

CONF 620/820

Sara Cobb

Spring 2016

CONF 620 / 820
Reflective Practice in Conflict Analysis and Resolution

Wednesday 4:30-7:20pm

Founders Hall 467

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Course Description and Objectives

This course is designed to provide participants with an experience of conflict resolution practice (negotiation, mediation, facilitation, dialogue and problem-solving workshops) through reflection on the experience of meaning making in conversations---both its production as well as its transformation. *Reflective practice*, a concept developed by Schön (1983), provides a general framework for *designing* our participation in the practice of conflict resolution. He notes that “design” is itself a reflective conversation.¹ Arising out of pragmatism, which acknowledges the importance of practice and the practical, reflection is the process by which people make sense of themselves, in action, by attending to their roles, the theories-in-use, the frames embedded in those theories, as well as the dynamics of the interaction, i.e., how the theories-in-use impact the interaction, and vice versa. This class will expose students to this framework of reflective practice, at the level of theory, as well as at the level of experience. Reflective practice is, after all, a practice. This is the first of three components to this course.

But if the design of this course is to enable students to participate in the struggle over meaning, in their lives, as a party to conflict, and as a third party, the course needs to enable students to track and foster the transformation of meaning, within the narratives that operate as the architecture of meaning itself. Reflective practice provides the framework for assessment, but it does not carry with it, an understanding of how meaning is produced and transformed.

Moving beyond reflective practice, this course will provide students with practical knowledge, if not practice wisdom, in how to participate in conflict resolution processes, either as parties to the conflict, or as 3rd parties toward what Dewey called “critical intelligence,” a kind of interaction that itself would promote the engagement of people in the design of solutions to their own problem, advancing what he called “creative

¹ See Schön, D. (1983). *The Reflective Practitioner*. New York: Basic Books.

democracy” in the process.² In other words, “reflective practice” is a necessary but not sufficient condition for “critical intelligence”---for the latter we need to be able to make sense of how meaning, in context works. For this reason, this course will provide a foundation in narrative theory sufficient to support “participation” in conversational processes and the evolution of meaning frameworks. This is the second component to this course.

Finally, in order to participate in narrative toward conflict resolution, toward the reduction of violence, toward the development of community, and even identity itself, there must be an ethics that guides our engagement, and provides an anchor, a “plumb line” against which we can evaluate our participation. This could be termed “participation ethics.” But rather than offer an ethics of practice, a participation ethics, this course will provide a venue for the *creation* of an ethics of practice, as participants move through their experiences during the course. In this way, the ethical frameworks that guide action will arise *within the doing*, within the practice of conflict resolution processes and tied to the cultural and value traditions that each person brings to the action and interaction. The third component of this course involves the emergence of participation ethics.

All three of these components, reflective practice, participation in meaning-making, and participation ethics are essential features for the practice of a kind of conflict resolution in which people can explore what Ranciere calls the “contradiction”³ between the espoused theory (the story about what is so) and the lived experience, the sensibility, of real people, with real suffering, in the context of marginalization. This is not just a practical process that leads to agreements or settlements. It is a political process by which inequality, as marginality, is exposed, disorganizing and destabilizing the order of things. Without the exposure of this contradiction, conflict resolution can easily function as a smoothing over of marginalization, a silencing of suffering, and a tool that perpetuates inequality. This course offers participants an opportunity, drawing on reflective practice and narrative theory, to engage conflict resolution as a political process.

Learning Goals

This course is intended to provide students with both an intellectual understanding of reflective practice manifest in their ability to critically question the current theory, and its relevance to conflict resolution, as well as their ability to write about the ethical issues associated to reflective practice. But it is also intended to provide students with the experience of 5 models of conflict resolution, (negotiation, facilitation, mediation, dialogue, and problem-solving workshops). To these ends, the learning goals for this course include:

- Knowledge of the philosophical foundation of American pragmatism, on which reflective practice is based, i.e., Dewey.

² See West, C. (1989). *The American Evasion of Philosophy*. Madison WI: University of Wisconsin Press, p.72.

³ Ranciere, J. and Corcoran, S. (2010). *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*. New York, NY: Continuum Books.

