

Social Conflict SOC 157

Fall 2004

Instructor: Dr. Brian Paciotti

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Monday and Wednesday 2:10-4:00pm; Olson 205

Office hours: 3138 Wickson (10-11 am Monday and Wednesday; AND BY APPOINTMENT)

I. Organization of Course

There are three main parts to this course:

PART I. Social Conflict: Definitions, Typologies, and Theory: In this section, we first define social conflict and disputes, and then discuss theoretical approaches to explain the origins of conflict. We will spend the majority of our time covering evolutionary and cultural theories since these have been the focus of my research. However, we will also cover psychological and sociological theories of conflict, and in the end, we can discuss and debate which ideas are the most interesting or important. Next, with these theories in mind, we will consider empirical data that sheds light on “human nature”. We will evaluate the extent to which humans are inherently aggressive and prone to conflict, and the limits of their capacity to be prosocial and altruistic. This section will be important for the remaining parts of the course when we add details about mechanisms of conflict resolution, as well as substantive details concerning human conflict.

PART II. Conflict Resolution: With a foundation for why social conflict emerges, and how such conflicts often escalate, we will look at mechanisms (strategies) and politics (institutions) to resolve conflicts. We will first define a “system of social control” and then look at different types of mechanisms to resolve conflict (e.g., mediation, arbitration). Finally, we will contrast both violent and non-violent approaches to conflict resolution.

PART III. Examples and Case Studies: In this section, we will apply what we learned in the first two-thirds of the course to evaluate specific types of conflict. For example, we will start with interpersonal conflict between romantic partners to address the specific causes of conflict, and how these can be resolved. We will move on to conflicts that occur on larger scales between ethnic groups and religious groups. Although many of the principles we learn will apply to all these different forms of conflict, we may find some theories of conflict (and mechanisms of conflict resolution) are more suited for specific types of conflict. For example, can Gandhi’s approach to conflict resolution be used to resolve the dispute between Osama Bin Laden and the United States? Which forms of conflict resolution work best when dealing with ethnic/racial conflict? In the end, we will attempt to compare these different forms to evaluate the generality of the processes we studied.

II. Textbooks

REQUIRED READING

- 1.) Gandhi’s Way: A Handbook of Conflict Resolution
- 2.) Culture of Honor: The Psychology of Violence in the South

Reader. (Available at Navin’s Copy Shop)

III. Exams, Essays, and Grading

The grading for this class will be determined by two in-class midterms (20% each), one 7-8 page essay assignment (25%), one final exam (20%), attendance/participation (10%), and participation in psychology experiments (5%).

Midterms and Final Exams: The exams will have short answer questions with some matching and true/false. Questions will be designed to test knowledge of both conceptual and factual material presented in the lectures and readings. Short answer questions will involve writing about a page in a blue book about definitions, concepts, theories, and policies presented throughout the course. The final exam is cumulative, but will be weighted more heavily towards the last half of the course.

Paper: The paper will require you to think about information presented in lecture and in the readings. I expect that you will be able to link concepts from different parts of the course to show that you are thinking about both the origins of conflict and mechanisms to reduce conflict. Because there are such a variety of forms or types of conflict, I will ask that you choose **one** type for your paper. For example, you may want to describe the origins of religious terrorism and the best strategies to resolve such conflicts. I will ask you to discuss your topic with me before you start writing to ensure that the topic is properly defined.

Policy on Make-Up Exams: Make-up tests for those who miss an examination will not be allowed unless the student has received permission from the instructor to miss the exam before the test is given. Make-up tests will be in essay format.

Participation in Psychology Department Experiments: To help you learn about how experiments are conducted (and research in general), I am encouraging you to participate in experiments offered by the psychology department. If you choose not to participate, you have the option to write **three** 1-2 page essays about research methods. **Each paper is worth 2 points.** Thus, you need to complete 3 papers to earn the complete 5% for this assignment. See details on my webpage. (www.brianpaciotti.com) *EXPERIMENT CREDITS (or papers) are due by December 8th.*

Participation: Listening to lectures may be somewhat useful, but it is likely that active participation by students is preferable. Thus, although I will give lectures during class time, questions and comments are always welcome during lectures. In addition, we will have plenty of time after lectures for discussion.

VI. Lecture Outline

Part I: Theory of Conflict (Origins of Conflict) [Readings]		
Lecture 1	Oct. 4 th	Course Introduction
Lecture 2	Oct. 6 th	Evolutionary theory; Culture Exists and is Important
Lecture 3	Oct. 11 th	Social Dilemmas, Cultural Evolution, and Social Institutions [READER, #1]
Lecture 4	Oct. 13 th	Cultural Evolutionary Theory: Predictions and Empirical Support [READER #2]
Lecture 5	Oct. 18 th	Psychological Theories of Conflict
Lecture 6	Oct. 20 th	Sociological and Political Theories of Conflict [READER #3]
Lecture 7	Oct. 25 th	Dynamics of Conflict [READER #4, #5]
	Oct. 27 th	Exam 1
Part II: Conflict Resolution		
Lecture 8	Nov. 1 st	Systems of Social Control (Formal and Informal Mechanisms of Conflict Resolution) [READER, #6]
Lecture 9	Nov. 3 rd	Strategies of Conflict Resolution [READER #7]
Lecture 10	Nov. 8 th	Video: "Gandhi"
Lecture 11	Nov. 10 th	Nonviolence; Gandhi's Approach [Gandhi's Way: A Handbook of Conflict Resolution]
Part III: Analysis of Conflict		
Lecture 12	Nov. 15 th	Gender: Romantic Relationships and Conflict [READER #8, #9]
	Nov. 17 th	Exam 2
Lecture 13	Nov. 22 nd	Gender: Male Interpersonal Violence; "Cultures of Honor"; Chinese tong organizations. [Culture of Honor: The Psychology of Violence in the South]
Lecture 14	Nov. 24 th	Race and Class: Social Dominance Theory [READER, #10]
Lecture 15	Nov. 29 th	Race and Class: Social Dominance Theory
Lecture 16	Dec. 1 st	Religion: Love and Conflict? [READER #11, #12]
Lecture 17	Dec. 6 th	Religious Terrorism: Osama Bin Laden [READER, #13, #14]
Lecture 18	Dec. 8 th	Crime and Dispute Resolution in Tanzania (Sungusungu Vigilantes), Review for Exam
Final Exam	Dec. 14th 4:00 pm	