

ROOTS OF SOCIAL CONFLICT  
DR 710/PS785 FALL 1996

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COURSE OBJECTIVES:

This class serves as a graduate level interdisciplinary introduction to the forms and causes of conflict in society—at the interpersonal, group, and international levels. It is meant to familiarize students with the processes whereby conflicts unfold, escalate, and deescalate. The theories reviewed deal with explaining conflict; practical approaches to managing or resolving conflict will be part of the discussion, but not the central focus of this course, since many of these skills will be learned later in the dispute resolution sequence.

Students will become familiar with approaches and methodologies in the study of conflict, and will see the similarities and differences among various forms of violent and non-violent disputes. Implications for democracy also will be discussed, including questions related to social diversity. At the end of the course, the student should be able to analyze in detail the structure and process of conflict situations as a first step toward proposing means of resolving disputes. Remember that conflict can be either functional (beneficial) or dysfunctional (harmful), and that we will explore the circumstances of each as well as the conditions for replacing conflict with cooperation.

The course is structured as a lecture/dialogue between instructor and students and among students. Please feel free to raise questions, and please try to demonstrate that you are coming to grips with issues and concerns raised by the readings and prior class discussion.

GRADING PROCEDURES AND ASSIGNMENTS

Students will be evaluated on the basis of a four week quiz (10%), a midsemester essay exam (20%), a course paper (40%), and a take-home final exam (30%). All written work done outside the classroom must be typed and adhere to proper footnoting and bibliographic requirements for source attribution. In all work, please be aware of and abide fully by the rules regarding plagiarism and all other forms of academic dishonesty, as specified in the Student Due Process Statute of the Board of Governors, copies of which may be obtained from Student Services, Rm. 470 Student Center. Such matters will be treated very seriously. Students may hand in preliminary drafts of projects for advice and feedback.

The course paper is to be a "conflict mapping" exercise, in which the student chooses a real conflict situation, either locally, nationally, or internationally, and systematically details the structure and dynamics of that conflict in terms of:

- (1) the relevant actors (including "third parties");
- (2) their issues, positions, interests, priorities, values, needs, and demands;
- (3) the context and environment in which the conflict takes place, including its history and the dynamics by which it has developed and changed;
- (4) the consequences of the conflict, both positive and negative;
- (5) prior attempts to resolve the conflict, and their outcome; and
- (6) the degree of common ground for settlement, or "regulation potential." Conflict mapping is described more fully in Paul Wehr's book, *Conflict Resolution*, on reserve at the Library.

TEXTBOOKS

The following are for purchase at the Campus bookstore:

Rubin, Pruitt, and Kim, (RPK) Social Conflict Escalation. Stalemate. and Settlement, 2nd (or latest) edition.

A. Rapoport, The Origins of Violence: Approaches to the Study of Conflict.

Kriesberg, Northrop, and Thorson, (KNT) eds., Intractable Conflicts and their Transformation. Kolb and Bartunek (KB) Hidden Conflict in Organizations: Uncovering Behind-the Scenes Disputes The following are suggested for optional purchase at the bookstore: Hocker and Wilmot, Interpersonal Conflict. 4th edition. Ross, The Management of Conflict: Interpretations and Interests in Comparative Perspective.

Several additional readings have been placed on reserve at the Library for your use in assignments or for general background and familiarity with conflict resolution

Avruch, et. al., Conflict Resolution. Cross Cultural Perspectives.

Deutsch, The Resolution of Conflict: Constructive and Destructive Processes.

Ross, The Culture of conflict: Interpretations and Interests in Comparative Perspective.

Sandole, ed, Conflict Resolution and Practice.

Ury, Brett, and Goldberg, Getting disputes Resolved: Designing Systems to Cut the Costs of Conflict

#### COURSE OUTLINE

Part I — Understanding Conflict Dynamics

Weeks 1-2 The Concepts of Conflict

Read RPK, Chs. 1-8

Weeks 3-4 "Intractable" Conflicts

Read KNT, Chs. 1-6

Week 4 Quiz

Week 5 Conflict Contexts

Read KB, Chs. 1-5

Weeks 6-7 Conflict and Diversity

Read KB, Chs. ~9 and Ross, The Culture of Conflict (reserve)

Week 8 Midsemester Exam

Part 2 — Understanding Violence Dynamics

Weeks 9-10 Concepts of Violence and Aggression

Read Rapoport, Parts I and II

Week 11-12 Violence from Interpersonal to International Levels

Read Rapoport, Parts III and IV

Part 3 — Moving Toward Resolution

Weeks 13-14 Amelioration Strategies

Read RPK, Chs. 9-11

Rapoport, Part V

Week 15 Course Paper Due

Transforming Disputes

Read KNT, Part III

Readings in Ross, The Management of Conflict. and Hocker and Wilmot,

Interpersonal Conflict will be useful, though not essential, for the final exam

FINAL EX - 1 DUE ON OR BEFORE, BUT NOT LATER THAN DECEMBER 17, 1996