- Knowledge of Schon's theory of reflective practice and associated theories of learning;
- Ability to critique Schon's theory of reflective practice
- Understanding of practice as a process of meaning-making (storytelling);
- Ability to engage in the process of reflecting on meaning-making;
- Experiential knowledge of different models of conflict resolution practice;
- Ability to develop a model of the ethical issues associated to conflict resolution as/and social activism;
- Self-knowledge regarding the dominant stories that we, as practitioners, tell ourselves, in the course of the practice of conflict resolution;

Course Requirements

Students are expected to participate fully in all exercises and complete all weekly, required readings in preparation for class discussion. Throughout the course there will be various learning experiences. Mediums will include videos, guest speakers, impromptu vignettes, lectures, simulations and role-plays, journaling, structured observation, class exercises and discussions. Students will be required to (1) participate in class, (2) keep a journal, (3) write papers, and (4) present a group project. *Doctoral students will be offered the option to write one large paper (for publication) and forego the group project, as well as the other set of three papers.*

(1) Class Discussion & Exercises (simulations, role-plays, readings, debriefs) **20% (for doctoral students)** **40% (for masters students)**

During the course of the semester, there will be opportunities for students to engage in simulations, exercises and role-plays. All of these sessions will provide opportunities for reflective practice as a form of meaning making in two senses of the term: at one level we will tracking the stories/frames that comprise the conflict, and at the second level, we will be attending to the story *we* are telling about our participation in conflicts and conflict resolution processes. Indeed, it is not just participation, but the *experience of participation*, as a story, that is critical to the development of practical knowledge about conflict resolution. *For indeed, our stories as practitioners are part of the conflict system.*

Grading: Students will be expected to present an argument for a participation grade they think they deserve at the end of the semester; these arguments will be taken into consideration in formulating the final grade. I will take this "argument" into consideration in grading student's participation in class:

1. Attendance
2. Engagement in class discussions of readings
3. Engagement in role plays/simulations

**(2) Reflective Practice Log: 10% (for both masters and doctoral students)
Due March 30th**

Students will be required to keep a *reflective practice log* from the start of the class through March 16th (or so), recording reflections and tasks on class assignments, readings, discussions and exercises. The log is meant to help you develop your own skills as reflective practitioners and you will explore your own skills and abilities to be a conflict resolution practitioner while integrating class assignments and readings. *A short log summary (5 pages, 10% of grade) is due on March 30th. Grading: The log will not be evaluated, but will be counted as "Complete" or "Incomplete." Logs that are handed in by the due date will be marked "complete" and students will be given 10 points toward their final grade for the course. Journals are due and thus students will not have an opportunity to earn 10 points toward their final grade. Many students write these logs the night before they are due, but the most learning comes from those that are written over the course of the weeks in the course.*

(3) Reflection Papers (3) 30% (or 10 % per paper)

#1 Due February 17

#2: March 23th

#3: End of class (4/28)

Masters Students 30%:

Masters students will select three of the simulations and write a short paper (5-7) pages reflecting on the simulation, drawing on readings from class, as well as experience.

Optional for Doctoral Students 70% (Due at the end of the course)

Doctoral students have the additional option of writing a final paper on the ethics of practice; this paper may take up a theoretical issue at the intersection of conflict resolution and ethics; it may address an ethical issue at the core of a given case of conflict resolution practice; it could describe the set of ethical issues at the core of practices such as development, human rights, and/or transitional justice.

Doctoral students will be expected to submit a paragraph on their topic by February 17th and final papers are due by May 5th. These papers should be written with a particular scholarly journal in mind, to be submitted after comments and revisions.

Should doctoral students choose this option, they will not be required to participate in the group projects (unless they so choose). Research is indeed a form of reflective practice, and as such, doctoral students can choose to focus their "practice" on research.

**(4) Group Presentation of an Ethics of Conflict Resolution Practice: 20%
(This is optional for doctoral students.)**

Building on all class requirements and activities, teams of no more than 3 to 4 students will develop their own *theory of an ethics of conflict resolution practice* as a capstone product that integrates classroom exercises and discussions, and simulation/role plays. Creativity is encouraged. Presentations will take place the last t weeks of classes (student groups may sign up for April 22 or 29). Please submit names of group members and date

preferences for presentation on or by **March 16rd**.

