ECS 4102

CAUSES OF CONFLICT II: SOCIOLOGICAL AND RATIONALIST APPROACHES

Fall 2012
Wednesday 17:30-20:30

Professor: Jean-François Rioux

Office Hours: Wednesday 10:00-12:00 Guigues 320
Tel: 236-1393 #2388
jfrioux@ustpaul.ca

DESCRIPTION

This course will introduce the student to some of the most influential theories and approaches of the social sciences and humanities used in the analysis of social conflicts. Those theories are mostly found in the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, political science, and economics, but they often have their roots in philosophical traditions. The instructor will favour the study of classic and representative texts.

The purpose of this course is to provide our students with a solid social science background that will complement the philosophical and ethical approaches favoured by Saint Paul University in that it will allow the student to understand the perspectives and methods used by other specialists of conflicts. In more details, we can say that the course aims at 1) developing the understanding of sociological and rationalist theories by students; 2) comparing and contrasting theories; 3) developing the analytical and critical capacities for evaluating the logic, consistency, and applicability of theories; 4) understanding how theories can be applied to reality, and empirically tested.

Most of the theories covered in the course deal with violent conflict, and many revolve around the question of international strife. However, the instructor will also provide many examples about internal and local conflicts. The students interested in community-level and national-level issues will be able to write about the theories and approaches that are particularly related to those types of conflicts.

FORMAT

The course will consist in lectures by the professor during 90 to 120 minutes, followed by a discussion of the compulsory readings.

READINGS

There is no required textbook for this course. The weekly compulsory readings are taken from diverse textbooks, essays, and periodicals and will be made available to students.
SCHEDULE

September 5: Introduction: Why Do We Study Theories and Approaches?
The Scientific Study of Conflict and the Humanities / Theories, Models, Approaches, and Paradigms / Theory and Verification / Structuralist vs. Rationalist Approaches / Need, Greed, and Creed

Part I - Sociological Theories

September 12: Elite Theory and Realism: Are All Conflicts about Power?
Power and Conflict / Elite Theory / Anarchy and Conflict / Realism in International Relations / Neo-Realism / The ontology and epistemology of realism

Required Readings:

Other Readings:
Machiavelli, The Prince (several editions).
Morgenthau, Hans, Politics Among Nations, NY, Alfred Knopf, (several editions).

September 19: Modernization and Development: Whither Social Conflict?
Positivist Thought and Methodology / Modernization / Political Development and State Building / Political Decay and Revival / Democratization

Required Readings:

Other Readings:
September 26: Marxism and Economic Structuralism: Are All Conflicts about Ownership?

Dialectical and Historical Materialism / Class Struggles / Capitalism and War / Imperialism / Dependency and Conflict / Globalization and Conflict

Required Readings:

Other Readings:
Marx, Karl, The Civil War in France, 1871 (several editions).
Marx, Karl, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon, 1852 (several editions).
Marx, Karl & Friedrich Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party, 1848 (several editions).

October 3: The Environment and Armed Conflicts: The Global Warming of Conflicts?

Biology and Conflicts / Demography and War / Resource Exploitation and War / Current Environmental Conflicts / Global Warming

Required Readings:

Other Readings:

October 10: Culture, Religion, and Ideology: Do Ideas Cause Conflict?
The Study of Ideas in the social sciences / Ideology and the Cold War / Cultural Encounters and Violence / the Clash of Civilizations / Religions and War

Required Readings:

Other Readings:
McTernan, Oliver, *Violence in God’s Name: Religion in an Age of Conflict*, Maryknoll (NY), Orbis, 2003, pp.1-44; 165-168.

**October 17: Mid-Term Exam**

**October 24 Study Week**

**October 31: The Constructionist View on Conflicts: How are Conflicts Constructed?**

*The Agent-Structure Debate / Post-Positivism / Constructivism and Constructionism / Post-Modernism / Critical Theory / Feminist Thought*

**Required Readings:**

- TBA.

**Other Readings:**


**Part II: Rationalist Approaches**

**November 7: Rationality and Game Theory: Is the Matrix Everywhere?**

*Methodological Individualism / Reason and Rationality / Utility and Choice / The Prisoners’ Dilemma / The Chicken / The Evolution of Cooperation*

**Required Readings:**


**Other Readings:**


**November 14: Public Choice and Liberal Economics: When is War a Rational Behaviour?**

*Public Choice Theory / Public Goods / The Coordination Problem / The Curse of Raw Materials / The Choice of Taking Up Arms*

**Required Reading:**

**Other Readings:**

**November 21: Deterrence and the Security Dilemma: Is War Averted or Caused by Threats?**

*Deterrence and Defence / Alliances, Arms Races and Wars / Credibility Issues / Mutually Assured Destruction / Crisis Management / Nuclear Defence / Arms Control*

**Required Reading:**

**Other Readings:**

**November 28: The Limits of Rationality: Can Conflict Emerge from Unexpected Places?**

*Limited Information and Limited Rationality / Perceptions and Reality / Organizational Constraints / Bureaucratic Infighting*

**Conclusion: Is there a Future for Theory?**

*The Role of Theory / Irreducibility and Compatibility of Approaches / Deficiencies in Theories*

**Required Readings:**
- Allison, Graham, “The Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis”, in Matthews, Rubinoff and Stein (op.cit.) pp.94-104.

**Other Readings:**


---

**EVALUATION**

**Literature Reviews (2 X 20% = 40%)**

They will be 10 page papers that will summarize, analyze, and evaluate a few theoretical contributions. The students will take one topic from the first part of the course, and one from the second part. They will review at least 5 sources, two of which may be required readings. At least one source must be found beyond the references featured in the course outline.

The purpose of the literature reviews is to develop your abstract and analytical reasoning about theories. You must show that you understand the texts by providing a very succinct summary. Then, you must analyze where the author starts from (his/her influences, his/her assumptions, etc.), the similarities and differences with other approaches, and the types of applications for the approach. The students conclude by evaluating the logic, the consistency, and the applicability of the models under study. The first review will be due on October 31, and the second one on December 5.

**Mid-Term Exam (20%)**

This two-hour exam will verify the students’ knowledge about the material covered until October 19 (incl.) through long answers to questions. It will be held in class on October 17 from 17:30 to 19:30.

**Final Exam (30%)**

This three-hour exam will cover all of the course’s material, with emphasis on the content seen since Oct.31. The exam will take place during the official examination period, probably on December 12 at 17:30 in the classroom.

**Participation (10%)**

Presence in the classroom and participation in the discussions will be evaluated by the instructor.
OTHER ISSUES

Plagiarism

Plagiarism will be prosecuted, as specified in the rules and regulations of the university.

Methodology

Students can use their own favourite style of referencing (i.e. APA, Chicago, etc.) as long as they apply it consistently. Failure in the proper use of a referencing model will result in grades lowered by 5 to 10%.

Grammar and Presentation

Grades will be lowered 5% when the form of the paper is not adequate.

Delays

Delays for the papers will be granted for serious reasons that are beyond the control of the student. Otherwise, late papers will be subtracted 10% per day.

Supplementary Evaluations

They are not allowed by the university.