# International Applied Practice and Theory
## CONF 690/890

Fall 2010- Spring 2011

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Tues: 4.30- 7.10

This course builds on ideas and skills emphasized in other courses at ICAR:
CONF 501: Introduction to Conflict Analysis
CONF 601: Theories of Conflict
CONF 703: Concepts of Practice
CONF 713: Skills/Practices of Interpersonal Conflict and Conflict Resolution
CONF 714: Skills/Practices of Community Conflict Resolution
CONF 715: Skills/Practices of Large Systems Conflict and Conflict Resolution

Further, it is an integrative course, intended to provide ideas and knowledge which feed into and work with:
CONF 642: MS Integration.
CONF 697: Independent Study
CONF 799: MS Thesis
CONF 900: PhD Integration
CONF 901: Theory Development
CONF 999: PhD Dissertation

**Short Course Description**: CONF 690/890, the Applied Practice and Theory Program on Conflict Resolution or APT, is a six-credit course conducted over two semesters. The purpose of the course is to give students experience in understanding dynamics of conflict that include issues of violence, injustice, and discrimination as well as in building research and practice projects on conflict resolution. Students have the opportunity to learn field research in different cultural context, conflict analysis, research and intervention design, intervention processes, data analysis, evaluation, consulting, contracting, entry and exit. Inevitably, they also learn about themselves: their skills, their abilities to work in the ebb and flow of real conflict, their abilities to work in teams, their preferences in research and intervention style, and preferences for form of practice and research. Students find that lessons learned and capabilities built are not easy to articulate. Some students report that the knowledge only coalesced years after graduation.

**Course format:** It is taught in a team project format: students work as a team, actively participating in research design development, pilot phase of research, development and conduction of survey and interviews, data analysis, and final conference. That is, students work on real projects, involving real people, real institutions, real conflicts, and real conflict analysis and resolution. To protect both the

students and the real people involved, faculty participates as members of these teams providing knowledge, skills, guidance and oversight. The APT experience is primarily about applying ideas, theories, models, skills and practices in an intentional and deliberate way. This is about doing, but is also about learning and inventing.

**Course content:** The team of graduate students (around 10 people) chooses the conflict to study during the course. Usually the choice of conflict come as a result of several discussions on (a) the most interesting for students topics on conflict analysis and resolution and (b) ongoing conflicts where research could be conducted. Students come up with the short list of conflicts and professor facilitates the discussion on selection of the particular conflict to study and travel to. The following table presents the conflicts that were analyzed by groups of students during last 6 years:

| Academic Year | Conflict site | Purpose of the course |
|---|---|---|
| 2004-2005 | Bosnia | To study the dynamics of ethnic conflict in Bosnia and its impact on youth. |
| 2005-2006 | International Criminal Court (the Netherlands) | To assess activities and aims of ICC and potential of collaboration between ICC and stakeholders; to develop conception of ICC role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. |
| 2006-2007 | Group of conflicts in Africa (trip to New York, NY) | To analyze interrelations between conceptions of Justice and peace in the operations of humanitarian and human right international organizations and the UN. |
| 2007-2008 | Chiapas, Mexico | To study the Zapatista movement and current state of the conflict. |
| 2008-2009 | Morocco | To study the modernization and religious radicalization. |
| 2009-2010 | Turkey | To study the impact of Turkish national identity on policies toward Kurds, refugees, and Greek Cypriots. |
| 2010-2011 | South Africa | To study challenges and prospects for common national identity development in post-apartheid South Africa |

**Course structure:**

Together with the faculty students develop research design on conflict of their choice: research question, hypothesis, variables, criteria, propositions, modeling conflict, sampling, research methods. Each class meeting starts with the faculty's presentation about particular part of the research design and then students apply this knowledge on the study of the particular conflict. All parts of research design are developed by students that help them to deeper understand conflict dynamics, factors that impact it, and role of parties in conflict. Faculty shares with students experience in development of research design, provides feedback, and facilitates group discussions.

During this step students also meet with experts on the conflict, read literature on the topic and make presentations. Each student chooses specific research sub-question on the issue of their interest that becomes a part of the team research design.

Next step includes designing of research tools: survey and interview questions. The developed survey is published on the Web and students have to identify and invite experts to answer survey questions. The results of survey help both to deeper understand the conflict and to learn statistical procedures of data analysis. During this step, students also start to conduct pilot interviews with experts based on developed questions and start to make appointments for interviews in the country of the conflict. Students learn about cross-cultural interviewing and understanding, specificity of working with vulnerable populations.