Grading: Each group will be able to earn a potential of 20 points. Groups will be evaluated on the merits of their theory in terms of how it integrates across sets of practices, and addresses sets of ethical issues. They will also be given points for creativity in terms of the presentation itself, so both content and presentation style will contribute to the grade. With approximately 8 groups to present, we will have 4 groups per session (one session on April 22 and another on April 29). Each group will have about 30 minutes to present.

A = 20-19 points; B = 18-14 points; C=13-10 points; F = 9-0 points

Class Policies and Procedures

Students are responsible for completing individual and group assignments on time.

Some class assignments and readings will be sent via e-mail and students are responsible for checking **GMU email** and keeping up-to-date with these.

Honor Code and Plagiarism

A reminder: Plagiarism or other violations of the **honor code** are not acceptable in this or any other GMU class. In addition to the following, please see the Masters Student and Doctoral Student Handbooks on the S-CAR website. All S-CAR students are expected to uphold the Honor Code. All George Mason University students have agreed to abide by the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code. You can find a copy of the Honor Code at: <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code-2/>

All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee for review. With specific regards to plagiarism, 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. If you have questions about when the contributions of others to your work must be acknowledged and appropriate ways to cite those contributions, please talk with the professor.

S-CAR requires that all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit a student's work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. It is good scholarly practice to ensure that all written and oral materials that are presented in class, as well as in writing, be original work, or properly cited.

University Resources and Assistance

English Language Institute

The English Language Institute offers free English language tutoring to non-native English speaking students who are referred by a member of the GMU faculty or staff. They offer Professional Programs for all students needing support to read and write in English. They have an office in Arlington, and are eager to help students with papers. <http://www.intohigher.com/us/en-us/the-universities/into-mason.aspx>

The Writing Center

The Writing Center provides tutors who can help you develop ideas and revise papers at no charge. It can sometimes accommodate walk-ins, but generally it is best to call for an appointment. The services of the Writing Center are also available online.

Contact: 703. 993.4491 or <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>. It is a free writing resource that offers individual, group, and online tutoring.

Disability Resource Center

The Disability Resource Center assists students with learning or physical conditions affecting learning. Students with learning differences that require special conditions for exams or other writing assignments should provide documentation provided by the Disability Resource Center. Please see one of the instructors the first week of classes.

Location: SUB I, Room 222 **Contact:** 703.993.2474 www.gmu.edu/student/drc/

Required Readings

Books (available in the Arlington Bookstore).

Required Books

1. Schön, D. A. (1983). *The Reflective Practitioner: How professionals Think in Action*. Basic Books.
2. Winslade, J. & Monk, G. (2008). *Practicing Narrative Mediation: Loosening the Grip of Conflict*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

4. Ginwright, S. (2009). *Black Youth Rising: Activism and Radical Healing in Urban America*. Teachers College Press: New York.
5. Bojer, M., Heiko, R., Knuth, M. and Mager, C. (2008). *Mapping Dialogue: Essential Tools for Social Change*. The Taos Institute.
6. Freire, P. (1996). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Penguin Books: New York, NY.
7. Dewey, J. (2013). *How We Think*. Creative Space Independent Publishing.
8. Laws, D & Forester, J. (2015). *Conflict, Improvisation and Governance*. Routledge, New York, NY.

Recommended Books

1. West, C. (1989). *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism*. University of Wisconsin Press. · ISBN-10: 0299119645 ; ISBN-13: 978-0299119645
2. Ranciere, J. (2004). *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*. University of Minnesota Press.

Articles

I am posting articles that are required reading on the Blackboard site, under “readings” where you will find the “item” listed in a way that signals the author/title that is associated to the reading assigned for that week. (The library has changed the e-reserve system, so I am loading them into your Blackboard site myself--I have many more to load but the readings associated to first few weeks are available on Blackboard.

