Conflict Assessment and Program Evaluation
School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution
George Mason University
CONF 660 Section 002

Class Time: 10:00am – 5:00 pm
                Saturday February 4, February 11, February 18, March 4,
                Sunday February 19, March 5
                (Snow day as needed: Saturday March 11)

Location: Arlington Campus – Founders Hall, Room 478. Online at: mymason.gmu.edu

Instructor: Susan Allen, sallen29@gmu.edu

Office Hours: by appointment, Metropolitan Building, Room 5108A

Introduction
Prerequisites or co-requisites: CONF 501 or 502, and acceptance in the graduate certificate program or graduate program in Conflict Analysis and Resolution, or permission of instructor.

The course examines the monitoring and evaluation of conflict resolution programs and initiatives and covers strategies for evaluating programs. Course readings will emphasize conflict assessment and evaluation methods for conflict resolution initiatives generally and specifically as these topics relate to the certificate programs, including: community planning and collaboration initiatives; conflict prevention, reconstruction and stabilization; regional conflict resolution and peacebuilding; and the applications of specific conflict resolution skills and processes.

The course operates on two levels—the need for decisions and tangible evaluation components as well as consideration of emergent issues for which there are no easy answers. An important aspect of the course is the utilization of an array of publically shared monitoring and evaluation resources, gaining exposure to the developing community of conflict resolution and peacebuilding practitioners working to improve interventions and our understanding of what works. Practical difficulties and issues to consider will include: balancing multiple purposes of evaluation; defining success; power and empowerment; user focused utilization and learning; impartiality; ethics; cultural issues; conflict sensitivity; and intervention assessment in complex systems. Students will develop an appreciation and understanding of both established and emergent approaches for evaluating conflict interventions and will wrestle with the many decisions points that arise in completing an evaluation design for a conflict intervention program as the major course requirement.

An understanding of evaluation and the ability to evaluate complement analyzing conflict and designing programs that are intended to ameliorate or transform conflicts. The general approach in the course is that evaluation is a form of feedback and learning and when done well, serves as a mechanism for improving conflict resolution practice and theory.

Objectives and Core Competencies

The course focuses on the following objectives:

❖ *Providing an overview of program evaluation and the variety of approaches and tools available.*
❖ *Providing experience with the phases and steps in designing and implementing a monitoring and evaluation plan.*
❖ *Exploring the constraints, challenges and other considerations an evaluator working in conflict environments might face and how these influence the design and implementation of assessments and evaluations.*

By the end of the course, students will be expected to have the following core competencies:

1. *Orient evaluation efforts towards learning and utilization*

2. *Apply evaluation tools used by evaluators and donors in the field, including logical frameworks*

3. *Understand different methods for documenting program effects*

4. *Select appropriate approaches and tools for monitoring and evaluation given the goals of the evaluation and constraints and challenges to design and implementation*

5. *Explain reasoning behind evaluation design choices*

6. *Know how to conduct an evaluation, write an evaluation report and encourage utilization of findings.*

Course Expectations

1. *Consistent attendance.* Barring exceptional circumstances, you are expected to attend all weekends for the full time scheduled.
2. *Effective preparation.* Class discussions and activities depend on your preparation. Reading-related online quizzes must be completed 24 hours prior to all class meetings.
3. *Appropriate participation.* Engage actively in the course: thorough reading and preparation for class, discussions, class exercises, and peer reviews.
4. *Course completion.* In keeping with departmental policy, incomplete grades will be given only in cases of personal or immediate family illness and unforeseen emergencies. It is important to complete all work on schedule, but if there are extenuating circumstances such as sickness, family issues or religious observances that conflict with our schedule, please let me know as soon as possible and I will try to accommodate your needs.

Course Requirements

Students are responsible for completing individual and group assignments on time. You may be penalized the equivalent of a full letter grade for each day the assignment is late. Some class assignments and readings will be on the course homepage or sent via e-mail. Students are responsible for checking Mason email and keeping up-to-date with these.

1. **Preparation (5%)** Students are expected to demonstrate content comprehension by completing brief online quizzes due 24 hours before class. There is no quiz prior to the first

class. The quizzes are designed to help faculty determine what concepts and content need additional work and for you to assess your own understanding. After the class, students will have the opportunity to retake the quiz.

2. **Active Participation (15%)** In class and online in all discussions and exercises. Given the intensive schedule of this course, absences will be excused only in exceptional circumstances (death in family, medical emergency, etc). Unexcused absences will negatively affect participation grades. An alternate assignment may be required for any excused absences (to be negotiated with the instructor).

