PACS 604: Conflict Analysis

Fall 2015

Thursday 9:00 a.m.-11:50 a.m.
Conrad Grebel University College, University of Waterloo
CGR 4224

Instructor Nathan C. Funk
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Course Description

PACS 604 examines theoretical and practical frameworks for understanding conflict, with particular attention to structures and dynamics inhibiting peace. The course provides students with some of the analytical skills needed to understand how conflicts develop and escalate, to identify factors that can lead to or sustain violence, and to map root causes of conflict (e.g., human rights violations, needs deprivation, cultural and religious differences, inequality, resource misuse and environmental degradation) at interpersonal, intergroup, and international levels. Attention will also be given to ways in which conflict analysis relates to constructive forms of conflict engagement and to long-term peacebuilding objectives.

Learning Objectives

Upon completing PACS 604 students should be able to:

- describe the benefits of a multi-dimensional approach to analyzing and “making sense” of social conflict;
- apply key conflict analysis concepts from the interdisciplinary MPACS field, to shed light on factors driving and transforming conflicts among individuals, social groups, and nations;
• discuss similarities and differences between conflict dynamics at different levels of analysis (e.g., interpersonal, intergroup, international);
• discuss the role of communication in conflict situations, with particular attention to its role in escalation and de-escalation processes;
• describe stages and consequences of conflict escalation, as well as challenges and methods of conflict de-escalation;
• apply specific conflict analysis frameworks (including instruments developed for policymakers and practitioners) to large-scale conflict scenarios;
• discuss issues of concern among analysts of contemporary (and especially armed) conflicts (e.g., poverty, human rights, identity, resources, environmental degradation, the arms trade), as they relate to particular cases;
• describe non-polarizing forms of conflict engagement (in addition to conventional third-party roles) that facilitate the development of in-depth understanding, and explain how these forms of engagement can provide openings for conflict transformation;
• reflect on personal habits and patterns in dealing with conflict, identifying strengths as well as potential growth areas; and
• demonstrate understanding of principles for engaging and working with conflict constructively.

Course Requirements and Evaluation Criteria

15% Participation: Fifteen percent of your final grade will be based on the quality of your participation in class. Participation presupposes both consistent attendance and good preparation. It manifests through thoughtful engagement with discussions of readings and lecture topics, as well as through contributions to small-group activities.

5% Discussion Leader Assignment: Five percent of your final grade will be derived from a discussion leader exercise in which you will present (individually or in collaboration with another student) your analysis and assessment of assigned readings. Discussion leaders will be asked to initiate conversation by sharing their own reactions to the material, in 5 minutes or less per person. Each discussion leader will provide a short, disciplined summary of important points from their assigned material, using personal commentary and interpretation to provoke conversation. Handouts summarizing key points and/or discussion questions are recommended.

25% Case Study Analysis #1 (20% for the paper + 5% for a presentation): Twenty-five percent of your grade will be based on a collaborative case study project and an individual presentation. Early in the term, students will form teams of 2-4 persons who share interest in a common case; each team member will be responsible for writing a 8-10 page (double-spaced, 11- or 12-point font, 1-inch margins) analysis of dynamic processes related to that case. At least one paper in each team should explore a different set of themes from the first four weeks of class (for example, one paper might explore processes of conflict escalation and/or de-escalation, while other papers might explore interrelationships of actors and motivations, identity issues, and/or critical issues such as culture, power, gender, etc.). Upon completing the paper and submitting it at the beginning of the Week 6 class session, each student will give a concise presentation on his or her contribution to the team project. Handouts for presentations are recommended. Due in class on October 22.
25% Case Study Analysis #2: Another twenty-five percent of your grade will be based on a second case study analysis, in which you will apply concepts from the readings (Week 5 through Week 10) to analyze diverse factors that are driving a particular case of protracted social conflict. Students may choose from a wide range of conflict scenarios, so long as the conflict in question has not already been covered earlier in the term for Case Study Analysis #1. Additional details will be provided in class; the paper should be 10-12 pages in length. Due in class on November 26.

30% Take Home Final Exam: Thirty percent of your final grade will be based on a take-home exam. This exam will consist of short essay questions asking you to apply concepts from readings and presentations to real or hypothetical conflict scenarios. The expected length of submissions is 12-14 pages. The due date is Monday, December 14 by 4:30 p.m. (deposit at Conrad Grebel Reception Desk).

PACS Research Support

The library has created a subject guide to help you carry out peace-related research. You can access this guide at http://subjectguides.uwaterloo.ca/pacs. If you need more specialized assistance, the Peace and Conflict Studies liaison librarian, Laureen Harder-Gissing, is available for consultation. Laureen works with PACS faculty to order library resources and to create the subject guide. See the guide for research tips and ways to contact Laureen.

