

## **CONF 802: Theories of the Person/Micro Theories**

Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution

George Mason University

Fall 2007

Thursdays, 4:30-7:10 pm

Truland Building #666B

Instructor: Susan Allen Nan  
Office Hours: By appointment, generally Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri, 9:30 am- 4 pm  
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### **Course Description**

*The pre- or co-requisites for this course are CONF 801, and acceptance in the doctoral program.*

Understanding human conflict requires knowledge of human behavior, motivation and perception. This course reviews and critically analyzes several theories that seek to explain human behavior, motivation, and/or perception. The theories of human nature chosen for examination are considered specifically in light of their relevance to conflict analysis and resolution.

Class participants are expected to develop:

- A general awareness of the breadth of approaches to micro theory
- More in-depth understanding of selected micro theories as relevant to conflict and conflict resolution
- Increased skills in original critical analysis of micro theories relevant to conflict and conflict resolution
- An articulation of one's own articulation of theory of the person in conflict and conflict resolution
- Expertise in a range of theories that seek to explain a particular aspect of conflict or conflict resolution

This course is not a lecture course. Rather, it is a graduate seminar designed for doctoral students to actively engage in reflecting on the course material interactively. Participants are expected to arrive in class having read and reflected on the week's readings, and prepared to participate in discussion.

Each theoretical perspective studied should be examined with the following key questions in mind:

- **QUESTION:** What question(s) is the theorist trying to answer? Why? What is the puzzle here?
- **THESIS:** What are the key elements of the argument presented?

- **STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES:** What is convincing in the argument? What are the weaknesses of the argument?
- **UTILITY:** What does this work offer – directly or indirectly—for conflict analysis and resolution theory and practice? Are there some types of conflicts for which this theory has more relevance?

## **Requirements**

Class participation (10%) All students are expected to participate actively in discussion in this seminar-style class. Absences will be excused only in exceptional circumstances.

Class Presentation of Deutsch, Coleman, and Marcus, eds, Chapter (5%) Each participant will sign up the first week to present a chapter from the Deutsch, Coleman, and Marcus edited Handbook of Conflict Resolution during class Week 3. The presentations should, in less than four minutes, summarize the essential thesis of the chapter and the presenter's assessment of the approach presented. Each participant should prepare a one page outline of the core concepts of the chapter, and bring copies of this outline for distribution to all classmates. DUE WEEK 3, SEPT 13.

Reflection papers (45%-- 15% each) Three times during Weeks 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, and 12, write a reflection paper on the reading for the week. Consider the main arguments of the reading, and assess the strengths, weaknesses, and relevance of the theory. Papers should be no more than 4-6 pages. Reflections papers are due by 4:30 the day of the course discussion of the relevant reading material. Consider spacing out your reflection papers to at least every other week so that you are able to consider feedback on your early reflection papers prior to writing your later papers. DUE THREE TIMES DURING WEEKS 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, or 12.

Book Review (15%) Choose a book from the broad areas of psychology, conflict resolution, spirituality, religion, organizational development, self-help, or other related field that you have not previously read and that sparks your interest in some personal way. Read the book. Then, building on your experience of writing three reflection papers, write a book review. Write your book review so that it is appropriate for publication in a journal of your choice. Identify the publication guidelines for the particular journal you choose, write your book review in accordance with these guidelines, and turn a copy of the guidelines in when you turn in your book review. Consider also looking at other book reviews published in the journal you have chosen. Depending on your intended publication outlet, you may focus your book review on evaluating the book's utility, message, intended audience, contribution to the literature, role in an important area of research, etc. Consider reflecting on how the book helps you make sense of your life or your work. Generally, less than half of your book review should summarize the main points of the book; a major part of the book review should be your opinion about the book's usefulness in terms of understanding aspects of your life or conflict and conflict resolution related theory or practice. Like the previously completed reflection papers, these elements, summarizing the theorist's thesis and your assessment

of it, should be woven together in your paper. Unlike the reflection papers, this review should be written with a publication plan in mind. I highly recommend participants choose a very recently published book, and consider submitting your book review for publication in a relevant journal. DUE NOV. 15, with presentations on Nov. 15 and Nov. 29.

Final paper (25%) Consider the range of micro theory approaches to conflict and conflict resolution, with a focus on a question that interests you. How have theorists attempted to answer your question? What approaches have been useful, and what approaches less useful. In what ways do these various approaches complement each other? Contradict each other? As a whole, what guidance do they offer scholar/practitioners of conflict resolution? What additional insights does our field need in this area? What areas require additional research? What do we not understand now that we need to better understand? Papers should be 17-20 pages maximum. Due December 10 at 9 am. Prepare to present paper December 6, prior to turning in final paper on December 10 by 9 am.

### **Honor Code**

Plagiarism or other violations of the honor code are not acceptable in this or any other GMU class. See the ICAR handbook ([http://www.gmu.edu/departments/ICAR/newstudent/Appendix\\_L.pdf](http://www.gmu.edu/departments/ICAR/newstudent/Appendix_L.pdf)) for clarification of related issues, or ask me if you have any questions. It is much better to ask prior to turning in an assignment, rather than waiting for a faculty member to notice something that should have been cited. Papers turned in for this class may be analyzed with online plagiarism detection services such as Turnitin.com.

### **Books (on order at GMU Bookstore):**

Bandura, Albert. *Aggression: A Social Learning Analysis*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1973.

Deutsch, Coleman, and Marcus, eds. *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution*. Second Edition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006.

Gilligan, Carol. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Hanh, Tich Nhat. *Peace is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life*. New York: Bantam Books, 1991.

Harre, Rom and Grant Gillett. *The Discursive Mind*. Sage Publications, 1994.

