

# CULTURE, PEACE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION  
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL SERVICE  
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY  
SIS 606

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Centuries before there was any such thing as a 'Western perspective on conflict resolution' conflicts were being resolved peacefully... We in the West are only beginning to formalize an understanding of conflict based on a set of principles that have been known and practiced around the world for many years.  
-Jeffrey Z. Rubin, "Western Perspectives on Conflict Resolution"

Cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete. And worse than that, the more deeply it goes the more incomplete it gets  
-Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*

Methodologies and theories that are assumed helpful in one part of the world are useless in another...  
-David Augsberger, *Conflict Mediation Across Cultures*

## COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students in this course engage in two primary questions: What roles do cultural values, norms and practices play in conflict and in its resolution? How is conflict resolution practiced in cultural contexts around the world? We explore these questions in order to become more informed practitioners of conflict resolution practices, capable of adapting our knowledge, attitudes and skills in diverse contexts around the globe.

**How do people in different cultures resolve conflicts? What similarities and differences are there** and where do these come from? One of the several dimensions of culture and conflict resolution taken in this course is the dimension of cultural competence: we need to be competent in the analysis of others' ways of looking at the world, communicating, making decisions, disputing, agreeing, reconciling, reaching shared understandings. We will confront both similarity and difference as we look into the mirrors of other cultural orientations, and as we understand the multidimensionality of our own cultural identities, through our engagement with the course materials and concepts.

The societies we live and work in are always in flux. One of the ways we orient ourselves within social contexts is through our identities. **Numerous violent conflicts in the contemporary world seem to involve some dimension of identity: religious, ethnic or other affiliations.** Sometimes groups and individuals believe that their preferred identity group is deserving of special treatment or rights that are denied to others outside the group. Sometimes identities are mobilized and exploited by those seeking to create conflict. Either way the identity dimension and its cultural underpinnings take on importance and need to be carefully considered by the international affairs professional. We will raise questions about whether or not culture really ‘causes’ violent conflicts: Are the Ossetians and Georgians destined to live apart? Can Hutus and Tutsis find political and community arrangements that provide for all of Burundi’s citizens? Have other political and social grievances hardened identities?

**Conflict resolution practiced with consideration for the cultural context of the parties may be more helpful than practices that are imposed from an external context.** Knowledge about how people resolve conflicts within their own cultural contexts can help us develop specific, localized knowledge, but also comparative generalizations about conflict resolution around the world. When practicing conflict resolution, the practitioner chooses one or more points on the spectrum between *prescriptive* and *elicitive* approaches, the former offering an outsider’s perspective based on universalist assumptions, and the latter taking the point of view, terminology and assumptions that are specific to the parties and their dispute.

**How can we resolve conflict among people from different cultural groups?** Another dimension of the course is the exploration of how to make sense of the conflictive interactions between people from different cultural affiliations. While there is some indication (and much speculation) that cultural differences can *cause* conflict, we take a different approach and look at insufficient knowledge, empathy and competence in intercultural settings as more related to intercultural conflict. The role of culture need not, in this view, be destructive, as some international affairs scholars and practitioners seem to believe. The role of culture in violent conflicts where identity plays a role is also considered here. In many of these conflicts cultural and religious traditions appear to play a negative role by being either being identified as a source of conflict or are used to justify violence. However these same traditions can also play a constructive role in resolving conflicts by helping to establish sustainable relationships within and among communities.

Therefore, learning outcomes of the course include:

1. Increased awareness of the role of culture in communication, conflict and conflict resolution
2. Ability to apply frameworks that enhance understanding of culturally embedded individual and social behaviors in conflict and its resolution.
3. Understanding the potential for conflict resolution found within different religious and cultural traditions.
4. Ability to effectively apply cultural knowledge to peacemaking, peacebuilding, development and other field-based activities.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS THAT HELP US ACHIEVE THE LEARNING OUTCOMES