Desire2Learn (D2L or LEARN) Learning Management System

Important course announcements will appear from time to time in the Desire2Learn (LEARN) learning management system. To access these announcements and make use of additional course resources posted in LEARN, go to https://learn.uwaterloo.ca. Enter your WatIAM username and password. If you encounter difficulties, you are welcome to contact learnhelp.uwaterloo.ca. After you have successfully logged in, click on the PACS 604 link in the yellow “My Courses and Communities” menu. Be sure that the email address listed under your name in LEARN is an address that you check on a regular basis.

Required Texts


PACS 604 Electronic Reserves. Available at https://www.reserves.uwaterloo.ca, and in LEARN (These readings are marked with an “*” in the schedule below.)
The Writing Centre

The Writing Centre works across all faculties to help students clarify their ideas, develop their voices, and write in the style appropriate to their disciplines. Writing Centre staff offer one-on-one support in planning assignments and presentations, using and documenting research, organizing and structuring papers, and revising for clarity and coherence.

You can make multiple appointments throughout the term, or drop in at the Library for quick questions or feedback. To book a 50-minute appointment and to see drop-in hours, visit www.uwaterloo.ca/writing-centre. Group appointments for team-based projects, presentations, and papers are also available.

Please note that writing specialists guide you to see your work as readers would. They can teach you revising skills and strategies, but will not proof-read or edit for you. Please bring hard copies of your assignment instructions and any notes or drafts to your appointment.

UW Policies on Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline.

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4.

Appeals: A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals.

Other sources of information for students:
Academic Integrity website (Arts)
Academic Integrity Office (UWaterloo)
Note for Students with Disabilities

The AccessAbility Services office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS office at the beginning of each academic term.

Additional Considerations

As we progress through the term, please remember:

- In academics as in life more generally, what we get from an experience depends on what we put into it. **Preparation for class** (completing reading and writing assignments on time, tracking world events) is the basis for effective learning.

- When we come to class prepared to participate and pose questions, we transform the classroom environment, making active and collaborative learning possible. We discover that **learning is a communal rather than a solitary endeavor**, and that each one of us is a resource for everyone else in the learning process.

- The subject matter covered by Peace and Conflict Studies courses is inevitably open to **multiple interpretations**. This means that you will not always agree with ideas presented in course readings, lectures, and discussions. In such cases, disagreement is often a good thing, so long as it enables you to develop an enhanced capacity to express where you stand in relation to others. What matters most is not whether or not we all agree, but whether or not we are willing to engage one another with respect and integrity.

- Collaborative learning requires not only preparation and self-expression, but also a commitment to **active listening**. Active listening is a communication skill that we develop as we begin to hear not only words, opinions, and ideas, but also the experiences and the awareness behind them. When we practice active listening, we cease to merely debate and begin to sharpen the focus of our deliberations. We clarify divergent perceptions and develop deeper understanding of contrasting perspectives. We become a clear mirror, reflecting back what we have heard and asking questions to learn rather than to score rhetorical points. In the process, we test and refine our own ideas and those held by others.

Schedule of Topics

Week 1 (September 17): Meeting One Another

What are our goals and plans for the term? What do we already know about conflict, and what do we want to learn? How will we work together?

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Week 2 (September 24): Conflict and Peace: Dimensions and Sources

What do we mean when we use terms like “conflict,” “violence,” and “peace”? What are some of the more important global trends in armed conflict and peacebuilding?

Required Readings:

- Mayer, The Dynamics of Conflict.
  - Preface
  - Chapter 1 (“The Nature of Conflict”)
- Fisher, et al., Working with Conflict.
  - Chapter 1 (“Understanding Conflict”)
- Redekop, From Violence to Blessing.
  - Chapter 1 (“Deep-Rooted Conflict”)

Further Reading:
Relevant Internet Resources for Mapping Global Conflict:

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Week 3 (October 1): The Complexity of Conflict: Culture, Power, and Interactive Processes

What are some of the various ways in which culture can influence the dynamics of conflict? Why is it important to pay attention to differences in the relative power, leverage, or influence capacity of opposing parties? Why should conflict analysts pay attention to gender? Under what conditions can escalation be positive or “constructive”? When is escalation destructive?

**Required Readings:**

- Mayer, *The Dynamics of Conflict*.
  - Chapter 2 (“How People Approach Conflict”)
  - Chapter 3 (“Power and Conflict”)
  - Chapter 4 (“Culture and Conflict”)
- Fisher, et al., *Working with Conflict*.
  - Chapter 3 (“Critical Issues”)

*Form teams for Case Analysis #1.*

**Further Reading:**
Week 4 (October 8): Dynamics of Social Conflict: Human Needs, Identities, and Escalation

How can conflict analysis provide insight into culture, identity, and related “intersubjective” aspects of conflict (e.g., religion, values, gender, ethnicity, narratives, worldviews, social memory, shared trauma)? Can “human needs” theories help to illuminate some of the most fundamental stakes for parties to conflict? What are some key factors that can contribute to the escalation and perpetuation of social conflicts? What changes occur within and between groups as conflicts escalate?

