

Culture, Identity, and Conflict
CONF 302-004 Spring 2019
Founders Hall 475
Thursdays 1:30 pm – 4:10 pm
Office Hours: by personal appointments
César Estrada Pérez
cestrad4@gmu.edu

Course Description

Welcome to the course *Culture, Identity, and Conflict*. This course explores the complex interrelations of social identity and contemporary conflicts across local, national and global contexts. This course emphasizes the role of *identity* both in the production of violent conflict as well as in the processes of conflict resolution and transformation. The course strongly relies on a critical rethinking of ethnic, national and religious identities, understanding them as both generators and outcomes of conflict. This course aims to extend knowledge on the components and structure of social identity, and on the dynamics of identity-based conflicts to develop theoretically and empirically informed frameworks for their analysis and resolution. The course includes lectures, classroom practices, discussions of documentary material, and use of case studies—on which students will write their final paper and elaborate their classroom presentations.

Learning Goals

By the end of the course students are expected to:

- Understand the main theoretical approaches to the study of Collective Identity within contexts of violent conflict.
- Recognize the main components, structures, and dynamics of social identity and their role in the reproduction of conflict.
- Identify the nature and main features of identity-based contemporary conflicts, with an emphasis and critical perspective on the emergence of nationalistic, ethnic, and racial movements in Western societies.
- Analyze cases of conflict through an identity lens, and craft recommendations for conflict resolution and transformation that largely consider collective identity in their scenarios.

Course Requirements and Grading

Class participation and engagement (20%)

1. Students are expected to complete their readings assignments, come prepared to class and contribute to discussions and activities within the classroom.

Written Assignments (60%)

1. Personal Identity Paper (10%). 3-4 pages.

Write a reflective paper about one or two of your own social identities, and how such social identity shapes your views about specific issues or your behavior in any given situations. You can mention the social groups you are involved in—e.g. student organizations, advocacy groups, job environments. You can describe one or two of your most *salient social identities*—e.g. student, musician, volunteer, foreigner, citizen, professional worker. Speak of how your salient social identities influence your attitudes, values, or behavior. Speak of how some of your social identities are interconnected, and how they change over time. Finally, you are expected to reflect on the complexity of your personal identity, and its relations within larger structures and within other identity groups. Rely on the readings and other material from the first three classes—and cite properly. Due on Week 3

2. Collective Identity Paper (10%). 3-4 pages.

Write a paper analyzing ethnic or other collective identity of your choice based on theoretical ideas discussed in class. Use concepts such as self-esteem, prototypes, kinship, chosen trauma and glory, and others to describe features of the collective identity you choose, give examples and provide conclusion about the relevance of theoretical approaches. For this paper, you can use interviews with representatives of an identity group, or refer to examples from literature, art, or history. Paper draft due Week 7. Final paper due Week 9.

3. Final paper on Case Study and Intervention scenarios (40%). 10-15 pages.

The case study can be drawn from the organizational, communal, national, or international level and should involve identity conflict in any form. Be sure to analyze the case study based on theoretical ideas and concepts you studied during the course. Show how theoretical analysis based on an identity lens can help to understand this case study, and can serve as a basis for intervention. Suggest your scenarios for conflict resolution, based on social identity theory. Plan to present your paper for twenty minutes in any of the last two classes. Paper draft due Week 12 April 11th. Paper final version due May 9th.

Final Paper Presentations (20%)

1. It will be a 20-minute presentation on your final paper. After the presentation, feedback will be provided. Presentations will be held the last two sessions of the course.

Grading Scale

Percentage Accumulated (%)	Letter Grade
94-100	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+

84-86	B
80-83	B-
77-79	C+
74-76	C
70-73	C-
60-69	D
0-59	F

Academic Integrity

*It is expected that students adhere to the **George Mason University Honor Code** as it relates to integrity regarding coursework and grades. The Honor Code reads as follows: “To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the University Community have set forth this: Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal and/or lie in matters related to academic work.” More information about the Honor Code, including definitions of cheating, lying, and plagiarism, can be found at the Office of Academic Integrity website at <http://oai.gmu.edu>*

All written work must be available in electronic (Word format) form so that it can be compared to electronic databases.

Disabilities

Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See <http://ods.gmu.edu>].

Email and Blackboard

Instructor and students will communicate only through Mason e-mail. Students must activate their Mason e-mail account, and use *only* Mason email to communicate with the instructor for this course.

The Writing Center

I strongly encourage students to use the different resources offered by The Writing Center at GMU (<https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>). The Center can be a useful space for you to improve your reading and writing skills and allow you to craft academic texts expected at both undergraduate and graduate level (see e.g. <https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/guides/strategies-for-reading-academic-articles>). Overall, it is a great institutional resource for you to improve your educational experience at GMU.