3. **Theories of Change and Process Tracing (20%)** Consider the program proposal example posted online. First, draft a logframe (include as an appendix) or other chart format that creates a graphic depiction of the processes and links. Then, discuss the theories of change that appear to inform the intervention proposed; these may be directly or indirectly present in the program proposal. Discuss the processes of change from intervention to output, outcome, and impact as captured in the logframe. These two steps should be written up as a three page narrative summary of the core theory or theories of change and the core process tracing relevant to the proposal. Finally, include a brief critique of these ToC and process assumptions. **Due: Sunday, Feb 19 (midnight).**

4. **Group Bibliographic Essay and Poster Presentation (25%)** The class will be divided into groups of 4-5 students (TBD in class second weekend). The group assignment requires investigating, analyzing, and organizing existing resources for evaluation into a *bibliographic essay,* focusing on one specific conflict and intervention program arena (such as interfaith dialogue, public participation processes or in-house ADR programs). The bibliographic essay is a narrative discussion and review of the literature, issues, indicators, evaluation approaches, organizations and resources relevant to your particular program type, presented to help orient those new to the subject. Each group will present their results during a poster session; the bibliographic essay will be posted online as a resource guide available to all class members. Further details to be provided in class. **Due: Final Weekend, March 5**

5. **Final Paper (35%)** The final paper is an evaluation design demonstrating application and understanding of the course material. Papers should be 12-15 pages and be well supported and documented. The evaluation proposal should be as specific and practical as possible since the assignment is designed for you to demonstrate your ability to design a monitoring and evaluation plan that can be utilized in real world settings.

   Design focus and approval: identify one program or initiative for which you will prepare an evaluation design. You should have personal access to the program or be able to do research via available documentation. In a paragraph, describe what intervention/program you propose to evaluate and to select a primary purpose for the evaluation you will plan. Do not choose too complicated a project for this assignment! **Due: By February 17**

   Evaluation Design: consider the conflict resolution program you choose to work with for the semester. Very briefly describe the conflict and the assessment that the intervention was designed to impact. Identify the goals and objectives of the intervention, as well as the relevant theories of change and process tracing. Identify a core purpose for the evaluation.

Now, design a monitoring and evaluation plan to achieve the evaluation's purpose, such as measuring progress towards achieving the initiative/program's goals and objectives. Identify the type of evaluation you have selected and discuss the alternative approaches considered. Also include the purpose of the evaluation, hypothesis (if any), intended audience, specific data collection and analysis plan, including samples of data collection instruments, and how the results of the evaluation will be distributed and utilized. The paper should be written in a format consistent with typical evaluation plans. Your design should reference and utilize insights from course readings and your own research. Further details to be provided in class. Please include links to the program or program information used for your evaluation design. **Due: Sunday, March 13th (midnight)**

**Doctoral student requirements: In accordance with S-CAR policy, doctoral students enrolled in CONF 660 will be required to complete an additional course assignment. Please see your instructor for guidelines tailored to your doctoral course of study.

University Resources and Assistance

Writing Center: Provides tutors and online services to 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. **Location**: Arlington, Founder's Hall, Room 212 (also in Fairfax). **Contact**: (703) 993-4491 http://writingcenter.gmu.edu

Disability Services: If you have a documented learning disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with Office for Disability Services to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) talk with the instructor to discuss your accommodation needs the first week of class. **Location**: Fairfax, SUB I, Room 2500. **Contact**: 703-993-2474 http://ods.gmu.edu/

Honor Code and Plagiarism: All George Mason University students have agreed to abide by the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code: http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee for review. With specific regards to plagiarism, please ensure that: (1) all work submitted is 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. You should review requirements regarding use and citation of sources prior to submitting your final work.

S-CAR requires that all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases. 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. S-CAR's policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace or substitute for it.

For each major assignment in this course, students will include a signed statement:
  "On my honor, I have neither given nor received any unauthorized aid on this assignment."

Readings

Required Text (available at the GMU Arlington Bookstore or from online booksellers)

Bamberger, Rugh and Mabry. *RealWorld Evaluation: Working under Budget, Time, Data and Political Constraints, 2nd Edition.* SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks CA, 2012.

Required Manuals (Available on-line)

Church, Cheyanne and Mark Rogers. *Designing for Results: Integrating Monitoring & Evaluation in Conflict Transformation Programmes*. Washington, DC: Search for Common Ground, 2005. http://www.dmeforpeace.org/learn/designing-results-integrating-monitoring-and-evaluation-conflict-transformation-activities

Lederach, John Paul, et al., *Reflective Peacebuilding: A Planning, Monitoring and Learning Toolkit.* The Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace, University of Notre Dame, Indiana and Catholic Relief Services Southeast Asia, 2007. http://www.crs.org/sites/default/files/tools-research/reflective-peacebuilding.pdf

Required Reading (Available on course homepage)

Aotearoa New Zealand Evaluation Association. (2011). *Evaluator competencies*. CARE International UK. *Peacebuilding with Impact: Defining Theories of Change.* January 2012. http://dmeforpeace.org/sites/default/files/CAREUK_Defining%20Theories%20of%20Change.pdf

D'Estree, Tamra Pearson, Larissa Fast, Joshua Weiss, and Monica Jakobsen. (2001) "Changing the Debate about 'Success' in Conflict Resolution Efforts." *Negotiation Journal*, vol. 17., no. 2. pp. 101-113.

