

Department of Dispute Resolution
Nova Southeastern University

THEORIES OF CONFLICT & CONFLICT RESOLUTION

ADRD 7040
Fall 1997
Tues. 6-9:00pm
Room B 103

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

A foundation course examining macro and micro theories from sociology, psychology, and other disciplines about the nature of conflict and various approaches to conflict resolution. This graduate seminar has been envisioned as a collective exercise in critical thinking. It is an interactive seminar based on readings and analytical/evaluative discussions of conflict theory. The course is designed and structured in such a way so as to highlight many of the theoretical roots of modern scholarly approaches to social conflict perspectives and conflict resolution interventions. Specifically, the course aims to emphasize and explore prior researchers and theoreticians work to present day academic studies, especially in the areas of sociology, political science and social psychology. My goal is to engender an informal participatory class environment where we can collectively assess the relative explanatory power of various theoretical approaches and subject them to rigorous examination.

The primary objective for each student is to become familiar with the root theories and theoretical perspectives which dominate the field of conflict resolution. You will learn to design a taxonomy of theoretical perspectives, recognize similar perceptual world views and understand the background that makes numerous theoretical lenses distinct. Students will be able to apply theories to numerous present day community conflicts. You will learn to identify the distinguishing characteristics of numerous theories and how, as practitioners, such identification can be translated into more informed and effective practice. Students will be able to critically analyze theories for their respective strengths and weaknesses as each is applied to commonly occurring conflict. Students will become familiarized with the fundamental components of theory building and development. Students will learn a variety of perspective and process theories and how they interact in certain circumstances. In other words, you will know how to properly apply various types of theories to a variety of conflict scenarios.

In order to provide an educational setting congruent with the material under review, the seminar will be structured generally after the manner of a colloquium, where students and instructor will gather to discuss the material in depth and in a critical and systematic manner. The exact nature of this structure, however, will be dynamic and evolving, because it will be defined by the group as a whole. The learning process will be accomplished in several ways, through lectures, readings, class exercises, open class discussions, simulations, homework exercises. Students will also be required to write three thought papers and a research paper. The thought papers will have students focus on synthesizing a number of theories over a 4 week period into a logical and argumentative type essay. The research paper will allow each student to select a topic of his/her interest and apply the theories learned over the course of the semester. Each student should have a solid grounding in the theories of conflict by the end of the semester.

In this class we will also utilize various technologies such as email, electronic library searches, Netscape data collection and data base research and retrieval. In addition, this class is designed to incorporate a number of teaching methods to enhance the learning experience. They partially include: seminar discussions, simulation exercises, role playing, slides, videos, field research and of course, formal lectures.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Class Participation

This class will be run to a large extent as a seminar. The Professor will briefly lecture at the beginning of the class and set the tone for the discussions. The expectation is that all members will attend regularly. Regular attendance is important for two reasons: first, the classes will help you to identify and absorb nuances inherent in the readings. Secondly, the quality of class discussion is contingent upon your ability to build on previous deliberations and analyses. You cannot build a store of knowledge without a measure of consistency and continuity. Students are expected to participate actively in class discussion and activities.

To this end, please note that attendance is mandatory, and that I shall hold each student personally responsible for consulting with me regarding materials missed in the event of any absence. Anyone exceeding two unexcused absences should not expect to receive an "A" grade in this course. Under School policy three unexcused absences result in an automatic failure.

Success in this class requires that you do all the reading and that

you come regularly to class. Students will be expected to have completed the reading assignments for each week prior to seminar sessions. The readings will serve as vehicles for lectures and discussions in the classroom. Class participation should provide some evidence that you are keeping up with the readings and continuing to think about the issues raised in the course. This is a pro-active, hands-on learning approach to improve one's communication skills. 10% of your grade will be based on class participation. Evaluation of your class participation will be based on the following criteria:

- 1) raising and answering questions related to the assigned readings.
- 2). Sharing ideas and insights.
- 3). Sharing personal experiences and observations.
- 4). Pointing out relevant data.
- 5). Relating and synthesizing ideas of others.
- 6). Providing constructive feedback on processes in the classroom.
- 7). Pointing out relationships to earlier discussion.
- 8). Helping others develop their ideas and views.

Undoubtedly the agenda I have set for the class is a formidable one. However, I believe that it should be well worth your effort, as I have taken care to select readings representative of the most diverse intellectual background. If you study assiduously, you should have a theoretically informed understanding of theories of conflict and conflict resolution by the end of the semester.

