Syllabus for ECS 5101 Identity-Based Conflict  
(Deep-Rooted Ethnic and Religious Conflict)

Winter, 2013

Professor: Vern Neufeld Redekop

This course presents the theoretical concepts with which to understand the dynamics of deep-rooted or identity-based conflict, including religious and ethnic conflict, and applies them to particular situations. Religion, ethnicity, gender, class, and other identity signifiers are examined using such concepts as human identity needs, mimetic theory, hegemonic structures, ethno-nationalist movements, complex identity and victimization. The concept of reconciliation is introduced as a positive response to deep-rooted conflict.

Goal

To demonstrate how an appropriate hermeneutical framework helps understand the dynamics of deep-rooted conflict and how this understanding can help to comprehend the meaning, challenges and potential of reconciliation and to develop strategies and actions to deal constructively with such conflict.

Objectives

1. To gain an awareness of the complexity of deep-rooted conflict.
2. To understand a constellation of concepts such as human identity needs, mimetic desire, scapegoating, hegemonic structures, ethnonationalism and ontological rift and to see the links among them within the concept of mimetic structures of violence.
3. To develop the concept of reconciliation as a process of justice-making, ritual, and healing by which mimetic structures of violence are transformed into mimetic structures of blessing.

Assignments and Evaluation

Weekly Assigned Readings and Class Participation 10
Write a one page reflection on each of ten classes. Reflections any particular class will be accepted only the week after the class.

Survey Reading 10
Read 100 pages from any combination of the books in the bibliography each of ten weeks and provide one page of insights, questions and/or critique.

Text Book 10
Read the first eight chapters and identify five major challenges to reconciliation based on mimetic structures of violence (5 marks). Read the remainder of the book and identify five major concepts that help understand the process and potential of reconciliation.
**Research Paper**  
Provide your own hermeneutical framework based on ideas from the course and reading you have done. Use this framework to analyze a deep-rooted conflict.

**Reconciliation Process**  
In a team of four students, either develop a reconciliation ritual, a set of “teachings,” or recommendations for structural change to address deep-rooted conflict in a particular context and make a class presentation.

**Final Assignment**  
Total 100

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Survey Reading List

Session 1 – Problematique


Session 2 – Reconciliation Framework


**Reconciliation: Structural Change**


**Theory and Praxis**


**Reconciliation General**


Aertsen, Ivo, Jane Arsovska, Holger-C. Rohne, Marta Valiñas, and Kris Vanspauwen (eds.), *Restoring Justice after Large-scale Violent Conflicts: Kosovo, DR Congo and the Israeli-Palestinian Case* (Cullompton: Willan, 2008);


Berg, Manfred and Schaefer, Bernd (eds.), *Historical Justice in International Perspective: How societies are Trying to Right the Wrongs of the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press and Washington, D.C.: German Historical Institute, 2007).


Herman, Judith, *Trauma and Recovery*.


*Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 10(1) 2004


**Session 3 – Human Identity Needs and Emotions**


Frankl, Viktor. *Man's Search for Meaning*.


**Emotions**


Mimetic Theory


Scapegoating


Session 4 – Creative Mimesis and Blessing-Based Reconciliation


Session 5 – Hegemonic Structures


Session 6 – Ethnonationalism

Ethnicity


_________. *Psychodynamics of International Relations*.


**Religion**


**Session 7 – Ontological Rift and Gender**


_________. *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence / Emmanuel Levinas ; translated by Alphonso Lingis. The Hague : M. Nijhoff , 1981.*


**Session 8 – Case Study: The Oka/Kanehsata:ke Crisis**

See bibliography in *From Violence to Blessing*.

**Notes on Methodology for Assignments**

*Weekly Assigned Readings and Class Participation*

Write a one page reflection on each class and reading. Format:

Course: Identity-Based Conflict, ECS 5101, Fall, 2008

Name:

Date:

Session:

Violence to Blessing: Chapter ___

Reflection:
The point of the reflection is for you to articulate insights and questions that come from a combination of the class session and reading in From Violence to Blessing. It also becomes the means by which you can communicate how the course is going for you.

**Survey Reading**

Read 200 pages from any of the books in the bibliography for each of 10 sessions and provide two pages of key points, insights and questions raised. Format:

Course: Identity-Based Conflict, ECS 5101, Winter, 2006  
Name:  
Date:  
Session:  
Name of Book:  
Pages read:

Reflection:

The survey reading is meant to give you an awareness of literature that pertains to the topic at hand and to provide a broader understanding for thinking critically on each issue. For the reflection, it is important to note key insights and questions raised and to point out how the book contributes to your comprehension of the issue at hand.

**Research Paper**

Provide your own hermeneutical framework based on ideas from the course and reading you have done. Use this framework to analyze a deep-rooted conflict.

Early on in the course, you should decide on a deep-rooted conflict you wish to analyze. It will be important for you to define the relational system you are working on and to situate this in relation to other relational systems. As you do your weekly reflections, you should at the same time make notes of how the theory you are studying helps to understand the conflict you have chosen. When the time comes to write your paper, you may wish to focus on the theory that seemed to be the most illuminating. As you reflect on this particular theory, which for you becomes central, you may wish to reflect on how other theoretical approaches enhance this theory.

Outline

1. The Conflict – an Overview  
   What is the conflict? Which relational system? Who are the parties? What are the key features of the conflict that make it a particular challenge?  
2. The Theory  
   Develop the theoretical perspective you intend to use.  
3. The Conflict – the Narrative  
   Describe how the conflict unfolded, taking note of key critical junctures or nodes of decision.  
4. The Interpretation  
   Use the theoretical framework you developed to interpret the dynamics of the conflict.  
5. Conclusion – reflect on the usefulness of the theory and suggest further research that would need to be undertaken to deal with yet unanswered questions.

**Reconciliation Process**

20
Either develop a reconciliation ritual, a set of “teachings,” or recommendations for structural change to address deep-rooted conflict in a particular context; with your working pod, make a class presentation.

For a particular identity-based conflict you can work on an appropriate process to address some aspect of what is needed for reconciliation. You will submit your own assignment but can work together with those in your working pod. You may choose to all work on the same conflict and each work on a different aspect of the process or you may all choose to work on the same aspect (e.g. healing rituals) and develop processes adapted to different contexts. You will present your work to the entire class together.

**Final Assignment**

For the final assignment, you will need to be aware of, and able to work with the theoretical perspectives presented in class.