Elliot, Michael, Pearson d'Estree, Tamra, and Kaufman. "Evaluation as a Tool for Reflection," *Beyond Intractability.* Ed. Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess. Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado, USA. September 2003. http://www.beyondintractability.org/bi-essay/Evaluation-Reflection

Gasper, Des (2001) 'Evaluating the 'Logical Framework Approach' Towards Learning-Oriented Development Evaluation," *Public Administration and Development*, 20, pp.17-28, 2000.

Langlois, et al. The Art of the Nudge: Five Practices for Developmental Evaluators, *The Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation* Vol. 27 No. 2 Pages 39–59 ISSN 0834-1516 Copyright © 2013 Canadian Evaluation Society

Mayne, John. Contribution Analysis: Coming of Age? *Evaluation* July 2012 vol. 18, 3270-280

Rodgers, Patricia. Using Programme Theory to Evaluate Complicated and Complex Aspects of Interventions.

Ross, Marc Howard. (2004) "Some Guidelines for Conceptualizing Success in Conflict Resolution Evaluation," *Peace and Conflict Studies*. 11(1). pp. 1-18.

Search for Common Ground. "Evaluation Guidelines." July 2006.
http://www.sfcg.org/sfcg/sfcg_evaluations.html

Case examples: Conflict resolution program proposals, videos and evaluation designs for in-class and online assignments will be posted to the course webpage or handed out in class.

A useful website is the online portal for Design, Monitoring and Evaluation in Peacebuilding:
http://dmeforpeace.org/

CLASS PLANS AND ASSIGNMENTS

<u>**Weekend 1**</u>   <u>**Saturday: February 4, 10 am-5 pm**</u>

<u>Introductions</u>
- Class members
- Introduction to the course, syllabus overview

<u>Overview</u>
History and purpose of evaluation
Types of evaluation, evaluation roles, emerging issues and approaches
Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) for conflict interventions
- Evaluation cycle and stages
- Assessment/analysis, design & implementation, monitoring & evaluation
Evaluation as learning

<u>Evaluation Exercise: developing criteria, measures</u>

Required Reading for Weekend One:

    Church and Rogers. *Designing for Results,* Chapters 1, 7

Elliot, Pearson d'Estree, and Kaufman. "Evaluation as a Tool for Reflection," *Beyond Intractability.* http://www.beyondintractability.org/bi-essay/Evaluation-Reflection

Lederach, John Paul, et al., *Reflective Peacebuilding: A Planning, Monitoring and Learning Toolkit.* (Sections 1, 2, 3)

Additional Resources:
- Contributions of M&E to Conflict Interventions: DM&E Video, Rob Ricigliano

Due:
(see assignments due for next class)

Theories of Change and Logic Models
- Understanding effects: Theories of change
- Understanding programs and change: Process tracing, logical frameworks, indicators

Indicators
- Recognizing change
- Operationalizing abstract concepts

Applications
- Case Studies
- Discuss chosen semester project topics
- Sign up/Select Group for Group Presentation

Required Reading for Weekend Two:

Bamberger et al. *RealWorld Evaluation.* Chapter 1

CARE UK, *Defining Theories of Change*

Church and Rogers. *Designing for Results:* Chapter 2, 3, 4

Gasper. "Evaluating the Logical Framework Approach…" See course homepage.

Lederach, John Paul, et al., *Reflective Peacebuilding: A Planning, Monitoring and Learning Toolkit.* (Sections 5, 6, 7)

Additional Resources:
- Patton, *Utilization Focused Evaluation,* Chapter 10 (available on course homepage, see discussion guide)
- Mercy Corps Theory of Change, *Youth and Conflict Toolkit*, pp 7-17 (focus on ToC and indicators)
- Bamburger, et al Chapter 10

Due:
1. Start individual evaluation project selection (submit topic by Feb 17)
2. Group project formation (in-class)
3. Content Comprehension Quiz on readings for Weekends 1 and 2
    Due: Friday night (before class)

Theories of change and process tracing reports
- Log frame draft peer discussions

Focusing the evaluation: Purpose, lines of inquiry, stakeholders

Overview of evaluation designs and addressing budget, time & information constraints

Evaluation planning
- Steps in planning an evaluation
- Case study example: to be announced
- Conflict context
- Participatory focus