Class Presentations

Students will be required to do two class presentations, based on the readings for those weeks. The students will be responsible for taking the lead role in our discussion of the reading material. The class presentations each week will act as a catalyst for our broader class discussion. The students leading the discussion must summarize the key points in the reading material and apply it to a case study (develop questions and answers). For example, if the weekly topic was third party intervention in intercommunal conflicts, it would be the task of the presenters to develop key questions around the issues. Some examples of key questions could be: what is third-party intervention? Distinguish between preventative diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping, post-conflict and peace-building? Do recent developments suggest that a stronger legal basis for the international protection of the rights of ethnic groups is evolving? Students must prepare 3-5 page outlines and bring enough copies for all students. All students should write and bring to class a 2 page summary of the texts each week. The summaries should focus on the disciplinary approach of the author(s) and the theoretical explanation of what is being examined. The outlines should use complete sentences and be understandable without reference back to the readings.

10% of your grade will be based on your presentation of selected readings for class discussion. Your preparation for the class, the assigned reading outline and your leading of the group discussion. All students should have read the required material and be prepared to discuss them, regardless of whether they are presenting it in a given class.

Thought Papers

Students will need to do the reading assignments attentively and in a timely fashion (i.e., completed prior to the class sessions). Students will be expected to write three concise and succinct thought papers of 3-4 pages during the course of the semester. These papers should synthesize major ideas and themes outlined in the readings, and reflect a critical analysis of the reading assignments for each week. Each student will submit his or her paper on the day of class. The papers will help you to prepare for comprehensive exams and for other classes. 45% of your grade will be based on the three thought papers.

Paper Presentation

Students will have the opportunity at the end of the semester to present their research paper in class. For those of you who would like my assistance in either preparing or presenting your paper please come and see me. One purpose of the presentations is to disseminate knowledge to your fellow students. In addition, it provides an opportunity for each of you to explore more fully, and with the aid of the other students, theoretical frameworks which may be useful to your ADR practice and your dissertation topics. It is an exercise in which we can all benefit. 10% of your grade will be based on the paper presentation.

Scholarly Research Paper

The research paper will focus on the integration of theory and practice. This is your opportunity to either explore the varied manifestations of theoretical perspectives or to work on the development of a hybrid or novel theory of your own. You must discuss your proposed topic with the Professor sometime in November. Final approval of the topic is contingent on its relevancy to the various theoretical schools presented in the seminar, your personal interest and hopefully the beginning of the theory component of your dissertations. 25% of your grade will be based on the 8-10 page research paper.

The general purpose of the paper is to synthesize your theoretical knowledge of conflict by applying it to a recent or ongoing conflict of your choice. Learning to apply theory will enable you to more

easily determine where a theory has some explanatory influence and where it fails to increase understanding or insight. This final exercise is designed to increase your theoretical development and analytical capabilities and should be entered into with an exploratory frame of mind.

(1). In consultation with the professor choose a conflict that has some interest and meaning to you. It would be preferable if the conflict were limited in the number of identifiable parties, issues, and other information intensive variables just for your own sake. I do not want you to write a thesis but a concise theoretically oriented paper of 8-10 pages. If you need more space use it but remember being clear and to the point is more important than length.

(2). It is not absolutely necessary to conduct in-depth field research for this assignment. However, you must be able to identify the parties, issues, relationships, and the source of conflict. The reader must be able to understand, at the minimum, the basics or essence of the conflict. For example, is the conflict over identity or class conflict? Do not spend a lot of time or space providing a rich and detailed account of the conflict's history.

(3). After you have collected the basic information you are to apply a theory or set of theories to the conflict. You do not need to consult the professor on which theory or theories to use but you are welcome to do so if you want. You can develop your own theory. Remember that it is not a wise or logical idea to cram in numerous theories in an attempt to explain as many facets of the conflict.

What Constitutes An Excellent Research Paper

(1). The presentation of the conflict should provide enough information to give the reader an adequate background or history of the conflict. Do Not spend time on a detailed description of the conflict. The more important focus is on parts 2-4.

(2). The reader should be able to understand the presentation of your theory in three critical areas:

a). The theoretical perspective(s) being adopted (for e.g. Marxist, Feminist, Structural Functionalism, Critical, Conflict, Hybrid).

b). The specific theoretical focus (i.e. Class, Exchange, Conflict, Basic Human Needs) and,

c). What are the primary characteristics of the conflict and theory (for e.g. a power struggle over identity or/and survival). Are there specific variables that carry more explanatory clarity than others (for e.g., class, ethnicity, religion, gender, culture)?

(3). Next, you should apply the theory to your chosen conflict to

analyze the conflict. Staying within your theory will help you to cover the last point. How does the theory compare to the context/reality of the conflict?

