

PSYCHOLOGY 327z
THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

SYLLABUS

Course Information

Class Sessions: 10 class sessions, 4 hours each (9:00am-1:00pm)

Monday – Friday; January 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22 (Reading Period 23), Final Exam 24

Professor

Dr. Steven Stemler

Professor of Psychology

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Required Texts

Ashmore, R. D., Jussim, L., & Wilder, D. (Eds.). (2001). *Social identity, intergroup conflict, and conflict reduction* (Vol. 3). New York: Oxford University Press.

Barsky, A.E. (2007). *Conflict resolution for the helping professions (2nd Ed.)*. Belmont, CA: Thomson.

Deutsch, M. (1974). *The resolution of conflict: Constructive and destructive processes*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Stone, D., Patton, B., & Heen, S. (2010). *Difficult Conversations*. New York: Penguin.

Strongly Recommended

Baumesiter, R. (1997). *Evil: Inside human cruelty and violence.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Lakoff, G. (2014). *The All NEW Don't think of an elephant. Know your values and frame the debate*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing.

Tannen, D. (1998). *The Argument Culture: Stopping America's War of Words*. Ballantine.

Course Overview

This course will focus on the psychological causes and consequences of interpersonal, intergroup, and international conflict. Topics discussed will include such issues as the role of power, status, trust, and social identity. Students will learn about various theories related to the causes of conflict, as well as practical techniques for navigating conflict. Educational programs that teach conflict resolution skills will also be examined. This course will be conducted as a seminar. As such, students will be responsible for both the presentation of material and for leading discussions of various topics.

Course Website

I have set up a Moodle website for this class. On the site, you will be able to find a copy of the syllabus, required articles (listed on the reading list), and a host of supplementary references that will help you to gain a further appreciation of the course materials.

Accommodation Statement

Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a disability as defined by the ADA. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible.

If you have a disability, or think that you might have a disability, please contact [Accessibility Services](#) in order to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. Accessibility Services is located in North College, rooms 021/022, or can be reached by email (accessibility@wesleyan.edu) or phone (860-685-5581).

Religious Observances

Religious observances require that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required assignments/attendance. If this applies to you, please speak with me directly as soon as possible at the beginning of the term.

Classroom Behavior

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression, age, ability, and nationality. Classrosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the policies on [the student code](#).

Discrimination and Harassment

Wesleyan University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. Wesleyan will not tolerate acts of discrimination or harassment based upon Protected Classes or related retaliation against or by any employee or student. For purposes of this Wesleyan policy, "**Protected Classes**" refers to race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against should contact [the Office for Equity and Inclusion](#) at 860-685-4771. The [responsibility of the University Members](#) has more information.

Honor Code

All students of Wesleyan University are responsible for knowing and adhering to [the Honor Code](#) of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council – Office of Student Affairs. Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). The [Honor Code Office](#) has more information

Syllabus Information Disclaimer

I reserve the right to change any information contained in this document, when necessary, with adequate notice given to the student. Notice shall be given in the classroom during class or via e-mail. No other notice is required. It is the students' responsibility to keep up with any changes, modifications, adjustments or amendments that are made to this document.

Course Requirements and Grading

25% Participation

25% Thought Papers

25% Examinations

25% Major Project

Participation. There will be a number of controversial, sensitive, and lively topics that we discuss throughout the course of the semester. Since this is a seminar course, a large component of your grade will be based upon the extent to which you actively participate in the discussions as well as encourage the participation of others by inviting alternative points of view and listening respectfully to others. You are expected to attend all class sessions, complete the readings (including any additional readings handed out), and actively participate in class discussions and activities. You will be expected to bring with you at least one written question for discussion for each class session and you can expect to be a discussion leader at some point during the course. The questions you bring should be related in some way to the readings for the week. In all, your participation will count for 25% of your final course grade.

Thought Papers. Throughout the course you will be required to submit a series of thought papers. The thought papers should briefly summarize the materials that you have read, highlighting the key theses, and then provide a thoughtful response to the readings. Each of the thought papers is intended as an outlet for you to respond to and explore ideas that the readings provoked for you. Each paper should be no longer than 3 pages (1-page summary and 2-page response), double-spaced, 12 point font with 1" margins all around. Do not use a title page; instead, include your name in the header of the paper. In order to receive full credit for this component of the course, you must submit and receive credit for six out of 8 possible thought papers. The papers will be graded in the following manner. 6 papers receiving credit = A; 5 = B; 4 = C; 3 = D; 0-2 = F. All thought papers are due to Professor Stemler via Moodle by the beginning of the class session that is highlighted in the course calendar listed on the next page. Late papers will not be accepted. The thought papers are worth a total of 25% of your final course grade.

Examinations. There will be three examinations throughout the course. The purpose of these examinations is to check your understanding of key material covered in the course readings and handouts. The exams will take the form of closed-book tests that may include a variety of item types. The exams will combine to count for 25% of your final course grade.