Learning Environment

We are co-creators of our learning environment. It is our collective responsibility to develop a supportive learning environment for everyone. Listening with respect and an open mind, striving to understand others’ views, and articulating your own point of view will help foster the creation

of this environment. We engage our differences with the intent to build community—not to put down the other and distance our self from the other. Being mindful to not monopolize discussion and/or interrupt others will also help foster a dialogic environment.

The following guidelines can add to the richness of our discussion:

- We assume that persons are always doing the best that they can, including the persons in this learning environment.
- We acknowledge that systematic oppression exists based on privileged positions and specific to race, gender, class, religion, sexual orientation, and other social variables and identities.
- We posit that assigning blame to persons in socially marginal positions is counter-productive to our practice. We can learn much about the dominant culture by looking at how it constructs the lives of those on its social margins.
- While we may question or take issue with another class member's ideology, we will not demean, devalue, or attempt to humiliate another person based on her/his experiences, value system, or construction of meaning.
- We have a professional obligation to actively challenge myths and stereotypes about our own groups and other groups so we can break down the walls that prohibit group cooperation and growth.¹

We are a learning community. As a learning community, we are expected to engage with difference, to engage in dialogue in respectful ways that supports learning for all of us and that holds us accountable to each other.

Course Materials

Required book (can be purchased, rented, or checked out of GMU or WRLC):

Volkan, V. (1997) *Bloodlines: From ethnic pride to ethnic terrorism*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Support books (texts are available online through the University Library by clicking on the links):

Rothbart, D. and K. V. Korostelina (2007). *Identity, morality, and threat*. Lexington.

<https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.mutex.gmu.edu/lib/gmu/detail.action?docID=1331624>

Bordens Ashmore, Richard D., Jussim, Lee, and Wilder, David (Eds.). (2001) *Social identity, intergroup conflict, and conflict reduction*. New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press.

<https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.mutex.gmu.edu/lib/GMU/detail.action?docID=241450>

Korostelina, K. V. (2007) *Social identity and conflict*. Palgrave

http://mutex.gmu.edu/login?url=http://www.gmu.eblib.com/EBLWeb/patron/?target=patron&extendedid=P_496118_0

Additional readings (PDF's) will be provided on Blackboard. Access Blackboard 9.1 by following these steps:

1. Go to <http://mymason.gmu.edu>.

¹ Adapted from Lynn Weber Cannon (1990). "Fostering positive race, class and gender dynamics in the classroom". *Women Studies Quarterly*, 1 & 2, 126-134.

2. Login using your NETID and password,
3. Click on the ‘Courses’ tab.
4. Double-click on CONF 302-004 (Spring 2019).

Other resources:

Discussions on race in America: <https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/tag/philosophers-on-race/>

Creating Conversations on Justice: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmoiH1PkHGQ>

The dangers of having a “single story” of another person:

https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story#t-194068

Short texts and other resources on CAR: <https://www.beyondintractability.org/>

Films and Documentaries (access with GMU credentials): <https://gmu.kanopy.com/>

Course outline

Week 1. January 24th. Introduction Class: Culture, Subjectivity, and Social Identity

- Avruch, K. (Chapter 1. “Introduction: Culture, Conflict, and Conflict Resolution”, pp. 3-20)
- Tilly, C. (Chapter 1, pp. 3-10; Chapter 4, pp. 60-67)
- Discuss: “The Danger of a Single Story” (Chimamanda Ngozi, Ted Talk, 2009, 18 min. https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story#t-194068)

Recommended:

- Morris, Wesley. “The Year We Obsessed Over Identity”. *The New York Times Magazine*. October 6, 2015.

Week 2. January 31st. System of Social Identity

- Korostelina, K. (Chapter 1. “Social Identity as Social Phenomenon and Scientific Concept” pp. 13-32)
- Korostelina, K. (Chapter 4, “Components of the System of Social Identity”, pp. 71-93; Chapter 7, “Dynamics of the System of Social Identity”, pp. 113-132)

Week 3. February 7th. Self and Other; Us versus Them

- Volkan, V. (Chapter 1. “Distinctions of Large Group Identity”, pp. 19-29)
- Ashmore et al (Chapter 1. Ashmore et al, “Introduction: Social Identity and Intergroup Conflict”, pp. 3-14. Chapter 2. Brewer, M. B. “Ingroup Identification and Intergroup Conflict. When Does Ingroup Love Becomes Outgroup Hate?”, pp. 17-41)

Week 3 Feb-7th. Personal Identity paper. 3-4 pages.

Week 4. February 14th. Identity, Moral denigration and Violence

- Rothbart, D. and Korostelina, K. (Chapter 3. “Moral Denigration of the Other”, pp. 29-57).
- Ashmore et al (Chapter 6. White, R. W. “Social and Role Identities and Political Violence: Identity as a Window on Violence in Northern Ireland” pp. 133-184).