Required Readings for Weekend Three:

Bamberger et al. *RealWorld Evaluation.* Chapters 2, 3, 4

Church and Rogers. *Designing for Results*. Ch. 6, 8, 9

Additional Resources:
- Preskill and Catsambas, "Focusing the Evaluation Using Appreciative Inquiry" Chapter 3
- http://betterevaluation.org/plan/engage_frame/decide_evaluation_questions
- http://usaidlearninglab.org/library/checklist-defining-evaluation-questions (url or pdf available)

Due:
1. Draft logframe in class for peer review, full assignment (Theories of Change and Process Tracing) due February 19 (Sunday, by midnight)

2. Submit topic and focusing description for group project research

3. Complete Content Comprehension Quiz on readings for Weekend 3 Part 1
   Due: Friday night (before class)

Measuring change
- Baselines, contribution analysis, attribution
- Collecting data, developing measures
- Writing questions for interviews, surveys

Developmental Evaluation

Required Readings for Weekend 3 Part 2

Bamberger et al. *RealWorld Evaluation.* Chapter 5

Church and Rogers. *Designing for Results*. Ch. 5 and 12

Mayne, John. Contribution Analysis: Coming of Age? Evaluation July 2012 vol. 18 no. 3270-280

Langlois, et al. The Art of the Nudge: Five Practices for Developmental Evaluators, *The Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation* Vol. 27 No. 2 Pages 39–59 ISSN 0834-1516 Copyright © 2013 Canadian Evaluation Society

Rodgers, Patricia, Using Programme Theory to Evaluate Complicated and Complex Aspects of Interventions.

Additional Resources:
- Patton, Developmental Evaluation, Ch. 1 and 2
- USAID Complexity Aware Monitoring and Module 17 on Evaluating Complex Programs
- Practitioners Guide to Developmental Evaluation, The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation and the International Institute for Child Rights and Development, 2010.
- Biggs, et al. A practical example of Contribution Analysis to a public health intervention. Evaluation April 2014 vol. 20 no. 2214-229
- Search for Common Ground Module on Data Collection: http://dmeforpeace.org/sites/default/files/2.1%20Data%20Collection%20Overview.pdf

Due:
1. Continue group project research and preparation for group assignment due final class
2. Content comprehension quiz for Weekend 3 Part 2 due Sunday Feb 19 by 8 am

Defining success and effectiveness for conflict programs/interventions

Evaluation challenges
- Political constraints
- Ethics

Data analysis, validity and credibility

Required Readings

Bamberger et al. *RealWorld Evaluation.* Chapters 6, 9

Church and Rogers. *Designing for Results*. Ch. 11

D'Estree, Fast, Weiss, and Jakobsen. "Changing the Debate about 'Success' in Conflict Resolution Efforts." pp. 101-113

Ross, Marc Howard. (2004) "Some Guidelines for Conceptualizing Success in Conflict Resolution Evaluation"

Aotearoa New Zealand Evaluation Association. (2011). *Evaluator competencies*. (see section on cultural competency and values in evaluation) http://www.anzea.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/110801_anzea_evaluator_competencies_final.pdf

Additional resources:
- http://betterevaluation.org/evaluation-options/cultural_competence_evaluation
- Bledsoe, K. L. (2014). Truth, beauty, and justice: Conceptualizing House's framework for evaluation in community-based settings. In J. C. Griffith & B. Montrosse-Moorhead (Eds.), Revisiting truth, beauty, and justice: Evaluating with validity in the 21st century. New Directions for Evaluation, 142, 71–82.

Due:
1. Continue group project research and preparation for group assignment due final class
2. Complete Content Comprehension Quiz on readings for Weekend 4 Part 1
    Due: Friday night (before class)

Poster session: Evaluation Resources for Specific Conflict Resolution Sectors

Evaluation Utilization

Evaluation planning: Peer discussion final papers

Professional development and networking in evaluation

Course Wrap-Up
- Picture
- Course Evaluations

Required Readings
        Bamberger et al. *RealWorld Evaluation.* Chapters 8, 19

        Church, Cheyanne and Mark Rogers. *Designing for Results: Integrating Monitoring & Evaluation in Conflict Transformation Programmes*. Ch. 10

        Take the Professional Competencies assessment (link on webpage):
http://www.cehd.umn.edu/OLPD/MESI/resources/ECPESelfAssessmentInstrument709.pdf

Additional resource:
- Search for Common Ground Evaluation Guidelines
  http://www.sfcg.org/sfcg/sfcg_evaluations.html

Due:
                1. Complete Content Comprehension Quiz on readings for Weekend 4 Part 2
                    Due: By 8 am Sunday March 5

    ** FINAL Assignment Due: (after last class) Sunday, March 13th (midnight)