

## **Conflict and Our World -- CONF 101 - 005**

Scheduled Meeting

3:00 pm - 4:15 pm

Tuesday and Thursday

Robinson Hall B118

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 2:00 pm to 2:45

### **Course Description**

Across all human societies, conflict is part of daily life. Sometimes it may be an annoyance, such as arguing with a sibling over the last cookie; sometimes it is more serious, such as the debate over gun control or immigration; and sometimes it is tragic, as in recent events in Darfur and Afghanistan. Conflict can be destructive, for example, when it damages relationships among neighbors or relatives or destroys homes and livelihoods. Conflict can also be constructive, as shown by the effects of civil rights demonstrations in the U.S. in the 1950s and 1960s or the Solidarity movement in Poland in the 1980s. Our increased interconnection as a global society has heightened the need for more attention to determining how humanity can deal with conflict productively.

This course introduces the interdisciplinary study of conflict analysis and resolution. We will examine how and why conflicts occur in human society, and what we can do to mitigate their destructive aspects while reinforcing their constructive potential. The course includes an overview of the field including the central approaches to analyzing conflict, an extended case study of a conflict, an examination of several forms of intervention, and finally a consideration of reconciliation and sustainable peacebuilding. We will highlight the societal, structural, and cultural factors that play a part in conflict and its resolution. At the end of the course, you should be able to analyze a conflict, appreciate the contextual factors that influence conflict, know the major conflict resolution techniques, and understand the complexity of the most pressing contemporary conflicts.

Conflict 101 fulfills the University General Education requirement for Social and Behavioral Sciences.

### **Course Readings**

All readings, except for Bronner's book *The Bigot*, are on blackboard. You will be required to get (purchase/download/rent/borrow from the library) the movies listed on the course schedule, and to have them in time for your assignment due dates.

- **Buy:** Stephen Bronner, *The Bigot* (Yale University Press, 2014)

### **Course Requirements and Grades**

- 6 Papers about the films           60% of your grade.
- 1 Final exam                           20% of your grade.
- Pop quizzes                           10% of your grade.
- Participation                           10% of your grade.

## Due Dates

Paper 1	Due Sept. 14—Paper On: <i>A Force More Powerful</i>
Paper 2	Due Sept 28—Paper On: <i>Watch A River Changes</i>
Paper 3	Due Oct. 12—Paper On: <i>Bringing Down a Dictator</i>
Paper 4	Due Oct. 26—Paper On: <i>The Fog of War</i>
Paper 5	Due Nov. 9—Paper On: <i>Pray the Devil Back to Hell</i>
Paper 6	Due Nov. 16—Paper On: <i>Watch Burma VJ</i>

Final paper -- TBD

## Paper Grading Rubric

Papers will be graded according to the following standards:

- A papers: 1) Pose an original question and thesis; 2) Defend that thesis through sound argumentation; 3) Engage deeply in the text, to demonstrate mastery of weekly readings; 4) Be free of all syntax, style, grammatical, and typographical errors; 5) Cite sources according to APA or Chicago style, and contain a bibliography (download and use Zotero if you need to).
- B papers: 1) Pose an original question and thesis; 2) Defend that thesis through sound argumentation; 3) Engage deeply in the text, even if they do not demonstrate mastery of weekly readings; 4) Have some syntax, style, grammatical, and typographical errors; 5) Cite sources according to APA or Chicago style, and contain a bibliography (download and use Zotero if you need to).
- C papers: 1) Pose an original question and thesis; 2) Have difficulty defending that thesis through sound argumentation; 3) Engage deeply in the text, even if they do not demonstrate mastery of weekly readings; 4) Have some syntax, style, grammatical, and typographical errors; 5) Cite sources according to APA or Chicago style, and contain a bibliography (download and use Zotero if you need to).
- D papers: The same as C papers, except some elements have serious deficiencies
- F papers: 1) Do not pose an original question or thesis; 2) Engage in the texts by summarizing, rather than analyzing

Students who receive less than a C on their drafts will be required to take their essays to the Writing Center (<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>).