Weekly Class Structure and Assignments

WEEK 1 JANUARY 20, 2016

Introduction to Reflective Practice

Themes:

- Background on reflective practice, where and how it’s being used; role in conflict analysis and resolution
- Overview of relation between reflective practice and meaning, focused on narrative and its role in conflict resolution
- Ethics in/for/of Reflective Practice for Social Change
- Building a reflective class environment

Class Activities:

- Introduction, review of syllabus, course requirements and course structure
- Lecture/Discussion: Reflective practice as meaning-making (narrative process)
- Fishbowl exercise

Readings: BEFORE the first class in the semester

- Schön: *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action.*
This book is to be read. Students will be expected to discuss the book and its implications.
- Pierides et al: "Narratives that Nudge"

WEEK 2 JANUARY 27, 2016

Reflective Practice and NEGOTIATION

Themes:

- The negotiation process as a reflective practice
- Connecting "Critical Intelligence" to democracy"
- Ethics of/for/in negotiation as a conflict resolution practice

Class Activities:

- Discussion of "Critical Intelligence" and its foundation in American pragmatism and the role of negotiation processes
- Reframing as the social construction of "critical intelligence" and its role in negotiation processes
- Negotiation simulation and reflection

Readings:

Required:

- Dewey: *How We Think*
- Fisher et al: *Getting to*

Yes Recommended

- Wheeler: "Anxious Moments"
- Anderson: "The Imperative of Critical Thinking in Dewey's World View"
- Laws: "Practicing beyond a stable state" (Cobb's personal copy)
- <http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/example/fish7513.htm>
- <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/news/women-salary-negotiation/>

WEEK 3 FEBRUARY 3, 2016

FACILITATION as Learning Conversation

Themes:

- Conflict narratives in conversations:
- Implication for learning models: Single and Double Loop
- Circular Questions
- Implications for an ethics of practice: Questions that matter

Class activities:

- Lecture/Discussion of facilitation and learning models
- Circular questions as a facilitation practice
- Simulation: Interviewing parties to the immigration conflict (*live*)
- Debrief and Discussion/Reflection on “better” stories

Readings:

- Friere: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*
- Chris Argyris: <http://infed.org/mobi/chris-argyris-theories-of-action-double-loop-learning-and-organizational-learning/>
- Heiker and Huffington: “Reflexive Questions”

Suggested Secondary Reading:

- <http://www.provenmodels.com/5/double-loop-learning/chris-argyris--donald-alan-sch%C3%B6n/>
- [On Deutero Learning: https://organizationallearning9.wordpress.com/deutero-learning/](https://organizationallearning9.wordpress.com/deutero-learning/)

WEEK 4 FEBRUARY 10, 2016

Multi-party Public Policy FACILITATION—Part II

Themes:

- The role of the facilitator: Design issues
- “Consensus” and the politics of facilitation
- The ethics of facilitation practice: Questions that matter

Class activities:

- Lecture/Discussion of the politics of facilitation, the role of reframing
- Role Play: *Gang Violence Reduction Working Group*
- Reflecting on ethical issues and questions that matter

Readings:

- Laws and Forester: *Conflict, Improvisation and Governance*
- Consensus Building at <http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/treatment/consens.htm>
See the set of resources associated to this website at the Conflict Research Consortium.

WEEK 5 FEBRUARY 17, 2016 GUEST SPEAKER: (Hopefully) MOHAMMED ABU-NIMER

Paper #1 Due

Non-Western Approaches to Conflict Resolution

Themes:

- The Limits of Western Approaches to Conflict Resolution
- Lessons from Non-Westerns Approaches
- Reflections on Culture and Narrative for Conflict Resolution Practice

Classroom Activities

- Mohammed Abu-Nimer, guest speaker on non-Western conflict resolution practice
- Discussion of implications for reflective practice
- Reflections on the ethics of conflict resolution practice, as a predominantly Western practice

Readings:

TBD (dependent on Speaker)

WEEK 6 FEBRUARY 24, 2016

Module 3: Reflective Practice in MEDIATION – Part I

Themes:

- History and the nature and practice of mediation
- The role of reflective practice in mediation
- The ethics of mediation practice/questions that matter

Class activities:

- Lecture/Discussion of the stages of mediation and “multi-partiality”
- Baruch Bush video on Transformative Mediation:
<http://www.transformativemediation.org/videos-by-prof-baruch-bush/>
- Role play: *Prison mediation*
- Reflecting on ethical issues and questions that matter

Readings:

- See the link to a description of Chris Moore's work:
<http://www.beyondintractability.org/bksum/moore-mediation>
- Cobb & Rifkin: "Practice and paradox: Deconstructing neutrality in mediation"

WEEK 7 MARCH 2, 2016

Narrative MEDIATION – Part II

Themes:

