RELIGION AND CULTURE IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Peacebuilding and Development Summer Institute, 2012
American University, International Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR)
May 14-18, 2012

Instructor: Mohammed Abu-Nimer
Time: May 14-18, 2012 MTWThF 9am-5pm
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Course Description

Dealing with cultural differences can be a source of conflicts as well as a key to resolving conflicts. It can help in establishing sustainable relationships in the workplace and communities. This course explores the role of culture in causing and resolving conflicts through the understanding of different cultural views. The course will also relate to applying peacebuilding methods in an interreligious setting. Culture and religion will be treated as aspects of individual and group identity which influence the causes, dynamics, outcomes of conflicts, and intervention methods. The course is not designed to prepare you to be facilitator or mediators, but necessary basic skills are required in order to explore the impact and role of both religion and culture in this context. Specific skills, concepts, and stories will be shared by the facilitator on effective ways to handle cultural differences in community conflict and peacebuilding training. Participants will learn the skills and approaches to deal with issues of prejudice, stereotyping, and ethnocentrism in conflict settings. Interactive exercises, role plays, and real life case studies are used to learn constructive ways of addressing intercultural and interreligious encounters.

Course Objectives

This course aims to:

- Examine the multiplicity of methodologies that have evolved in the field of conflict resolution
- Highlight the role of culture in designing peacebuilding training or other intervention methods.
- Develop an awareness of the potential for peacebuilding found within participants’ own religious and cultural and traditions.
• Develop practical skills that will promote conflict resolution and peacebuilding within participants’ own cultural and religious community and in multicultural settings
• Explore the role of religion in conflict escalation and resolution

REQUIRED READINGS:
THE FOLLOWING IS A LIST OF REQUIRED BOOKS FOR PARTICIPANTS WHO ARE ENROLLED FOR CREDIT:

Please purchase the following books for the course:


Course Reading Package for Summer Peacebuilding and Development 2012 - will be available on Blackboard prior to the course and a hard copy will be distributed on the first day of class:


REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS
The final grade will be based on:
- 30% Participation
- 30 % Reflection Paper
- 40% Research Paper
Participation (30%):
Each student is expected to participate in the five days intensive course. In addition to full attendance, active participation in the small group and large group discussions and projects will be the main criteria for determining the grade.

Each student is expected to complete the following two assignments.

**Reflection Paper: (30%)**
Write a reflection paper in which you examine the course/workshop. Make sure you relate to process, content, and structure; lessons learned; insights discovered; links to the two required reading books; and any other observations that relate to your participation or learning process. (Length 5-7 pages, double space, with full citation or references if needed, due date is August 6, 2012)

**Research or Application Paper: (40%)**
Each student is expected to write a final paper for this course.

Select a case study (project, organization, or any other conflict situation in which there is an attempt to intervene). Examine the intervention from the perspective of culture and religion, peacebuilding, and development.

To what extent is the project/case successful in addressing the cultural or religious aspects of the conflict?
How does culture/religion affect/shape the conflict and the intervention?

If you decide not to examine a case or project, you are welcomed to write a research paper on any of the questions that this course related to or discussed. Identify your research question and research it. (Make sure that you relate to culture, religion, peacebuilding and development context).

(Length 15-20 pages, double space, with full citation or references if needed, due date is August 13, 2012).
COURSE OUTLINE:

DAY I.

Getting Started
- Introductions and expectations
- Review of the program
  - Comments on issues of multi-cultural learning

SITUATING AND CONTEXTUALIZING OUR WORK

Overview of Conflict Resolution/Transformation Field
- Basic concepts; core principles, and assumptions of peacemaking
- What is the relationship between culture and religion?
- Are they different? How does this influence peacebuilding?

Our Experiences with cultural conflict resolution and peacebuilding
- Sharing of personal stories; identifying common themes, patterns, principles

READINGS:

DAY II.

ANALYSIS
Conflict Analysis/Assessment in Settings with cultural and religious Dimensions
- The nature of culturally oriented conflicts
- The nature of religiously oriented conflicts

CHANGE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION
- Process (experience)
- Skills
  --How do conflict resolution applications bring about change?

CULTURE AND PERCEPTION
  Perceptions and misperception
  Culture

CULTURE AND VALUES
- High context versus low context
- Polarity of responses to perceived wrong doing
Cultural differences: Examples/cases.

CULTURE, COMMUNICATION, AND LISTENING
Cultural sources of miscommunication
Cultural methods of communication

READINGS;

DAY III.

CULTURE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION
Culture and Conflict Resolution: How does culture influence/relate to conflict resolution?

- Emergence of conflict
- Course/dynamic of conflict
- Outcomes (mediation)
- Intervention (mediation)

Traditional and indigenous methods of conflict resolution
- Case studies from Middle East and Africa

TRAINING IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND CULTURE
What are the tools to assist the conflict resolution trainer in intercultural training?

Conflict and Intercultural Awareness (bias awareness)

1. Features of intercultural conflict (ethnic, religious, etc).
2. Implications to diversity work.
3. CR skills and processes to be use in diversity work

READINGS:

DAY IV.

Developing Self-Awareness

- Culture and self
- Clarification of values for intervention

Dealing with cultural and Religious Diversity

- Religious and cultural prejudice and stereotyping
- Constructive ways of dealing with them

Ethnography as a tool

Purpose of Ethnography
- Emic and etic perspectives
- Ethnographic research cycle

Elicitive training approach

READINGS:


DAY V.

Who are the “Multicultural Peacebuilders”?

Identifying the attributes and characteristics of a multicultural peacebuilders

Facilitation and mediation for the Multicultural Peacebuilder

- The role of facilitation in peacebuilding
- Ethics of facilitators of multicultural conflict
- How do cultural values and practices contribute to the facilitation process

Promoting multireligious and multicultural understanding and cooperation through dialogue

- Components of a dialogue process: what to do, avoid, make sure exists?
- Pitfalls of dialogue
- Classical process of interaction in interethnic

Action Planning and Next Steps
Conclusion and Course Evaluation

READINGS:


Recommended Readings:


Geertz, Clifford (1973). The Interpretation of Cultures.


Lee, Dorothy. Freedom and Culture.


Spradley, James P.

