

# ANTHROPOLOGICAL BASES FOR CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

PAX 653  
Spring 1998  
*Eastern Mennonite University*  
*Conflict Transformation Program*

Professor Lisa Schirch  
schirchl@cc.emu.edu  
Office 121 x4497  
Home 433-3998

**Meeting Times:** Thursday 3:00-6:00 pm

## **Course Description:**

The field of conflict studies is based primarily on Euro-North American cultures and worldviews. There has been growing concern in the field that these Western models are sometimes insufficient, inappropriate, and downright harmful when transplanted to other cultures. This concern has prompted a flood of literature on culture and conflict. In response to this concern and the new literature, this course will focus on the following:

- increasing our understanding of the concepts of culture and worldview;
- developing skills in cultural analysis;
- understanding cultural variations and models for addressing, behaving and communicating in conflict;
- learning to develop culturally-based conflict transformation processes.

## **Course Requirements:**

- Write 1/2 to 1 page on questions raised /thoughts/comments/reactions to each week's readings and participate in class discussions on readings. These will be turned in at the end of each class and returned the following week.(20%)
- Using the identity flower exercise given in class, write an ethnography of the different ways you respond to conflict in different contexts.(20%)
- Find a group that is as different from yourself as possible. Over the course of the term, spend time with this group. Using a variety of ethnographic research methodologies, discern how conflict is managed in this group. We will spend a portion of each class discussing how your research is progressing, what the difficulties are in spending time with this group, and what insights you are gaining into culture and conflict. A 15-20 page final ethnographic research paper is due on April 15 and will compose 40% of your grade.
- Present your paper to the class on April 16 and 23. (20%)

## **Communication/"Office Hours"**

Tuesday- 3-5pm  
Wednesday- 1-4pm  
Friday- 9-11am

## **Required Texts:**

Augsburger, David W. *Conflict Mediation Across Cultures*. Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1992.

Avruch, Kevin; Peter W. Black, and Joseph A. Scimecca, Eds. *Conflict Resolution: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*. London: Greenwood Press, 1991.

Jabbour, Elias J. *Sulha: Palestinian Traditional Peacemaking Process*. NC: House of Hope Publications, 1996.

Lederach, John Paul. *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures*. NY: Syracuse University Press, 1994.

Kochman, Thomas. *Black and White Styles in Conflict*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

Nader, Laura. *Harmony Ideology: Justice and Control in a Zapotec Mountain Village*. CA: Stanford University Press, 1990.

## **ASSIGNMENTS:**

### **SECTION I: UNDERSTANDING CULTURE & WORLDVIEW**

**January 8: Culture: Who are we and what are our cultures/worldviews?**

**January 15: Ethnography and Culture: A Thick Description/Cultivation**

Geertz, Clifford. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture" and "The Impact of the Concept of Culture on the Concept of Man (sic)" in *The Interpretation of Culture*. US: Basic Books, 1973.

Rosen, Lawrence. "Bargaining for Reality" and "The Social Construction of Identity" in *Bargaining for Reality: The Construction of Social Relations in a Muslim Community*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Clifford, James and George Marcus. *Writing Culture* (selections)

**January 22: How Worldviews and the Process of Cognition Shape Conflict**

Nudler, Oscar. "On Conflicts and Metaphors: Toward an Extended Rationality" in *Conflict: Human Needs Theory*. Ed. John Burton. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990.

Schirch, L. "The Web of Life" and "Unweaving the Web: Conflict" unpublished dissertation chapters.

Docherty, Jayne. "Accounting for Worldview Conflicts: The Narrative Bases of Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice" unpublished dissertation chapter.

### **January 29: Ethno Theories of Conflict**

Avruch, Kevin. "Introduction: Culture and Conflict Resolution" in *Conflict Resolution: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*. London: Greenwood Press, 1991.

Augsburger, David W. *Conflict Mediation Across Cultures*. Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1992.  
Read Chapters 1,3,4,7,8,9.

## **SECTION II: CULTURAL ANALYSIS**

### **February 5: The Way Culture Shapes Conflict Behavior: Israel/Arab**

Cohen, Raymond. *Culture and Conflict in Egyptian-Israeli Relations: A Dialogue of the Deaf*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990.