- 1. Class Participation:** 10% of the final grade will be based on the quality of your participation in class discussions. Therefore it is imperative that you come to the class having prepared your readings and participation. Be prepared to be called on at random to comment on a reading or to apply it to a practical case.
- 2. Mid-Term Exam:** 45% of your grade is based on your Mid-Term Exam, which typically consists of essay questions or case analysis. The Mid-Term Exam is a 'take-home': it will be posted on Blackboard's assignment space. Don't email your response back to the instructor, but rather post it back on Bb. Exams are individual efforts demonstrating your thoughtful, careful consideration of the questions and your engagement with the course materials.
- 3. Case Study Paper 45%:** Students will either write an individual research paper or a group paper (2 to 4 people). The first step is to identify a specific conflict. As part of your analysis, the specific role of culture and identity in the evolution of the conflict or in its resolution should be documented. Conflict resolution efforts undertaken by the parties or by outside actors should also be critiqued for their cultural competency and relevance. Individual papers should be no more or less than 15 pages (double-spaced, 12 point fonts). Add five pages for each additional co-author (i.e. a three student group paper needs to be 25 pages). Case studies may be historical or current. Papers should be properly proof-read and need to have good citation form (bibliography and footnotes/endnotes), and demonstrate that you used the course platform to launch yourselves into independent inquiry beyond the classroom. Group papers should read like a single paper, but should also identify authors of particular sections.

## COURSE MATERIALS

Required course books can be found both at the American University Library Reserve Desk and the American University Bookstore. They can be obtained from Abebooks.com (a used book web marketplace), as well as Amazon, etc. Other than the required texts, our readings will also be available as electronic Reserves that you access via Blackboard.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

1. Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede and Michael Minkov, *Culture and Organizations: Software of the Mind*. 3d. ed. (McGraw Hill, 2010)
2. Kevin Avruch, *Culture and Conflict Resolution* (United States Institute of Peace, 1998)
3. David Augsberger, *Conflict Mediation Across Cultures* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992)

#### 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 close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. This 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 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 faculty immediately of any absence due to illness. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping 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](http://www.prepared.american.edu)) and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for university-wide information, contact faculty and dean's office for course and school/college-specific information.

#### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY CODE

All students must adhere to the Academic Integrity Code (<http://www.american.edu/provost/registrar/regulations/reg80.cfm>). As the code states, "By enrolling at American University and then each semester when registering for classes, students acknowledge their commitment to the Code. As members of the academic community, students must become familiar with their rights and their responsibilities. In each course, they are responsible for knowing the requirements and restrictions regarding research and writing, examinations of whatever kind, collaborative work, the use of study aids, the appropriateness of assistance, and other issues. Students are responsible for learning the conventions of documentation and acknowledgment of sources. American University expects students to complete all examinations, tests, papers, creative projects, and assignments of any kind according to the highest ethical standards, as set forth either explicitly or implicitly in this Code or by the direction of instructors."

## CLASS SCHEDULE

Dates	Topic	Texts, Tasks	Assignments
8/30	Intro to course:	Syllabus review, course expectations, participant introductions, overview of Conflict Resolution field	
9/6	Defining culture	Hofstede, Ch. 1, 12  Avruch pp. 1-21  Augsberger Ch. 1  Edward T. Hall and Mildred Reed Hall, <i>Understanding Cultural Differences</i> (Intercultural Press, 1990), pp. 3-31	
9/13	What is ancient? What is modern? Lessons from North African water management among Berbers, Bushmen tribal conflict management and the rice farmers of Bali	Aaron Wolf, "Indigenous approaches to water conflict negotiations and implications for international waters" <i>International Negotiation</i> vol. 5, no. 2 (2000): 357-373  William Ury, "Conflict Resolution Among the Bushmen: Lessons in Dispute System Design," <i>Negotiation Journal</i> , vol. 11, no. 3 (1995)  Stephen J. Lansing, John H. Miller. "Cooperation, Games and Ecological Feedback: Some Insights from Bali," Santa Fe Institute Working Paper Series, January 13, 2004. <a href="http://www.santafe.edu/media/workingpapers/03-05-030.pdf">http://www.santafe.edu/media/workingpapers/03-05-030.pdf</a> (skip subsection 3 if desired)  Avruch, pp. 57-72	
9/20	Power and Inequality; Culture and Political Identity	B. Crawford, "The Causes of Cultural Conflict: An Institutional Approach," in Crawford, B. and Ronnie D. Lipschutz, eds. <i>The Myth of "Ethnic Conflict: Politics, Economics and "Cultural" Violence</i> (UC Berkeley, 1998)	