During the third step students and faculty travel to the country of the chosen conflict to conduct interviews. This 7-10 days experience is a culmination of the course: students meet and interview different people, learn how to develop snowballing sampling, and how to negotiate and organize everyday activities in different cultural context. Every evening the team meets for debriefings and discussions on interviews.

The final step includes analysis of interview data and presentation of it for wider auditory. Students learn how to analyze and present data about conflict as well as learn how to organize round table or conference on particular topics of conflict resolution.

Course Schedule:

September & October: Introduction to course and aims. Choose the research topics and questions and identify background materials. Digest background and develop research design.

November & December:  Develop interview questions. Conduct pilot research. Identify additional background needed. Prepare for trip.

January: Travel to the country of conflict. Conduct interviews.

February- April:  Analyze data.  Produce final report.

Course Requirements:

1.  Participation.  All students have to participate in and support all activities of their team.  They do not have to be interchangeable, but do have to stretch themselves to take on roles and tasks that are unfamiliar or even uncomfortable.  Frequently, this means that all team members have to do a combination of reading, preparation and organization of trip, interviewing, conducting survey, data analysis, and report preparation.  Students may be required to demonstrate that they have put in the requisite 300+ hours of work.

2.  Representation of ICAR and the field of CAR.  While operating in field settings, students are expected to behave in ways that enhance the reputation of our institution and the field.  Students should:
   a.  honestly represent their qualifications and status as students;
   b.  maintain confidentialities
   c.  build trust and cooperative inclinations
   d.  respect others
   e.  empower others
Actions not consistent with agreed-upon criteria can result in a student being removed from the field aspects of the project and suffering a reduction in course grade.

3.  Contribution to team products.  All students will visibly contribute to major products.  Final reports and written products may have a single voice or editor, but should have elements produced or co-produced by each team member.

Assessment of Students:

At the end of the first semester, all students receive a grade of "IP" indicating the course is in progress.

Final Course Grading:    At the end of the course, all students receive one grade that applies to all six credits.

Each APT team develops its own detailed criteria for grading in collaboration with the supervising faculty.  Some teams have adopted "one grade for all" ethics, while others have accepted different grades for individual team members.  Typically, teams adopt two or three criteria to compose the majority of their grade.  Criteria used in the past include:

1.  Teamwork.  How well did the team members design, clarify and carry out their work (tasks, resources, roles, rules) as a team?  Did team members support each other, particularly through tough points?  Did the team accomplish more as a team than it could as individual intervenors.

2.  Integration.  Was the team's work coherent and integrative; combining theory, research and practice in a useful way?  Did team members articulate their reflections and integrative learning as they went along?

3.  Personal Growth.  How far did an individual team member come during the course of the year?  How much did the individual (or team) stretch or challenge itself?

4.  Contribution to the field.  Did the team develop new theories, models or ideas?  Did the team produce something worth sharing with the field?  Did the team share its experience with the field?

5. Research ethic. Did the team understand cultural context and position of different populations in conflict? Did team follow ethic considerations in their research?

**Special notes**: It is important that every student in the team equally participates in each step of the class. The faculty will observe team dynamic and facilitate group discussions, meet with particular students or small group of student to manage conflicts within the team.

Important part of the course is to develop cultural understanding, sensitivity, and understanding of research responsibility and ethics among students to avoid any possible problems during research trip. Faculty will monitor interviews and discuss all misconducts or mistakes o of students immediately after interview.

**Honor Code and Plagiarism:**
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 academicintegrity.gmu.edu. 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.

ICAR 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. ICAR's policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace or substitute for it.

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. For more information contact 703-993-3642 or malle2@gmu.edu.

The Writing Center:

The Writing Center is a free writing resource that offers individual, group, and online tutoring. For general questions and comments please contact us at wcenter@gmu.edu or call: 703-993-4491.

ICAR's Policy

Each faculty member at the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution will include standard text on the George Mason University Honor Code as part of his or her course syllabi. Faculty will require that all written work must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared to electronic databases. Faculty may at any time compare a student's written work against electronic databases/plagiarism detection software without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require work to be submitted in print and electronic form.

Faculty are encouraged to require students to submit work through Blackboards SafeAssign program. Faculty may also directly submit work using the same system.