"Arabic Versus Hebrew" (Chapter 3)

"Israelis and Egyptians Face to Face (Chapter 4)

### **February 12: The Way Culture Shapes Conflict Behavior:Black/White**

Kochman, Thomas. *Black and White Styles in Conflict*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

### **February 19: Reading Gender/ Reading Class**

Merry, Sally. "Are American's Litigious at Home?" *National Forum*, Fall 1991, Vol 71(4) pp. 27-30.

Taylor, Anita and Judi Beinstein Miller. "Introduction: The Necessity of Seeing Gender in Conflict" in *Gender and Conflict*.

Augsburger, David W. "Conflict: Gender Differences and Conflict Styles" in *Conflict Mediation Across Cultures*. Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1992.

## **SECTION III: CULTURALLY-BASED CONFLICT MODELS**

### **February 26: Ritual and Conflict**

Schirch, Lisa "Reweaving the Web: Ritual Frames" unpublished dissertation chapter.

Jabbour, Elias J. *Sulha: Palestinian Traditional Peacemaking Process*. NC: House of Hope Publications, 1996.

Kertzer, David. *Ritual, Politics and Power*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.

### **March 12: First Nations Conflict Theories and Processes**

Schirch, Lisa "The Smudging Ceremony: A First Nation's Framing Ritual" unpublished dissertation chapter

Ywahoo, Dhyani. "Generating Peacekeeper Mind" in *Voices of Our Ancestors: Cherokee Teachings from the Wisdom Fire*. Boston: Shambhala Press, 1987.

Bluehouse, Philmer and James W. Zion. "Hozhooji Naat'aanii: The Navajo Justice and Harmony Ceremony" in *Mediation Quarterly*, 10(4), Summer 1993. pp. 327-337.

Shook, E. Victoria and Leonard Ke'ala Kwan. "Ho'oponopono: Straightening Family Relationships in Hawaii." in *Conflict Resolution: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*. London: Greenwood Press, 1991.

### **March 19: Harmony Ideology: Its Price and Its Gift**

Nader, Laura. *Harmony Ideology: Justice and Control in a Zapotec Mountain Village*. CA: Stanford University Press, 1990.

"Order Through Social Organization: Stratifying, Leveling, and Linking" (Ch. 3)  
"Grievances and Remedy Agents: Comparisons in Social Organization" (Ch. 4)  
"Harmony in Comparative Perspective" (Ch. 14)  
"Ethnography and the Construction of Theory" (Ch. 15)

### **March 26: Metaphor, Mythology, Storytelling and Conflict**

LeBaron, Michelle and Jim Potts. "Story and Legend: Powerful Tools for Conflict Resolution" *Mediation Quarterly*, 10(4), Summer 1993. pp. 387-395.

Lederach, John Paul. "Of Nets, Nails, and Problems: The Folk Language of Conflict Resolution in a Central American Setting." in *Conflict Resolution: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*. London: Greenwood Press, 1991.

White, Geoffrey M. "Rhetoric, Reality, and Resolving Conflicts: Disentangling in a Solomon Islands Society" in *Conflict Resolution: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*. London: Greenwood Press, 1991.

## **IV: RESOURCING CULTURE**

### **April 2: Re-evaluating Our Conflict Methodology**

Pedersen, Paul B. and Fred E. Jandt. Eds. *Constructive Conflict Management: Asia-Pacific Cases*. London: Sage Publications, 1996.

"Culturally Contextual Models for Creative Conflict Management" (Ch. 1)  
"The Cultural Context of Mediation and Constructive Conflict Management" (Ch. 26)

**April 9: Embracing Cultural Conflict Models**

Lederach, John Paul. *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures*.  
NY: Syracuse University Press, 1994.

LeBaron, Michelle and J. Bruce Grundison. "Executive Summary, Introduction, Research Methodology and Key Informant Interviews" (Chapters 1-3) in *Conflict and Culture: Research in Five Communities in Vancouver, British Columbia*. BC: University of Victoria, 1993.

**April 16: Student Presentations**

**April 23: Student Presentations**