*Papers:* All papers should be:

- Typed, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins
- Written in Times New Roman size 12 font
- Include a cover page, and page numbers
- Stapled

- Printed with single-sided printing so I have enough space to make comments on the back of pages

### **Paper Assignments**

- All papers must be between 500 and 600 words. You must cite 2 or 3 sources in each paper, only from the readings on the syllabus. Pick 1 or 2 readings from that week's readings, and 1 from a previous week. No outside readings allowed.
- Use the theory from the readings to ask questions about the movies, and to analyze the movies.
- You are responsible for developing your own question, based on close readings of the text, each week.
- You are then responsible for answering that question (the answer is your thesis), and defending your thesis through evidence and careful analysis.
- I expect that you have all taken your introductory composition courses, or are taking them currently, whether here at Mason or from another university. If you need a refresher, this is a wonderful site maintained by my former professor, Jack Lynch. It's called, "How to Get an A on your English Paper."  
<https://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/EngPaper/>

Here is some advice from Jack Lynch. A good thesis is:

- *Argumentative*. It makes a case. That's the biggest difference between a *thesis* and a *topic* — a topic is something like "Slavery in *Huck Finn*." That's not a case, only a general area. A *thesis*, on the other hand, makes a specific case, it tries to prove something. One way to tell a thesis from a topic: if it doesn't have an active verb, it's almost certainly still a topic.
- *Controversial*. That doesn't mean something like "Abortionists should be shot" or "George W. Bush's election was illegitimate" — it means that it has to be possible for an intelligent person to *disagree* with your thesis. If everyone agrees on first sight, your thesis is too obvious, and not worth writing about. It also has to be something you can reasonably argue about: it's not enough merely to give an unsupported opinion.
- *Analytical, not evaluative*. A college paper isn't the place to praise or blame works: theses like "*Paradise Lost* is an enduring expression of the human spirit" or "*The Sound and the Fury* isn't successful in its choice of narrative techniques" aren't appropriate. That's the business of book reviewers. No need to give thumbs-up or thumbs-down; evaluate the work on its own terms.
- *About the readings, not the real world*. Never forget that books are books and, if you're in a class, you're being asked to talk about *them*. Many books are actually unreliable guides to the real world outside, and it's dangerous to talk about, say, Muslim attitudes toward violence based only on your reading of one or two articles or books.
- *Specific*. It's not enough to deal in vague generalities. Some students want to write their paper on man and God, or on the black experience in the twentieth century. Both are far too nebulous to produce a good paper. Get your hands dirty with the text.

- *Well supported.* That's the key to the rest of the paper after those first few paragraphs.

Jeannine DeLombard and Dan White offer this advice for constructing a thesis:

- You do not need a refined thesis in order to start writing. If you begin with a *provisional* thesis and then do good and careful close readings, you will often find a version of your final thesis in the *last paragraph of a first draft*. Integrate that version into your first paragraph and revise from there. Do not worry too much about your thesis, therefore, until *after* you've written out your close readings! A good final thesis should *emerge from*, not precede, your analyses. (“[Papers: Expectations, Guidelines, Advice, and Grading](#)”)

### **Participation**

The professor will begin each class with comments and points of clarification on course readings. The majority of the course will consist of dialogue between students. A successful course will require that students come prepared, read all of the material, participate responsibly in discussions, and listen to the views and ideas of other students. Towards this end, all students will be required take responsibility for leading class discussions on assigned readings.

### **Attendance & Missed Assignments**

Students are expected to attend all classes of the courses. In-class participation is important not only to the individual student, but also to the class as a whole. Because class participation may be a factor in grading, the professor will use absence, tardiness, or early departure as de facto evidence of nonparticipation. Students will be allowed to miss 1 class without penalty. Missing a second and third class will result in 50% penalties to the student's class participation grade. Missing 3 classes is grounds for failure.

Students will not be allowed to miss an assigned presentation, unless they arrange to switch readings with a classmate. Otherwise, the presentation will receive a 0 grade.

Late papers will be penalized 20%

### **Technology Policy**

Cell phones must be silenced while in class. Excessive text messaging and communicating via social media is not allowed, and will result in an “absence” from the course.

### **Accommodations & Disability**

Any student who suspects she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the professor privately to discuss the student's specific needs, and provide written documentation from Disability Services. If the student is not yet registered as a student with a disability, she can contact Disability Services. For more information, view the office's website at <http://ods.gmu.edu>

### **English Language Learners**

The English Language Institute offers free English language tutoring to non-native English speaking students who are referred by a member of the faculty or staff. For more information, please visit their website at <http://eli.gmu.edu>

This course will explore controversial and sensitive subject matter; it is, therefore, expected that students will engage with one another in a respectful manner even when they do not agree with one another.