Major Project. Each student will be expected to undertake a major project during the course. The major project will require the students to perform a detailed analysis of a conflict culminating in a 10 page research paper related to the readings encountered during this course. Further details about the specific requirements for each major project will be provided at the appropriate point in the course. The major project will count for 25% of your final course grade.

Key Topics to be Covered

1. The Nature and Prevalence of Conflict – Constructive and Destructive Processes
2. Review of Key Psychological Principles
3. Media Representations of Conflict and the Myth of Pure Evil
4. Communication and Conflict
5. The Role of Power and Justice in Conflict
6. Culture and Conflict
7. Emotion and Conflict
8. Threats, Promises, Violence, and Intractable Conflict
9. Individual Differences and Conflict Resolution Styles
10. Strategies for Resolving Interpersonal Conflict (Negotiation, Mediation, etc.)

Course Schedule

Readings indicate material that will be discussed in class that day. The expectation is that you will have **read this material prior to coming to class.**

Pre-Course Readings – Thought Paper Due

Deutsch, Chapter 1, 4, 5
Ashmore et al., Chapters 1 and 2
Tannen Chapters 1-3
Lakoff (pp. 1-56)

Write one thought paper in response to something that struck you from the major readings above

Day 1

Topics

Introductions and Review of Syllabus
Review of Core Psychological Principles

Readings

None

Day 2

Topics

Exam #1 – African and Middle Eastern Geography
Presentations on Worldwide conflicts (10-15 min each)
Discussion regarding common themes in worldwide conflict

Readings

Readings related to presentation topic

Day 3 – Thought Paper Due

Topics

Types of Conflict – Discussion of Examples from Thought Papers
The Role of Social Identity in Intergroup Conflict
Optimal Distinctiveness Theory
The Prisoner's Dilemma Exercise

Readings

Deutsch, Chapter on Cooperation and Competition (see Moodle)

Day 4 (02/19) - Thought Paper Due

Topics

Social identity in America, Ireland, and the Middle East
Social Identity Groups at Wesleyan – Discussion of Examples from Thought Papers

Readings

Ashmore et al., Chapters 6 and 8

Day 5 (02/26) - Thought Paper Due

Topics

Representations of Evil in Media and Popular Culture – Discussion of Examples from Thought Papers
The Myth of Pure Evil
Conflict and the Perception of Evil

Readings

Ashmore et al., Chapter 7
Deutsch, Chapter 7
Baumeister, Chapter 1-3

Day 6 (03/05) - Thought Paper Due

Topics

Communication and Conflict – Discussion of Examples from Thought Papers
Culture and Conflict
The Role of Power, Justice, and Threats in Conflict – Discussion of Examples from Thought Papers

Readings

Stone, Patton, & Heen (pp. 1-85)
Deutsch, Chapters 6
Coleman, Chapter on Power and Conflict (see Moodle)
Deutsch, Chapter on Justice and Conflict (see Moodle)

Day 7 - Thought Paper Due

Topics

Individual Differences and Styles of Conflict Resolution
Styles of Conflict Resolution – Discussion of Examples from Thought Papers
Exam #2 – Intergroup Conflict Resolution

Readings

Barsky, Chapter 2
Stemler, et al., (see Moodle)

Day 8 - Thought Paper Due

Topics

Strategies for Resolving Interpersonal Conflict (Part I)
Discussion of Examples from Thought Papers
Negotiation
Role Playing

Readings

Barsky, Chapter 3
Stone, Patton, & Heen (pp. 109-163)

Day 9

Topics

Strategies for Resolving Interpersonal Conflict (Part II)
Mediation
Role Playing

Readings

Barsky, Chapter 4
Stone, Patton, & Heen (pp. 164-249)

Day 10 – Thought Paper Due

Topic

Conflict Resolution Programs in K-12 Schools
Third-Party Interventions and Peacekeeping

Integrating Course Material – Discussion of Examples from Thought Papers
Exam #3 – Interpersonal Conflict Resolution

Readings

Barsky, Chapter 7

Day 11

NO CLASS

Day 12

Major Project Due

RESOURCES RELATED TO THE STUDY OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

1. The Morton Deutsch International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution
<http://iccr.tc.columbia.edu/>
2. Carter Center
<http://www.cartercenter.org/peace/index.html>
3. Conflict Resolution Network
<http://www.crnhq.org/>
4. Conflict Research Consortium: U of Colorado
<http://conflict.colorado.edu/>
http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/index_orig.html
5. Society for the Study of Peace, Conflict, and Violence Prevention: Peace Psychology (APA Division 48)
<http://www.clarku.edu/peacepsychology/>
6. Conflict Resolution Information Source
<http://www.crinfo.org/>
7. The Association for Conflict Resolution
<http://www.acrnet.org/>
8. International Online Training Program on Intractable Conflict
<http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/>
9. Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution: George Mason University
<http://www.gmu.edu/departments/ICAR/>
10. CDR Associates
<http://www.mediate.org/>
11. Project Ploughshares
<http://www.ploughshares.ca/>
12. Mediation Training Institute International
<http://www.mediationworks.com/mti/>
13. The Oregon Mediation Center
<http://www.to-agree.com/>
14. Conflict Resolution/Peer Mediation Research Project
<http://www.coe.ufl.edu/CRPM/CRPMhome.html>