		<p>Avruch pp. 23-55</p> <p>Hofstede Ch. 3</p> <p>Augsberger, Ch. 2</p>	
9/27	Individual and society; Shame and guilt and conflict mitigators	<p>Hofstede Chs. 4</p> <p>Augsberger, Chs. 3, 4, 6</p>	
10/4	Gender Roles, Uncertainty, Time and Indulgence/Restraint	Hofstede, Chs. 5, 6, 7, 8	
10/11	Ethnocentrism vs. Ethnorelativism	Milton Bennett, "Towards Ethnorelativism: A Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity." In <i>Education for the Intercultural Experience</i> . ed. M. Paige, (Intercultural Press, 1993). pp. 22-71.	3 organizational consulting case studies (in class)
10/18	Intercultural Negotiation	<p>Anthony Wanis-St. John, "Cultural Pathways in Negotiation and Conflict Management" in <i>The Handbook of Dispute Resolution</i> ed. Michael L. Moffitt and Robert C. Bordone. (Jossey Bass, 2005)</p> <p>Avruch, pp. 73-108</p> <p>S. Weiss, "Negotiating With "Romans"--Part 1," <i>Sloan Management Review</i>, vol. 35, no. 2 (Winter 1994)</p> <p>S. Weiss, "Negotiating With "Romans"--Part 2," <i>Sloan Management Review</i>, vol. 35, no. 3 (Spring 1994)</p>	Mid-Term posted

10/25	Cross-cultural Mediation	Augsberger Ch. 5, 7	Mid-Term Due, Camels Exercise
11/1	Religion, Conflict and Resolution	<p>Mohammed Abu-Nimer, "Conflict Resolution, Culture, and Religion: Toward a Training Model of Interreligious Peacebuilding," <i>Journal of Peace Research</i>. vol. 38 no.6 (2001): 685-704</p> <p>David Little, <i>Peacemakers in Action: Profiles of Religion in Conflict Resolution</i>. (Cambridge University Press, 2007). Ch. 9 "Warriors and Brothers"</p> <p><i>Choose one of the following:</i></p> <p>David Smock, ed. "Religious Contributions to Peacemaking: When Religion Brings Peace, Not War" <i>Peaceworks</i> (United States Institute of Peace, January 2006)  <a href="http://www.usip.org/files/resources/PWJan2006.pdf">http://www.usip.org/files/resources/PWJan2006.pdf</a></p> <p>Yehezkel Landau, "Healing the Holy Land: Interreligious Peacebuilding in Israel/Palestine," <i>Peaceworks</i> No. 51 (United States Institute of Peace, August 2003)  <a href="http://www.usip.org/publications/healing-holy-land-interreligious-peacebuilding-israelpalestine">http://www.usip.org/publications/healing-holy-land-interreligious-peacebuilding-israelpalestine</a></p>	
11/8	Indigenous Conflict Resolution	<p>Jannie Malan, "Traditional and Local Conflict Resolution," in Paul van Tongeren et al., eds., <i>People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society</i> (Lynne Rienner, 2005), pp. 449-458</p> <p>Doron Pely, "When Honor Trumps Basic Needs: The Role of Honor in Deadly Disputes within Israel's Arab Community," <i>Negotiation Journal</i> vol. 27, no. 2 (April 2011): 205-225</p>	