### **Academic Conduct & Honor Code**

Students are accountable to the following Honor Code: “To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the University Community have set forth this: Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, and/or lie in matters related to academic work.”

### **Plagiarism & Honor Committee**

Students are prohibited from: (a) knowingly permitting another student to plagiarize or cheat from one's work, and (b) submitting the same assignment in different courses without consent of the professor. Should you have any questions about what it means to cheat, plagiarize, steal and/or lie, please consult the website: <http://oai.gmu.edu/understanding-the-honor-code/> Students should review: “Student Strategies for Preventing Violations” link on the Office for Academic Integrity’s website: <http://oai.gmu.edu/preventing-violations/student-strategies-for-preventingviolations/>

Any student found violating the tenets of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee for review.

### **Sexual Misconduct and Interpersonal Violence**

George Mason University is committed to providing a learning, living and working environment that is free from discrimination, and we are committed to a campus that is free of sexual misconduct and other acts of interpersonal violence in order to promote community well-being and student success. We encourage students who believe that they have been sexually harassed, assaulted or subjected to sexual misconduct to seek assistance and support. University Policy 1202 Sexual Harassment and Misconduct (<http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/sexual-harassment-policy>) speaks to the specifics of our process, our resources, and the options available to you.

Confidential student resources are available on campus at the Student Support and Advocacy Center (<http://ssac.gmu.edu>), Counseling and Psychological Services (<http://caps.gmu.edu>), and Student Health Services (<http://shs.gmu.edu>).

All other members of the University community (including faculty, except those noted above) are not considered confidential resources and are required to report incidents of sexual misconduct to the University Title IX Coordinator. For a full list of resources, support opportunities, and reporting options, contact Dr. Jennifer Hammat, Title IX Coordinator, at <http://diversity.gmu.edu/title-ix>, at 703-993-8730, or in the Compliance, Diversity, and Ethics office in the Aquia Building, Suite 373.

## Course Schedule

The Course Schedule is subject to change.

### Week 1

August 31

### Week 2      **What is Conflict?**

September 5 & September 7

- Pruitt and Kim, Chapter 1, pgs 1-14
- Lewis Coser, “The Functions of Social Conflict”
- Morton Deutsh, *The Resolution of Conflicts: Constructive and Destructive Processes*
- Elise Boulding, “Vision and Peacebuilding”

### Week 3      **What is Violence?**

September 12 & September 14

- Carolyn Nordstrom, “Deadly Myths of Aggression”
- Margret Mead, “Warfare is Only an Invention, Not Biological Necessity”
- John Burton, Violence Explained
- Johan Galtung, “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research”

Due Sept. 14—Paper On: *A Force More Powerful* (parts I and II)  
(<http://www.aforcemorepowerful.org/films/>)

### Week 4      **What is Power?**

September 19 & September 21

- Pruitt and Kim, Chapter 2
- Peter Coleman, “Power and Conflict”
- Joan Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*.
- Hannah Arendt, “On Violence”

## **Week 5      What is Peace?**

September 26 & September 28

- Irvin-Erickson, highlighted sections
- Alice Beban, “From land grab to agrarian transition? Hybrid trajectories of accumulation and environmental change on the Cambodia-Vietnam border,” *Journal of Peasant Studies*

Google search and read these if you’re interested. I’ll be talking about them today. My chapter also talks about these classic works of philosophy.

- Thomas Hobbes, “Leviathan” Immanuel Kant, “Perpetual Peace”
- Karl Marx, Communist Manifesto
- Confucius, The Analytics
- Mo Tzu, “Universal Love”
- The Buddha, “Foundations of the Kingdom of Righteousness”
- Plato, “The Republic”
- Aristotle, “Politics”
- Cicero, “On the Laws”
- Bhagavad Gita

Due Sept 28—Paper On: *Watch A River Changes Course*  
(<http://ariverchangescourse.com/> )

## **Week 6      Strategies and Tactics of Conflict**

October 3 & October 5

- Pruitt and Kim, Chapter 3 and Chapter 4
- Erica Chenoweth, “Why Civil Resistance Works”
- Gene Sharp, “Nonviolent Struggle”
- Stephen Zunes, “Unarmed Insurrections”

