Conflict Analysis and Resolution: Theory and Practice

SIS 609-001, Spring 2013
Class time: Th 5:30 – 8:00 pm
Location: AND LL-3
Office Hours: Th 8:00-9:00pm or by appointment

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Course Description:
This course is an overview of the interdisciplinary field of conflict analysis and resolution in terms of theory and practice. In it, we will explore the central concepts, definitions, perspectives and theories of causes of conflicts, and approaches to conflict intervention. A complete conflict mapping includes an analysis of underlying sources, causes, factors, stakeholders, their interests and positions, and conflict dynamics leading to manifest expression of the conflict, as well as an assessment of various methods of prevention, negotiation and third party intervention that can support conflict transformation processes. We will discuss the role of such issues as culture, gender and religion on conflict dynamics and conflict resolution processes.

This is an interactive course that will use seminar style discussion of the readings and class materials, group projects, and presentations.

Course Objectives:
- Improve students’ understanding of conflict theories and intervention strategies;
- Help students think critically and systematically about various types of conflicts;
- Increase students’ awareness of the complexity of underlying causes and contributing factors to conflict dynamics and conflict transformations;
- Increase understanding of different approaches and models to analyzing and resolving conflicts in a variety of contexts;
- Examine particular conflicts, their conditions, dynamics, stakeholders and conflict resolution efforts;
- Enhance students’ ability to apply theoretical concepts and conflict assessment tools to various conflict contexts;

Learning Outcomes:
By the end of this course, students will:
- Be aware of the history, development and current expression of the conflict resolution field;
- Have working knowledge of various conflict theories and models;
- Be able to conduct a comprehensive conflict analysis;
- Be aware of conflict assessment tools and indices – their merits and limitations;
- Have working knowledge of approaches to conflict resolution, conflict prevention and containment – their usage, timing and ethical considerations;
- Be able to apply models of conflict to cases and assess their utility;
- Be able to recommend conflict interventions based on analysis;
**Course Requirements:**

1) **Class participation (20%)**: I expect you to do the readings and come to each class prepared to have a detailed discussion of the course readings. Simply attending the class is not equal to participation in the class discussion and assignments.

2) **Group Project (30%)**: The group project will consist of two components – a Group Paper (20%) and a Group Presentation (10%). The groups are asked to research a conflict mapping/analysis tool used by any NGO/IGO working in the IPCR or related field. (Examples of conflict analysis tools will be available on Blackboard. You can analyze any of the models on the BB or choose a different one). For the group presentation you are asked to briefly introduce a conflict model and discuss it with other students in class. On February 21st, each group will have 10 minutes to present and 10 minutes to discuss the utility of the model. In the paper, students should outline a conflict analysis model they have chosen, discuss its strengths, weaknesses, and utility. The paper should be 10-12 pages and will be due by the beginning of the class period on February 28th, a week after your group presentation. You will have a chance to incorporate any comments and suggestions the instructor and other students may have had during the presentation.

Please, form your groups (of no more than 4 members) early in the semester and start researching your model. (This assignment will be helpful for your individual project proposal). Each team will receive one grade, so all members are expected to contribute equally to the group project.

3) **Final paper (50%)**: This is an individual semester-long assignment. It will consist of two components:

- **First component** – Identify potential donors or organizations undertaking work in line with your interests and their analytical and/or proposals requirements, conflict analysis models and indices they use. Pick one donor/organization, which you will (by the end of the semester) design an analysis for based on your interests and the class parameters. You can conduct research on potential choices with your group; however, the analysis of their objectives and funding aspirations should be your own. The paper should be 3 pages and is due by the beginning of the class period on February 21st. It is 5% of your grade.

- **Second component** – a Conflict Assessment/Analysis paper, where you provide an analysis of a conflict of your interest using a particular conflict analysis model and recommendation for a project to pitch to the donor/organization you identified and analyzed in the first paper. The paper should examine what has been done in and about the conflict you are interested in, what worked and what didn’t work and why. It should then lay out a thorough analysis and make solid recommendations for a programmatic intervention. This is due May 2nd, is 20 pages, and 45% of your grade.

I will provide more detailed guidelines for all assignments in class. Students are encouraged to consults with the instructor on their research and project proposal components.

**Course Policy and Procedures**

**Classroom Etiquette**: Please come to class on time and prepared. Turn off cell phones and other electronic devices. The use of laptops in class is for note-taking only. We will be discussing contentious political issues in this course. You are encouraged to express your opinion and diverse perspectives, however, be mindful and respectful of the sensitivities and views of others in your comments in class—this class will be a space in which all points of view are protected.