		<p>Haroon Yusuf and Robin Le Mare, “Clan Elders as Conflict Mediators: Somaliland,” in Paul van Tongeren et al., eds., <i>People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society</i> (Lynne Rienner, 2005), pp. 459-465</p> <p>“Revitalizing Tradition to Promote Reconciliation: The Gacaca Courts in Rwanda,” in Paul van Tongeren et al., eds., <i>People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society</i> (Lynne Rienner, 2005), pp. 466-471</p> <p>B. Newhouse, “Afghan, Pakistani Representatives Hold Jirga on Taliban Conflict,” Voice of America, October 27, 2008 <a href="http://www.voanews.com/english/2008-10-27-voa8.cfm">http://www.voanews.com/english/2008-10-27-voa8.cfm</a></p> <p>Roger Mac Ginty, “Indigenous Peace-Making Versus the Liberal Peace,” <i>Cooperation and Conflict</i>, vol. 43, no. 2 (2008): 139-163</p>	
11/15	Transitional Justice, War and Peace	<p>Augsberger Ch. 9</p> <p>Scott Worden, “Justice Dilemma in Uganda,” USIPeace Briefing, February 2008. <a href="http://www.usip.org/publications/justice-dilemma-uganda">http://www.usip.org/publications/justice-dilemma-uganda</a></p> <p>David Smock, “Lord’s Resistance Army Peace Negotiations,” USIPeace Briefing, February 2008. <a href="http://www.usip.org/publications/ugandalords-resistance-army-peace-negotiations">http://www.usip.org/publications/ugandalords-resistance-army-peace-negotiations</a></p> <p>Eric Baines, “Cooling of Hearts: Community Truth Telling in Acholi-Land” Justice and Reconciliation Project. July 2007. <a href="http://www.liu.xplorex.com/sites/liu/files/Publications/JRP/July2007_JRP_CoolingofHearts.pdf">http://www.liu.xplorex.com/sites/liu/files/Publications/JRP/July2007_JRP_CoolingofHearts.pdf</a></p> <p>International Criminal Court, Warrant of Arrest for Joseph Kony issued on July 8, 2005 as amended on September 27, 2005 (public redacted version), <a href="http://www.icc-cpi.int/iccdocs/doc/doc97185.PDF">http://www.icc-cpi.int/iccdocs/doc/doc97185.PDF</a></p>	Video Interview with Betty Bigombe, <a href="http://www.usip.org/in-the-field/in-the-field-uganda">http://www.usip.org/in-the-field/in-the-field-uganda</a> (in class)

11/29	Human Terrain: The Role of Culture in Intel, Combat and Peace Operations	<p>Maj. Gen. Robert Scales, "Culture-Centric Warfare," The Naval Institute: <i>Proceedings</i>, 2004. <a href="http://www.military.com/Content/MoreContent1?file=NI_1004_Culture-P1">http://www.military.com/Content/MoreContent1?file=NI_1004_Culture-P1</a></p> <p>R. J. Gonzalez, "Towards Mercenary Anthropology?" <i>Anthropology Today</i> vol. 23, no. 3 (2007)</p> <p>J. Kipp, et al. "The Human Terrain System: A CORDS for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?" <i>Military Review</i> September-October 2006. <a href="http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/MilitaryReview/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_20061031_art005.pdf">http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/MilitaryReview/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_20061031_art005.pdf</a></p> <p>Montgomery McFate, "The Military Utility of Understanding Adversary Culture," <i>Joint Forces Quarterly</i>, vol. 38, no. 3 (2005), <a href="http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/jfq_pubs/1038.pdf">http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/jfq_pubs/1038.pdf</a></p>	
12/6	Intercultural Competence in a Global World	<p>B. Crawford, "The Causes of Cultural Conflict: Assessing the Evidence," in B. Crawford and Ronnie D. Lipschutz, eds. <i>The Myth of "Ethnic Conflict: Politics, Economics and "Cultural" Violence</i> (UC Berkeley, 1998)</p> <p>Howard Wolpe, "Making Peace After Genocide," <i>Peaceworks</i>, March 2011, No. 70, USIP <a href="http://www.usip.org/files/resources/PW_Burundi.pdf">http://www.usip.org/files/resources/PW_Burundi.pdf</a></p> <p>Hofstede, Ch. 9, 10, 11</p> <p>Augsberger, Ch. 8</p>	Ecotonos Exercise (in class)
12/13	Study Day		Final papers due