(4). The second part of your analysis should critique your theory in order to determine whether or not the theory can indeed explain what it claims it can. So, what are the strengths and weaknesses of your theoretical design? Be sure to cover the following areas:

a). Discuss the inherent strengths that you see and provide an example or two to back up each thematic assertion.

b). Can the theory be applied in other contexts which have similar characteristics? In other words, do you think the theory has predictive strength and greater generalizability outside of the conflict?

c). Then discuss the limitations of the theory as it relates to the conflict. Was there a good match between the theory and the most important variables and factors comprising the conflict dynamics? Provide areas of future research and how the theory may be improved in design and perspective.

(5) You may find that many of the conflict theories reviewed in the seminar, and through your own reading, do not completely capture the ability to explain the essence of the conflict you have chosen to analyze. Therefore, you are encouraged to develop your own. However, it is unlikely that your new theory is completely novel (i.e., completely different than the existing or prior theoretical art) in which case it is up to you to map where certain ideas evolved. Combining numerous theories and/or focal lenses into a new improved or innovative theory is legitimate theory development and is strongly encouraged. If you choose to develop or improve a theory then it is important to discuss:

a) Which theory or theories influenced your thinking and,

b) Why the old theory or theories is or are inadequate. For example, if you claim to be a Neo-Marxist, then explain the distinction you have drawn between your thinking and the part of Marx's work where you diverge.

The expectation of the instructor is that you will employ a full library search strategy to uncover materials for your paper and that you will query (when applicable and appropriate) various persons and agencies regarding their practice and experience in the topic area. The paper will be due the last night of class.

How To Read Articles & Books

Many students may have never received any formal training and/or

practice in how to obtain the most from reading assignments in the least amount of time. The most effective approach to this task, in my experience, has been to follow and to practice very particular guidelines in reading the assignments for this course:

- 1). What is the author's thesis? The major point s/he is trying to make?
- 2). What are the major assumptions the author makes (and expects you to accept) in arguing that thesis?
- 3). What are the implications for research or practice if the author's thesis and underlying assumptions are valid or true?
- 4). What are some important or useful concepts the author presents?
- 5). How does the reading relate to previous readings?
- 6). Critically reflect on and assess the article as a whole; what are its strengths and weaknesses?
- 7) Are there any other arguments or perspectives that might explain the topic better than the author's argument?

GRADING CRITERIA

Class attendance & participation	10%
(2)Class presentations	10%
(3)Thought papers	45%
Paper presentation	10%
Research paper	25%

Late assignments will be marked down if the student fails to notify the instructor in advance of the circumstances surrounding the reason for turning the paper in late. Incomplete or "I" grades may be requested by a student in an emergency situation. Incomplete grades must be resolved within the following semester. Such requests, unless there is an unexpected medical emergency, must be approved before the last regularly schedule class. A student may request an incomplete, or "I" grade for a period of one semester only. Students must discuss with the professor and obtain his or her consent and signature before filing the incomplete form. Faculty will not initiate "I" grades. They must assign a letter grade of "F" if a student has not filed an "I" request form and has not completed the class assignments by the time grades are due. The school's policy on the "I" grade designation is clearly stated in the Department Handbook and the School Catalogue. For more information and the required form, see Ann Booth.

School policy states that any student who does not attend the first two class sessions and does not provide a satisfactory explanation will be administratively withdrawn from the course. In addition,

students may drop a class before completion of 12 hours of class meetings; after that time, students who wish to drop that class must formally withdraw by completing an official withdrawal form that requires the signature of the professor and the Chair of the Department

OFFICE HOURS

Office Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday 1:00-4:00p.m. and by appointment. Students are encouraged to meet with the instructor to discuss any questions, problems, issues, thoughts, or concerns which might arise. I urge you to come and see me during office hours. My office is Room 2. Phone: 262-3026.

REQUIRED TEXTS

(1) Collection of required articles

(2) Books - the following books are available for purchase at the campus bookstore.

Charles Lemert. (1993). Social Theory: The Multicultural & Classic Readings. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.

Jay MacLeod. (1995). Ain't No Makin' It. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.

WEEKLY TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

I. THEORIES AND THINKERS: CLASSICAL THEORETICIANS PERSPECTIVES ON CONFLICT

September 2: INTRODUCTION-THE NATURE AND STRUCTURE OF THE WHAT IS CONFLICT & THEORY

COURSE:

We shall spend the first class talking about the logistics, trajectory, expectations and goals of the course as well as getting to know one another.

Overview of the course and requirements

Seminar leader sign-up sheet

What is Conflict? What is Theory?

September 9: THE GERMAN IDEOLOGY & KARL MARX

assigned:

--- Charles Lemert. (1993). Social Theory: The Multicultural & Classic Readings. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.

"Karl Marx & Frederich Engels", pp. 1-76.

--- Ralf Dahrendorf, "Karl Marx's Model of the Class Society," pp. 1-35.