Required Readings:

- Redekop, From Violence to Blessing.
  - Chapter 2 (“Human Identity Needs”)
  - Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, passim.
  - Chapter 5 (“Hegemonic Structures”)
  - Chapter 6 (“Ethnonationalism”)
  - Chapter 7 (“Self-Other Dynamics”)

Further Reading:
- Center for International Development and Conflict Management. Minorities at Risk (MAR) Project.
  http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/.

Week 5 (October 15): Frameworks for Conflict Analysis

What are some policy instruments that many government agencies and international institutions use when dealing with conflict situations, particularly when advancing priorities related to relief, development, and peacebuilding? How do these instruments differ, and what are some of the theoretical assumptions that inform these instruments?
Guest speaker: Reina Neufeldt

**Required Readings:**

- Fisher, et al., *Working with Conflict.*
  - Chapter 2 (“Tools for Conflict Analysis“)

**Further Reading:**

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**Week 6 (October 22): Team Presentations**

How can concepts from weeks 2-4 help us understand the complex dynamics of “real-world” social conflicts?

*No required reading.*

**Case Study Analysis Paper #1 due.**

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Week 7 (October 29): Systemic Aspects of Conflict

How do social, economic, and political institutions shape conflict environments? What is known about the impact of poverty, inequality, and social/political exclusion on conflicts? What are some factors associated with governance failure and “state fragility”? What are some ways to engage conflict-habituated social systems?

Required Readings:

  - Chapter 1 (“The Political Economy of War: Situating the Debate,” by Cynthia J. Arnson)
- Fisher, et al., Working with Conflict.
  - Chapter 4 (“Building Strategies to Address Conflict”)

Declare preliminary plans for Case Analysis #2.

Further Reading:
Online Resources:
  http://books.google.ca/books?id=_3_c7OILUBAC&pg=PA69&source=qbs_toc_r&cad=4#v=onepage&q &f=true.

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Week 8 (November 5): Resources and the Arms Trade

How do factors such as the environment, resources, political economy, and the arms trade impact conflict? How can attention to factors such as ecological degradation, “lootable” resources, and conflict profiteering enhance our understanding and enable constructive responses?

Required Readings:

- Fisher, et al.,  *Working with Conflict.*  
  o Chapter 5 (“Influencing Policy”)

Further Reading:
Week 9 (November 12): Breaking Cycles of Violence

What are some ways in which conflict can leave its mark on a culture and society? How can conflict analysis support de-escalation in protracted social conflicts? What are some factors that can enable a sustainable transformation of conflict? Reconciliation?

**Required Readings:**

- Redekop, *From Violence to Blessing*.
  - Chapter 8 ("Structures of Violence")
  - Part 2 ("Case Study"), Chapters 9-11
  - Chapter 12, *passim*
  - Chapter 13 ("Reconciliation")


- Fisher, et al., *Working with Conflict*.
  - Chapter 7 ("Addressing the Consequences")

**Further Reading:**

Week 10 (November 19): Engaging Conflict

What are some core skills and processes of conflict engagement? How can a better understanding of these skills and processes help us to navigate conflict more wisely and effectively? How can conflict analysis enhance our capacity to engage conflict in ways that foster resolution or transformation? How do factors pertaining to communication shape how conflicts unfold?

Required Readings:

- Mayer, *The Dynamics of Conflict*.
  - Chapter 5 (“Resolving Conflict”)
  - Chapter 6 (“Engaging Conflict”)
  - Chapter 7 (“Communication”)
  - Chapter 8 (“Negotiation”)
  - Chapter 9 (“Working with Impasse”)
  - Chapter 10 (“Mediation”)

Further Reading:


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Week 11 (November 26): Working with Conflict Constructively

How can knowledge about conflict be put to practical use in challenging interpersonal, organizational, and policy contexts? What are some guidelines for conflict intervention, particularly in cases in which long-term presence is required? What are some guiding principles for constructive peace and conflict work? What can theories and practices of nonviolence contribute?

Required Readings:

- Mayer, *The Dynamics of Conflict*.
  - Chapter 11 (“Other Approaches to Conflict Intervention”)
  - Chapter 12 (“Why We Intervene in Conflict”)
- Fisher, et al., *Working with Conflict*.
  - Chapter 6 (“Intervening Directly in Conflict”)

Case Study Analysis #2 due.

Further Reading:

Week 12 (December 3): Agendas for Conflict Transformation

How can conflict analysis support local and global peacebuilding? What are some overarching “lessons” of conflict analysis for those engaged with the tasks of a) preventing destructive conflict, and b) assisting transitions from violence to stable peace?

Required Readings:

- Redekop, From Violence to Blessing.
  - Chapter 14, passim
  - Chapter 15, (“From Violence to Blessing”)
  - Epilogue
- Fisher, et al., Working with Conflict.
  - Chapter 8 (“Working on the Social Fabric”)

Further Reading:

>>Take-Home Exam Due Monday, December 14<<