– NO CLASS on 10/5

## **Week 7      Perceptions of Conflict**

October 10 & October 12

- Experiential Learning Activity: Perceptions of Conflict

Due Oct. 12—Paper On: *Bringing Down a Dictator*  
(<http://www.aforcemorepowerful.org/films/bdd/>)

– NO CLASS on 10/10

## **Week 8      How Conflicts Escalate (Case Study of US-Vietnam War)**

October 17 & October 19

- Pruitt and Kim, Chapter 5 and Chapter 6

Required (find them from the table of contents and read them in this order, 1 to 2 pages each):

1. Ngo Vinh Long, “Vietnam’s Revolutionary Tradition”
2. Ho Chi Minh, “First Appeal to the United States” (1919)
3. Ho Chi Minh, “Founding of the Doc-Lap Dong Minh Hoi” (1941)
4. Bao Dai, “Imperial Abdication” (1945)
5. Vietnam Declaration of Independence (1945)
6. Ho Chi Minh, “Cable to Harry S. Truman: Second Appeal to the United States” (1945)
7. Pentagon Papers, Secretary of State Dean Acheson, “US State
8. Department Decision to Sponsor French Colonialism”
9. Pentagon Papers, John Foster Dulles and Richard Nixon, “Taking up the White Man’s Burden” (1954)
10. Ngo Vinh Long, “The Franco-Vietnamese War and the Origins of US Involvement (1945-1954)
11. Vo Nguyen Giap, Vietnamese Victory at Dien Bien Phu (1954)
12. The Geneva Cease-Fire Agreement, July 20, 1954
13. Pentagon Papers, CIA Operative Edward Lansdale memo on US Cold War Tactic to subvert the peace (1955)
14. Dwight D. Eisenhower, US Endorsement of Ngo Dinh Diem (1955)

## **Week 9      How Conflicts Become Intractable (Case Study of US-Vietnam War)**

October 24 & October 26

- Pruitt and Kim, Chapter 7 and Chapter 8

Required (find them from the table of contents and read them in this order, 1 to 2 pages each):

15. Ho Chi Minh, “The Path that Led Me to Leninism” (1960)
16. The Pentagon Papers, Blueprint for an Americanized War (1963)
17. The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution (1964)
17. Ho Chi Minh, “Defeat American Escalation: Report to the National Assembly of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam” (1965)
18. Jean Paul Sartre, On Genocide
19. Martin Luther King, Jr. “Declaration of Independence Against the War in Vietnam”
20. Negotiating Positions: Hanoi’s 4 Points and Washington’s 14 Points (1966)
21. Negotiating Positions: The NLF’s 10 points and Nixon’s 8 points
22. The Paris Peace Accords (1973)

Due Oct. 26—Paper On: *The Fog of War*

(<http://www.sonyclassics.com/fogofwar/indexFlash.html> )



## **Week 10      Conflict Resolution: Mediation, Peacebuilding, and Waging Peace**

October 31 & November 2

- Sandra Cheldelin, Women Waging War and Peace
- Saadia Touval and William Zartman, “International Mediation in Theory and Practice”
- Paul Lederach, “Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies”

## **Week 11      Writing Week**

November 7 & November 9

- Peter C. Phan, “Interreligious Peacemaking”
- Re-read week 10

Due Today, 11/9, via Blackboard—Paper On: *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*  
(<http://www.forkfilms.net/pray-the-devil-back-to-hell/>)

## **Week 12      Conflict Resolution: Human Rights and Waging Peace**

November 14 & November 16

- Aung San Suu Kyi, “Freedom From Fear”
- Thant Myint-U, “River of Lost Footsepts: A Personal History of Burma”

Due November 16—Paper On: *Watch Burma VJ*  
(<http://www.hbo.com/documentaries/burma-vj-reporting-from-a-closed-country> )

## **Week 13**

Thanksgiving recess    November 22 – 26

## **Week 14      Class and Race**

November 28 & November 30

- William Patterson and W.E.B. Du Bois, *We Charge Genocide*
- W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*
- Carol Anderson, *White Rage*

## **Week 15**

December 5 & December 7

- Stephen Eric Bronner, *The Bigot*

Final Exam TBD, on:

- Patterson and Du Bois,
- Du Bois,
- Anderson, and
- Bronner