

**CONF 601  
Section 001**

**THEORIES OF CONFLICT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

Semester: Fall 2009  
Time: Wednesdays, 7:20-10 pm  
Location: Truland 647  
Instructor: Terrence Lyons  
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Office hours: By appointment

Welcome to CONF 601. In this course we will critically examine a wide range of theoretical frameworks for understanding social conflict. Our purpose is to:

- Present and critique theories for their usefulness in analyzing different types of social conflict
- Evaluate their usefulness by applying them to specific conflict situations
- Assist students to become better—critical—“consumers” of conflict theory and more acute conflict analysts, and;
- Help students to develop their own abilities to construct theories of conflict and conflict resolution.

**Course Requirements**

This course will be run as a graduate seminar. While I will provide background and context, my main role is to facilitate and guide discussion. Your active participation therefore is essential to the success of the course and you will benefit from the discussion to the extent that you have completed the readings and come to class prepared to discuss them.

In recognition of the importance placed on participation in classroom discussions, 10 percent of the total grade will reflect a student’s participation. Participation grades will be based on frequency and quality of your involvement in each week’s class, with an emphasis on the latter. You are not encouraged to speak on every topic simply for the sake of participating but rather are strongly encouraged to find opportunities to contribute in ways that advance and deepen the discussion. Missing more than one or two classes will inevitably reduce your overall participation and hence result in a lower participation grade.

Grades will be based on participation (10 percent), a take-home midterm exam (40 percent), and a take-home final exam (50 percent). These exams will offer a choice among two or more broad questions that will provide you with the opportunity to demonstrate your understanding and assessment of the theories

discussed in class. They will be open book but must reflect the student's own thinking and analysis. Consulting with other students is not allowed. Delays, deferrals or a grade of Incomplete will be given only in cases of personal or immediate family crisis, and late assignments will be penalized. You should look again at ICAR's statement on Academic Standards (Appendix L in the Handbook) and the University's Honor Code. They will be enforced.

### **Readings**

The following books are available at the GMU bookstore in Arlington. We will focus our discussions on key portions of each but all are worth reading in their entirety. Key sections of some will be available on e-reserves but our discussions will be based on the entire book.

Vamik Volkan, *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism* (Westview, 1997).

Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (2nd ed., Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Mark Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security* (New York and London: Zed Books, 2001).

Feargal Cochrane, *Ending Wars* (Polity Press, 2008).

Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Cornell University Press, 2001).

All other readings will be available through e-reserve, electronic data bases available through the Mason library, or from the web. In e-reserves search for CONF 601 Section 001 and then use my password "struggle."

### **Course Outline and Assignments**

**Week 1: Sept. 2 Introduction**

**Week 2: Sept. 9 Realism**

Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, Ch. 1, "A Realist Theory of International Politics," Ch. 3 "Political Power," and Ch. 10 "Evaluation of National Power." Available on e-reserve.

John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, "An Unnecessary War," *Foreign Policy*, no. 134 (Jan-Feb, 2003),

pp. 50-59. Available through Mason e-journals at  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/3183521.pdf>

Paul Wolfowitz, "Think Again: Realism," *Foreign Policy*  
 August 24, 2009, available at  
[http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/08/17/think\\_again\\_realism](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/08/17/think_again_realism)

**Week 3: Sept. 16 Structural Functionalism**

Lewis Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (Free Press, 1956).

**Week 4: Sept. 23 Relative Deprivation, Basic Human Needs**

Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton University Press, 1970). Ch. 2: Relative Deprivation and the Impetus to Violence," available on e-reserves.

John Burton, *Deviance, Terrorism, and War: The Process of Solving Unresolved Social and Political Problems* (1979): 55-84, available on e-reserves.

Johan Galtung. 1991. *Conflict: Human Needs Theory*. Ed. John Burton, (1991): 301-335, available on e-reserves.

**Week 5: Sept. 30 Psychoanalytical Perspectives**

Vamik Volkan, *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism* (Westview, 1997).

**Week 6: Oct. 7 Rational Choice**

Feargal Cochrane, *Ending Wars* (Polity Press, 2008).

**Week 7: Oct. 14 Social Mobilization**

Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (2nd ed., Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 10-25, 71-90, available through e-reserves.

Margaret Levi and Gillian H. Murphy, "Coalitions of Contention: The Case of the WTO Protests in Seattle," *Political Studies* 54:4 (December 2006): 651-670, available through Mason electronic journals.

Jeffrey M. Ayres, "Framing Collective Action against Neoliberalism: The Case of the 'Anti-Globalization' Movement," *Journal of World-Systems Research* 10:1 (Winter 2004): 11-35, available at <http://jwsr.ucr.edu/archive/vol10/number1/pdf/jwsr-v10n1-ayres.pdf>

**Week 8: Oct. 21 Case Study**

We will use this week to apply the theories that we have learned up to this point in the semester to contemporary cases of conflict in the world. You therefore should keep up on current events and be prepared to discuss how one or more of the theoretical perspective above help us understand the conflict in Afghanistan, the contentious politics around health care in the United States, or the continuing divisions around immigration in northern Virginia.

**Week 9: Oct. 28 Globalization and Political Economy  
Take Home Exam Handed Out at End of Class**

Mark Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security* (Zed Books, 2001).

Karen Ballentine and Heiko Nitzschke, *The Political Economy of Civil War and Conflict Transformation*, available at [http://www.berghof-handbook.net/articles/BHDS3\\_BallentineNitzschke230305.pdf](http://www.berghof-handbook.net/articles/BHDS3_BallentineNitzschke230305.pdf).

**Week 10: Nov. 4 Battle of Algiers (video)**  
No new readings  
**Take-home exam due at the beginning of class**

**Week 11: Nov. 11 Identity**

Benedict Anderson *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso, 2006).

**Week 12: Nov. 18 Symbolic Politics**

Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Cornell University Press, 2001).

**Note: No class Nov. 25 – Happy Thanksgiving**

**Week 13: Dec. 2 Non-Western Perspectives**

Mohammed Abu-Nimer. 2000-2001. A Framework for Nonviolence and Peacebuilding in Islam. *The Journal of Law and Religion*. vol. 15, no. 1 & 2. 217-265, available on e-reserves.

Nomonde Masina. 2000. Xhosa Practices of *Ubuntu* for South Africa. *Traditional Cures for Modern Conflicts*. Edited by I.W. Zartman. pp. 169-181, available on e-reserves.

Paul Salem, "In Theory: A Critique of Western Conflict Resolution from a Non-Western Perspective" *Negotiation Journal* 9:4 (1993): 361-9, available on e-reserves.

**Week 14: Dec 9 Post-Modernism**

**Final Take Home Exam Distributed at End of Class**

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1979), chapter 1, "The Body of the Condemned," available through e-reserves.

Amy Zalman and Jonathan Clarke, "The Global War on Terror: A Narrative in Need of a Rewrite," *Ethics and International Affairs* 23:2 (Summer 2009), available at <http://vlex.com/vid/global-war-terror-narrative-need-rewrite-60289141>

**December 16 – Final take-home exam due.** These exams may be e-mailed as Word attachments or printed out and left in Lyons' mail box at ICAR.