Course Review / Synthesis

Final Essay Questions Distributed

**Final Paper Due via email (pmaulden@gmu.edu) & (memagellan@gmail.com)
December 14 by 5:00 pm.**

Grading Scale

Points Accumulated	Letter Grade
94-100	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-
77-79	C+
74-76	C
70-73	C-
60-69	D
0-59	F