Lederach, John Paul. *The Moral Imagination*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2004.

Lorenz, Konrad (1966). *On Aggression*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc.

Nye, Robert D. *Three Psychologies: Perspectives from Freud, Skinner, and Rogers*. 6<sup>th</sup> Edition. Wadsworth Publishing, 1999.

Volkan, Vamik. *Killing in the Name of Identity: A Study of Bloody Conflicts*. Charlottesville, VA: Pitchstone Publishing, 2006.

Yoder, Carolyn. *The Little Book of Trauma Healing: When Violence Strikes and Community Security is Threatened*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2005.

## **Weekly Class Plans and Assignments**

### **Week 1 Theories of the Person overview.**

Placing theories of human nature in larger ontologies/worldviews.

Relating theories of human nature to theories of conflict and conflict resolution.

Introducing primary historical debates.

Considering key questions regarding people and people in conflict.

Emphasizing personal nature of theories of the person.

Thursday, August 30, 2007

No preparation for first class.

During class, participants will sign up for Week 3 Presentations.

### **Week 2 Comparing and Contrasting Major Psychological Theories**

Thursday, September 6, 2007

Preparation:

Nye, Robert D. *Three Psychologies: Perspectives from Freud, Skinner, and Rogers*. 6<sup>th</sup> Edition. Wadsworth Publishing, 1999.

### **Week 3 Micro-theories focused on Conflict and Conflict Resolution; Past, Present, and Future Research**

Thursday, September 13, 2007

Preparation:

Deutsch, Coleman, and Marcus, eds. *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution*. Jossey Bass: 2006. Selected Chapters:

- Introduction- required for all to read
- Chapter 37- required for all to read
- Conclusion- required for all to read

Choose one of these, as agreed in class the first week, to present with a one-page summary:

- Chapter 7
- Chapter 11
- Chapter 12
- Chapter 13
- Chapter 15
- Chapter 16
- Chapter 20
- Chapter 22
- Chapter 23
- Chapter 24
- Chapter 36

#### **Week 4 Instinct**

Thursday, September 20, 2007

Preparation:

Lorenz, Konrad (1966). *On Aggression*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc.

Optional week to turn in reflection paper. Paper is due at 4:30 pm the class day that the book reflected upon is discussed.

#### **Week 5 Social Learning Theory**

Thursday, September 27, 2007

Preparation:

Bandura, Albert. *Aggression: A Social Learning Analysis*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1973.

Optional week to turn in reflection paper. Paper is due at 4:30 pm the class day that the book reflected upon is discussed.

#### **Week 6 A Psychodynamic Approach to Conflict and Conflict Resolution**

Thursday, October 4, 2007

Preparation:

Volkan, Vamik. *Killing in the Name of Identity: A Study of Bloody Conflicts*. Charlottesville, VA: Pitchstone Publishing, 2006.

Optional week to turn in reflection paper. Paper is due at 4:30 pm the class day that the book reflected upon is discussed.

### **Week 7 A Contemplative Approach to Conflict and Conflict Resolution**

Thursday, October 11, 2007

Preparation:

Hanh, Tich Nhat. *Peace is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life*. New York: Bantam Books, 1991.

Optional week to turn in reflection paper. Paper is due at 4:30 pm the class day that the book reflected upon is discussed.

### **Week 8 Gender, Conflict and Conflict Resolution**

Thursday, October 18, 2007

Preparation:

Gilligan, Carol. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Optional week to turn in reflection paper. Paper is due at 4:30 pm the class day that the book reflected upon is discussed.

### **Week 9 Discursive Mind**

Thursday, October 25, 2007

Preparation:

Harre, Rom and Grant Gillett. *The Discursive Mind*. Sage Publications, 1994.

Optional week to turn in reflection paper. Paper is due at 4:30 pm the class day that the book reflected upon is discussed.

### **Week 10 Creating a Personal and a Class "Theory of the Person"**

Thursday, November 1, 2007

Guest Speaker: Elizabeth Johnson, Associate Artistic Director of Liz Lerman Dance Exchange, will present on the Critical Response Process, and lead us in an exercise of sharing our artistic expressions with each other.

Preparation:

Using any art form you wish, explore your own “theory of the person.” What are people? How do we develop? How do we relate with others? How do we engage in conflict and conflict resolution? Bring some sort of representation of your “theory of the person” to share in class—a poem, drawing, painting, sculpture, dance, music, weaving, food creation, etc.

### **Week 11 A Reflective Practitioner’s Theory of the Peacebuilder as a Person**

Thursday, November 8, 2007

Preparation:

Lederach, John Paul. *The Moral Imagination*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2004.

Optional week to turn in reflection paper. Paper is due at 4:30 pm the class day that the book reflected upon is discussed.

### **Week 12 A Reflective Practitioner’s Approach to Trauma Healing**

Thursday, November 15, 2007

Preparation:

Yoder, Carolyn. *The Little Book of Trauma Healing: When Violence Strikes and Community Security is Threatened*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2005.

Optional week to turn in reflection paper. Paper is due at 4:30 pm the class day that the book reflected upon is discussed.

Book review due at 4:30 pm as class begins.

A few students will make book review presentations this week, as agreed in previous weeks.

### **Thanksgiving Recess**

NO CLASS on Thursday, November 22, 2007

### **Week 13 Assessing Current Research, Considering New Directions**

Thursday, November 29, 2007

Preparation:

Prepare to present book review to classmates.

**Week 14 Paper Presentations**

**Integration**

LAST CLASS

Thursday, December 6, 2007

Preparation:

Prepare to present final paper to classmates.

**Exam Period December 11-18**

PAPERS DUE DECEMBER 10, 9 AM.