**Academic Integrity**: Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the University’s Academic Integrity Code, which can be found in the University catalog. By registering, you have acknowledged your awareness of the Academic Integrity Code, and you are obliged to become familiar with your rights and responsibilities as defined by the Code. Violations of the Academic...
Integrity Code will not be treated lightly, and disciplinary actions will be taken should such violations occur. Please see me if you have any questions about the academic violations described in the Code in general or as they relate to particular requirements for this course. You can read the University’s full Academic Integrity Code here: https://my.american.edu/external.cfm?linkID=78

**Late Work:** Class assignments that are submitted late will be penalized by 5% of the grade for each day they are late. If you have a documented emergency, special arrangements can be made with the instructor. If you cannot meet the deadline or need help with the class material see me during my office hours or make an appointment.

**Paper format:** Papers should be typed, double-spaced, have 1” margins, and Times New Roman 12-point font. Make sure that your name, course number, and paper title is on the first page, and pages are numbered. Papers that are not formatted appropriately will not be accepted. All assignments should be submitted electronically via email.

Edit your papers carefully. If you need help writing, ask the instructor or refer to the College Writing Center http://www.american.edu/cas/writing/.

**Grade Range**

A = 100-94  A- = 93-90  B+ = 89-87  B = 86-82  B- = 81-79  C+ = 78-75  C = 74-71  C- = 70-67  
D = 66-63  D- = 62-60  F = 60 and below

As one of the primary purposes of this class is to apply critical thought, you will be graded primarily on the critical thought within, reasoning of and logical construction of your argument—as a point of order, I will never grade you up because you agree with me if you can’t show how you got there; conversely, I will never grade you down if you disagree with me, but the same caveat applies: for every point made, a well-constructed argument must be shown.

**Emergency Preparedness:** In the event of a declared pandemic (influenza or other communicable disease), American University will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail and Blackboard, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence due to illness. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. In the event of a declared pandemic or other emergency, students should refer to the AU Web site (www.prepared.american.edu) and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university-wide information, as well as contact their faculty and/or respective dean’s office for course and school/college-specific information.

**Course Materials:**

*Required texts:*

*Recommended:*

Additional course materials:
We will utilize the blackboard extensively as a platform to provide the basic structure for our class, assignments, supplementary materials and discussions. A number of articles, reports and other materials are placed under Course Reserves (labeled CR) and Course Materials (labeled CM) on the blackboard. Readings noted as Supplementary are not required, but reading them will enhance your understanding of the course material.

If you have any questions not answered in this syllabus or have any concerns during the course, feel free to ask in class or contact me as soon as possible.

Course Schedule and Assignments (**Subject to Change**):

**January 17th:** This introductory class outlines the course objectives and requirements. We will talk about your interest and course expectations. We will also begin talking about the historical development of the interdisciplinary field of conflict analysis and resolution (CAR).

**January 24th:** Introduction to the Course – Development of CR Field
Ramsbotham et al, Chapters 1-2.

Supplementary:
Prof. Ron Fisher’s interview on the development of the field http://www.beyondintractability.org

**January 31st:** Understanding Sources of Conflict: Development of the CR Field Cont.
In this class, we will continue our discussion of the development of the field and its efforts to understand the sources of conflicts and to increase capacity of constructive conflict resolution. Ramsbotham et al. Chapter 3, pp. 63-73.
Pruitt and Kim, Ch. 1-2, “Overview,” and “Nature and Sources of Conflict”. CR

Supplementary:
Barash and Webel, Chapters 5-6-7.

**February 7th:** Understanding Contemporary Conflict
The nature and manifestation of conflicts have changed over time. The readings and class discussion will cover the causes and manifestations of contemporary conflicts. We will discuss such issues as state- and nation-building; terrorism, nationalism and population mobility. Our conversation will deepen your conceptual understanding of conflicts and conflict theories. Ramsbotham et al. Chapter 3, pp. 79-85, Chapter 4, pp. 94-111, and Chapter 11 – be prepared to research current ongoing conflicts to make connections for discussion.

Supplementary:
February 14th: Intergroup Conflicts: The Greed vs Grievance Debate

In the discussion of the sources of conflicts, the greed and grievance debate stands out. While economic argument emphasizes importance of rational choice and economic factors, grievances argument points to the role of identity, disparity in intergroup relationships and unmet basic needs. We will discuss both sides of this debate and the development of arguments over time.