- Destabilization of conflict narratives
- Narrative and identity
- The ethics of narrative mediation practice and questions that matter

Class activities:

- Class simulation (gender and culture): *Marisol's Mandate*
- GSCS Mid-term evaluations
- Reflecting on ethical issues and questions that matter

Readings

- Winslade & Monk: *Practicing Narrative Mediation: Loosening the Grip of Conflict*.
- Narrative Mediation in the Workplace, Part One (thru the GMU Library)
 - <http://search.alexanderstreet.com.mutex.gmu.edu/view/work/1649777>

Week 8 MARCH 16, 2016 Activism and Social Change

Themes:

Class Activities:

- Lecture/Discussion: Social networks in peacebuilding processes
- In Class: DC Alliance of Youth Activists members (interviews/discussion)
- Debrief and discussion of ethics in mediation practice

Readings:

- Friere: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*
- Ginwright, S. (2009). *Black Youth Rising: Activism and Radical Healing in Urban America*. Teachers College Press: New York.
- Nan: "Social capital in exclusive and inclusive networks"¹
- Speake: "A Gendered Approach to Peacebuilding" at <http://www.e-ir.info/2013/02/11/a-gendered-approach-to-peacebuilding-and-conflict-resolution/>

¹ Yet to be placed on Blackboard.

WEEK 9 MARCH 23, 2016 Paper #2 Due

Reflective Practice: Telling “Better-formed” stories

Themes:

- Criteria for assessing and evaluating, if not *judging* narratives
- The process of supporting the evolution of “better-formed” stories

Class Activity

- Lecture/Discussion on “better-formed” stories
- In class facilitation and reflection, via fishbowl format

Reading:

- Cobb, S. (2013). “Narrative braiding” and the role of public officials in the transformations of the public’s conflicts.
- Hardy: “Mediation and Genre”

Weekend Workshop on Dialogue (Weeks 10 and 11)

March 26th: 9:00-3:00

Reflective Practice in DIALOGUE (Week 10)

Themes:

- Principles and purposes of dialogue
- Where and how dialogue is used (community dialogues, problem-solving workshops, Public Conversations Project)
- Working with the AI process
- Theoretical overview

Class activities:

- Lecture/discussion on appreciative inquiry
- Video on dialogue models
- Fishbowl practice—in class simulation of AI dialogue
- Reflecting on the ethics of appreciative inquiry and questions that matter

Readings:

- Bojer, M., Heiko, R., Knuth, M. and Mager, C. (2008). *Mapping Dialogue: Essential Tools for Social Change*. The Taos Institute
- Appreciative Inquiry Commons: Please take a look at some of the cases

presented here, as well as the “Intro Info” tab:
<https://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/practice/toolsCases.cfm>

WEEKEND WORKSHOP MARCH 26th

World Café Dialogue Model (Week 11)

Themes:

- Cultural diversity
- Learning through dialogue
- Relational development

Class Activity:

- Convening a dialogue: a multi-party cross-cultural conversation on immigration policy in the US

Readings:

- <http://www.theworldcafe.com/>
See Also Hurley and Brown: “Conversational Leadership”
- Bohm: “On Dialogue” at

Due:

WEEK 12 March 30th, 2016

Problem Solving Workshops

Themes:

- The problem-solving process
- Narrative dynamics in problem solving
- The “invitation”
- The ethics of/for/in problem-solving workshops

Class activities:

- Lecture/discussion of the stages of the problem solving workshop as narrative process
- Speaker TBD

Readings:²

- Kelman & Cohen: “The Problem-Solving Workshop: A Social-Psychological Contribution to the Resolution of International Conflicts”
- Barak: “The Failure of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process, 1993-2000”
- http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/Anal_Prob_Solv/
- Kelman: “Evaluating the Contributions of Interactive Problem Solving to the Resolution of Ethnonational Conflicts”
- Rouhana & Korper: “Power Asymmetry and Goals of Unofficial Third Party Intervention in Protracted Intergroup Conflict”

WEEK 13 April 6, 2016 GROUP PROJECT PRESENTATION

- Group Presentations

Week 14 April 13th 2016

Wrap-up

Final Papers Due: April 28th

² All of the readings for this class are yet to be placed on Blackboard.