JOURNALS

- 1) Conflict and Communication Online:
 - a. <http://www.cco.regener-online.de/>
- 2) Conflict Management in Higher Education Report:
 - a. <http://www.campus-adr.org/CMHER/Newsletter.html>
- 3) The Journal of Conflict Resolution:
 - a. <http://www.sagepub.co.uk/journalsProdDesc.nav?prodId=Journal200764>
- 4) Conflict Resolution Quarterly:
 - a. <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com.ezproxy.wesleyan.edu:7790/cgi-bin/jhome/97519532/?CRETRY=1&SRETRY=0>
- 5) Negotiation Journal:
 - a. [http://www.metapress.com.ezproxy.wesleyan.edu:7790/\(dpc2ho45ygqw5n45rohpt3qa\)/app/home/journal.asp?referrer=parent&backto=linkingpublicationresults,1:102591,1](http://www.metapress.com.ezproxy.wesleyan.edu:7790/(dpc2ho45ygqw5n45rohpt3qa)/app/home/journal.asp?referrer=parent&backto=linkingpublicationresults,1:102591,1)
- 6) Mediation Quarterly:
 - a. <http://pao.chadwyck.com.ezproxy.wesleyan.edu:7790/journals/displayItemFromId.do?QueryType=journals&ItemID=w553>
- 7) Dispute Resolution Journal:
 - a. <http://proquest.umi.com.ezproxy.wesleyan.edu:7790/pqdweb?RQT=318&pmid=27007>
- 8) The Journal of Conflict Studies:
 - a. <http://www.lib.unb.ca/Texts/JCS/>
- 9) Cooperation and Conflict:
 - a. <http://cac.sagepub.com/>
- 10) Peace, Conflict and Development:
 - a. <http://www.peacestudiesjournal.org.uk/>
- 11) The Online Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution:
 - a. <http://www.trinstitute.org/ojpcr/>
- 12) Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology:
 - a. <http://gort.ucsd.edu/newjour/p/msg03137.html>
- 13) The African Conflict Journal:
 - a. http://www.crinfo.org/special_projects/mini-grants/summary_ACJ.jsp
- 14) International Journal of Conflict Management:
 - a. <http://members.aol.com/mgt2000/ijcm.htm>
- 15) Rutgers Conflict Resolution Law Journal:
 - a. <http://www.pegasus.rutgers.edu/~rcrlj/>

- 16) Journal of Conflict and Security Law:
 - a. <http://jcsl.oxfordjournals.org/archive/>
- 17) Journal of Peace Research:
 - a. <http://jpr.sagepub.com/>
- 18) The International Journal of Peace Studies:
 - a. <http://www.gmu.edu/academic/ijps/>
- 19) Peace and Change:
 - a. <http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/journal.asp?ref=0149-0508>
- 20) Peace and Conflict Studies:
 - a. <http://shss.nova.edu/pcs/>
- 21) Journal for the Study of Peace and Conflict
 - a. <http://www.peacewarconflict.org/flashplu.htm#JSPC%20Cfp>
- 22) Peace Research Abstracts Journal
 - a. <http://www.sagepub.co.uk/journalsProdDesc.nav?prodId=Journal200745>

FOUNDATIONS THAT FUND WORK RELATED TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION

John D. and Katherine T. MacArthur Foundation: Priority areas include “teaching and learning” as well as “human and community development,” which has in the past included work on conflict.

<http://www.macfound.org/programs/index.htm>

Research Council: natural sciences, but has in the past funded work on things like emotion regulation. It seems that they rarely fund psychological research, but “rare” is not the same as “nonexistent,” so this agency seemed worth mentioning.

<http://www4.nationalacademies.org/PGA/rap.nsf/WebDocuments/Home+Page>

National Institute of Mental Health: This institute has funded working on both emotion regulation and ingroup bias. It appears to grant a really wide range of projects money.

<http://grants2.nih.gov/grants/oer.htm>

Pew Memorial Trusts: Pew’s main areas are information, policy solutions and civic life. Both education and conflict are of interest under this broad umbrella.

<http://www.pewtrusts.com/grants/index.cfm>

Carnegie Corporation: International Peace and Security and Strengthening U.S. Democracy are two of their four initiatives (International Development and Education being the other two). Their international and democratic initiatives tend to include more education-based concerns, such as civic engagement in youth and immigrants in the U.S. and how education contributes to this. However, as recently as May of 2005 a foundation got a grant to study religious tolerance and conflict resolution.

Nathan Cummings Foundation: Expresses concern for democratic values and social justice; specific concerns include diversity.

Ford Foundation: Strengthening democratic values, reducing poverty and injustice, promoting international cooperation and advancing human achievement are their four main initiatives. Current interests include governance and civil society, under the heading “Peace and Social Justice.”

Andrew W. Mellon Foundation: University Programs support humanistic research in university settings.

Soros Foundations Network: Has a series of global initiatives.