Supplementary:


February 21st: Human Security

The first component of the final paper is due

Human Security is a paradigm that emerged in the early 1990s as a response to the changing world order. In this class, we will discuss how a shift in focus from the state to the individual level has changed the way we look at and deal with conflict. We will talk about the utility of human security framework and its “mainstreaming.”


Supplementary:
February 28th: Frameworks for Analysis

*Group presentations - discussion of conflict mapping tools and indices.*

In this class, we will discuss different tools for conflict mapping and how they are used in the field. The groups will present a conflict mapping tool of an organization of their choosing. Ramsbotham et al. Chapter 3 pp. 89-93; and Chapter 4, pp. 111-122.


USAID Conflict Assessment Framework - CM

DFID Conflict Assessment: Guidance Notes. CM

March 7th: The Issues of Culture and Religion

*The group papers are due*

The issue of culture and religion is significant for the field of conflict resolution. There is a broader debate about the role of culture and religion in conflict generation, escalation and cultural generalizability of conflict resolution efforts. We will discuss various theoretical approaches to these issues and their practical implications in the field of CAR.

Ramsbotham et al., Chapter 15


Supplementary:


Barash and Webel, Chapter 16, pp. 353-370


March 14th: Have a great spring break

March 21st: The Issue of Gender

The question of gender differences in perceiving and dealing with a conflict situation has increasingly drawn more attention in the field of CAR. The readings for this class address the issue of gender roles and gender expectations in conflicts and what implications the gender perspective has for practice of conflict resolution.

Ramsbotham et al., Ch. 13.


Harris, C. 2011. “What can applying a gender lens contribute to conflict studies?” MICROCON Research Paper. CM

*Supplementary:*


**March 28th: Conflict Escalation, Prevention and Timing for Intervention**

This class covers conflict dynamics and various processes by which conflicts increase in their intensity and destructiveness. We will look at how conflict stops escalating, stalemates and discuss what should be considered a ripe moment for intervention.

Ramsbotham et al, Chapter 5.


*Supplementary:*


**April 4th: Third-Party Intervention and Peacekeeping**

In this class, we will begin talking about the role of the third party in conflict intervention. We will focus mostly on peacekeeping, transformation in understanding of what peacekeeping entails and challenges of intervention.

Pruitt & Kim, Chapter- 11, pp. 227--232

Ramsbotham et al, Chapter 6.


*Supplementary:*


http://www.berghof-handbook.net/all/

Barash and Webel, Chapter 13, pp. 287-317

**April 11th: Negotiation and Mediation**

Negotiation and mediation are the two most common tools of conflict resolution. The class will address the critical distinctions between negotiation and mediation, situations where either of the tools is appropriate and their practical implications for conflict resolution efforts.


Supplementary:
Kriesberg, L. 2007. Ch. 8-9, “Mediation in Conflicts,” and “Negotiation in Settling Conflicts.”
Pruitt and Kim, Ch. 10 “Problem Solving and Reconciliation,” pp. 189-225.
Pearson d’Estree, T. and Babbitt, E. 1998. “Women and the Art of Peacemaking: Data from Israeli-Palestinian Interactive Problem-Solving Workshops.” Political Psychology, 19, pp. 185-209. CR

April 18th: Peacemaking and Peacebuilding
In this class, we will talk about processes of conflict de-escalation, challenges of ending a conflict situation and preventing it from re-emerging again.
Ramsbotham et al, Chapter 7-8-9.

Supplementary:
Boutros-Ghali, B. 1992. Agenda for Peace. CM

April 25th: The Ethics of Intervention – Do No Harm
Having discussed the timing and strategy of intervention in the preceding weeks, this class will turn to the analysis of challenges and implications of intervention. Is intervention always appropriate and harmless? Do we do more harm than good by intervening?
Ramsbotham et al, Chapter 14.
Anderson, M. 1999. Do No Harm – How Aid can support Peace –or War.

May 2nd: Reconciliation, Justice and Trauma-Healing
Final papers due!!!
Post-conflict period often entails not only reconstruction of infrastructure, but also mending of social wounds. The issues of reconciliation and justice are at the center of post-conflict recovery efforts and tend to define how successful and sustainable these efforts will be. The readings cover theoretical issues of reconciliation and trauma-healing, as well as challenges of reconciliation in variety of settings.
We will sum up the main themes discussed throughout the semester and consider long-term perspectives and direction of the CAR field. Students will do a course evaluation at the end of the period.
Ramsbotham et al, Chapter 10.