September 16: FUNCTIONALISM & CONSENSUS THEORY: EMILE DURKHEIM & THE SORBONNE

assigned:

--- Charles Lemert. (1993). Social Theory: The Multicultural & Classic Readings. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.

"Emile Durkheim" pp. 77-109.

--- "Durkheim's Conservation & Its Implications for Sociological Theory," pp. 153-79

September 23: RATIONALIZATION & CONFLICT ESCALATION: SYSTEMIC CONFLICT & MAX WEBER

assigned:

--- Charles Lemert. (1993). Social Theory: The Multicultural & Classic Readings. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.

"Max Weber," pp. 109-36.

--- E. Chambliss, "Max Weber and Bureaucracy," pp. 327-36.

--- George Ritzer, "The McDonaldization of Society," pp. 100-07.

II. CONFLICT THEORIES & SOCIAL CHANGE

September 30: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SOCIAL CONFLICT: UNCONSCIOUS CONFLICT?

Thought Paper #1 Due:

assigned:

--- Charles Lemert. (1993). Social Theory: The Multicultural & Classic Readings. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.

"Sigmund Freud & Ferdinand de Saussure," pp. 136-70.

--- Vamik Volkan. (August 1996). Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ancient Fuel of a Modern Inferno. Journal of Mind & Human Interaction. 7(3):110-27.

October 7: CONFLICT AS A FORM OF SOCIABILITY & EVERYDAY LIFE

assigned:

--- Charles Lemert. (1993). Social Theory: The Multicultural & Classic
Readings. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.
"Split Lives in the Modern World," pp. 171-206.

--- Donald N. Levine, (1971). Georg Simmel On Individuality & Social
Norms. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
"Conflict," pp. 70-96.

October 14: SOCIAL THEORIES & WORLD CONFLICT: IDEAS, CULTURE & SOCIAL
CRISES

assigned:

--- Charles Lemert. (1993). Social Theory: The Multicultural & Classic
Readings. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.
"Action, Knowledge, Self," pp. 207-62.

--- V.I. Lenin. "Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism," pp.490-
500.

October 21: SOCIAL THEORIES & WORLD CONFLICT: SOCIAL CHANGE

assigned:

--- Charles Lemert. (1993). Social Theory: The Multicultural & Classic
Readings. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.
"Unavoidable Dilemmas," pp. 263-90.

October 28: THE NEW ORDER & STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM

assigned:

--- Charles Lemert. (1993). Social Theory: The Multicultural & Classic
Readings. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.
"The Golden Age," pp. 291-348.

III. CONFLICT & CONFLICT RESOLUTION: THE RANGE OF PERSPECTIVES & SOME
APPLICATIONS

November 4: RADICAL INFLUENCES & SOCIAL CONFLICT PERSPECTIVES

Thought Paper #2 Due:

assigned:

--- Charles Lemert. (1993). Social Theory: The Multicultural & Classic
Readings. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.
"Doubts and Reservations, and Others Object," pp. 345-97.

November 11: SOCIAL CONFLICT & THE STRUGGLE WITHIN: A CHANGE IN TIME
& SPACE

assigned:

--- Charles Lemert. (1993). Social Theory: The Multicultural & Classic
Readings. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.

"Experiments at Renewal and Reconstruction," pp. 397-447.

November 18: UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL CONFLICT: A VIEW FROM YOUNG ADULTS

assigned:

--- Jay MacLeod. (1995). Ain't No Makin' It. Boulder, Colorado:
Westview Press.

"Part One: The Hallway Hangers and the Brothers as Teenagers" pp. 1-154.

November 25: CONFLICT THEORY & YOUNG ADULTS: WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

assigned:

--- Jay MacLeod. (1995). Ain't No Makin' It. Boulder, Colorado:
Westview Press.

"Part Two: Eight Years Later: Low Income, Low Outcome," pp. 155-303.

December 2: CONFLICT & CONFLICT RESOLUTION THEORIES IN PERSPECTIVE

Thought Paper #3 Due:

Class Presentations

Final Paper Due

The Types of Theorizing

Nature of Constitutive Elements

	Subjective	Objective	
Terms of Explanation	Individualistic Constructionism	Utilitarianism	
	Holistic	Functionalism	Critical Structuralism

Development & Types of Theory

Core Proposal	Theory Type	Classical	Modern	Cognate Disciplines
Agency	Construct- ionism	Weber Simmel	Symbolic Interactionism (Mead) Phenomenology (Schutz)	Cultural Anthropology History
System	Function- alism	Durkheim	Structural Functionalism	Ecology
Rationality	Utilitar- ianism	Pareto & Mosca	Exchange Theory	Neoclassical Economics Behavioral Psychology
Structure	Critical Structural- ism	Marx Engels	Critical Theory Structuralist	Political Economy Cultural Studies Analytic Psychology
Marxism		Psycho-		