Recommended:

- Rothbart, D. and Korostelina, K. (Chapter 1. “Identity, Morality and Threat: Studies in Violent Conflict”, pp. 3-15).

Week 5. February 21st. Race and the construction of Identity

- Smedley, Audrey (“Race and the Construction of Human Identity”, pp. 690-702).
- George Yancy and Judith Butler “What’s Wrong With ‘All Lives Matter’?”. *The New York Times*. January 12, 2015, pp. 1-11.
- Discussing film: *I Am Not Your Negro* (Raoul Peck, 2016).

Recommended:

- Fanon, F. (Intro, pp. xi-xviii. Chapter 1. “The Black Man and Language”, pp. 1-23. Chapter 5. “The Lived Experience of the Black Man”, pp. 89-119. Chapter 7 “The Black Man and Recognition”, pp. 185-197)

Week 6. February 28th. Migration Debate and the construction of the Other

- “The Latino Threat Narrative”. *The Latino Threat: Constructing Immigrants, Citizens, and the Nation*. Chavez, Leo. Stanford University Press. 2013: pp. 23-47
- Bauman, Z. “Migration and Identities in the Globalized World”. In *Dialogues on Civilizations*. (<https://www.resetdoc.org/story/migration-and-identities-in-the-globalized-world/>). May 2013, pp. 1-18.
- Discuss: “The Refugee Crisis is Humanity’s Crisis”. Bauman, Zygmunt. *The New York Times*. (May 02, 2016.) (<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/02/opinion/the-refugee-crisis-is-humanitys-crisis.html>)
- Sources: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/world/border-barriers/global-illegal-immigration-prevention/?noredirect=on>

Week 7. March 7th. Nationalisms and global emerging (dis)orders

- Ashmore et al (Chapter 5, Sidanius, J., and Petrocik, J. R., “Communal and National Identity in a Multiethnic State” pp. 101-129).
- Tilly, Charles (Chapter 11 “Boundaries, Citizenship, and Exclusion”, pp. 171-184)
- Discussing emergence of extreme identity-based movements in Europe and the Americas. News Sources
 - o <https://www.aljazeera.com/topics/spotlight/politics.html>
 - o <https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/insidestory/2018/10/worrying-rise-wing-extremism-america-181029184529263.html>

Week 7. Draft of Collective Identity Paper

Week 8. March 14th. Break.

Week 9. March 21st. Ethnic Conflict, Identity and Mass Violence: A critical reading

- Horowitz, H. (“Structure and Strategy in Ethnic Conflict” pp. 1-34)
- Volkan, V. (Chapter 6. “Enemy Images: Minor Differences and Dehumanization”, pp. 101-115).
- Discussion of Case Study: Rohingya Genocide in Myanmar. Some news sources:
 - o https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=04axDDRvy_o

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GtA19zJ3t-M>
- <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/myanmar-facebook-hate/>

Recommended

- Ashmore et al (Chapter 3. Eriksen, T. “Ethnic Identity, National Identity and Intergroup Conflict. The Significance of Personal Experience”, pp. 42-68).

Week 9. Collective Identity paper due.

Week 10. March 28th. No Class

Week 11. April 4th. Identity-Based Conflict Resolution: Early-warning and Identity management

- Korostelina, K. (Chapter 9. “Identity and Conflict: Implications for Identity Conflict Management”, pp. 201-239).

Week 12. April 11th. Conflict Transformation: Building Relationships

- Volkan, V. (Chapter 13. “Experiment in Estonia: ‘Unofficial Diplomacy’ At Work”, pp. 202-224).
- Ashmore et al (Chapter 8. Kelman, H. C. “The Role of National Identity in Conflict Resolution: Experiences from Israeli-Palestinian Problem-Solving Workshops”, pp. 187-213)

Recommended:

- Alexander, Jeffrey (“Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma”, in Alexander et al, Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity. University of California Press: 2004, pp. 1-30.)
- Rothbart, D. and Korostelina, K. (Chapter 14. Montville, J. V. “Reconciliation as Realpolitik: Facing the Burdens of Conflict Resolution”, pp. 271-288).

Week 12. April 11th. Draft of Final Paper.

Week 13. April 18th. Case Study: Violence, Identity, and Culture in Mexico (Instructor’s presentation)

- *Readings: TBA*

(HRW: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/10/05/mexico-militarization-public-security>

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/10/17/mexico-violence-and-opacity>

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/10/29/mexico-torture-and-historical-truth>

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/11/26/mexico-forced-disappearance-ongoing-crime>

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/01/15/mexico-other-disappeared>)

<https://www.c-span.org/video/?294061-1/murder-city>

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2008/11/10/days-of-the-dead-letter-from-mexico-alma-guillermoprieto>

Week 13. Feedback on Draft of Final Paper

Week 14. April 25th. Case Studies Presentations and Feedback

Week 15. May 2nd. Case Studies Presentations and Feedback

May 9th. Final Paper Submission