

## SYLLABUS

SC 094: Social Conflict  
T/Th 3-4:15  
Campion Hall 200  
Spring 2007

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The end of the Cold War has not put an end to either war or violent conflicts within society. Some old conflicts that were dormant have now flared up. Problems of large scale, violent conflicts unfortunately remain central in the modern world. The probability of nuclear proliferation and the possible use of chemical weapons make such conflicts even scarier. The purpose of this course is to increase your understanding of the conditions under which social conflicts tend to become violent and on how they can be resolved non-violently.

Since this is a core sociology course, we will address some of the perennial questions that concern sociologists about society, conflict, and human and social behavior. More specifically, we will consider rebellion, conflict and conflict resolution, socialization and culture, war, genocide and the breakdown of social order, and finally, the possibilities for peace and justice. In this course, we will explore issues of causality (human nature or social creation); the characteristic of societies with and without war; the tension between peace and justice; and finally, questions concerning the potential for human agency within the larger social structures. Through this broader exploration of these perennial questions we will keep an eye towards the questions: Why is there so much destructive conflict; how can it be transformed to more constructive conflict; and what is needed for building more peaceful and just societies taking into account both structures and relationships.

In this course, we will also incorporate culturally diverse perspectives that bring new and critical insight into these perennial topics of rebellion, conflict, war, genocide, and peace. These voices and perspectives are vital for the study of social conflict and often serve to bring issues of oppression, justice, discrimination, and prejudice to the forefront.

The course explores work in the fields of sociology, conflict resolution, and peace studies that draw on comparative, historical, and case study methods. Students mainly read qualitative material but there is also attention to quantitative data as it relates to social conflict and war. There is also an in-depth and critical look at issues of framing for understanding conflict and the ways individual conflicts are represented in the mass media.

Finally, we will bring a historical perspective to the course with an eye towards where we have come from, where we are now, and where we may be going. Society is not static and change is inevitable. So the question is not whether or not there will be change, but what kind of change will there be and where will we be in relation to it. It is my intention that this course will help you to recognize the moral significance of your life, both for you and society and encourage you to create a life philosophy that integrates your values, commitments, and the type of change you would like to see in this world.

## COURSE STRUCTURE AND EXPECTATIONS

The format of the class sessions is unusual, with very few lectures. The course will be discussion-based and involve experiential learning and active learning/ participative methods. A highlight around which much of the course is built will be SIMSOC weekend, held outside of normal class hours. SIMSOC (Simulated Society), is a game simulation of a society, and will be held on the following dates, with the rooms to be announced:

Fri., February 2: 7:00-10:00 p.m. and Sat., February 3: 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

It is possible for you to miss a small fraction of this time period and still participate but if you must miss the whole session or most of it, please discuss with me how you will need to make it up.

To compensate for the extra class time spent on this weekend, there will be no regular class on the following dates:

Thursday, Feb. 6: (This is the Tuesday after SIMSOC weekend)

Thursday, Mar. 1: (This is the Thursday before Spring break)

Tuesday, April 3: (This is the Tuesday before Easter weekend / also the first day of Passover)

Thursday, April 19: (No class unless needed to make up a snow holiday)

In most of the regular class sessions, the class will be divided into learning groups of five to seven people to carry out exercises that we will later discuss.

In this course, I would like to foster an open atmosphere of participatory engagement, discussion, questioning, learning, and dialogue. Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator, who saw education as part of a larger struggle for liberation from oppression and social change, referred to traditional teaching styles as being based on *a banking concept of education*, in which the teachers *deposit* knowledge into the students. In this model, teachers are seen as being knowledgeable and students ignorant. The teacher is the subject and students are the objects; the teacher is made active and students are made passive with the focus being on memorizing rather than really understanding. This class will not be run in this way. I do not have all the answers—no one does for that matter. And rather than *depositing* knowledge, I will seek to pose problems and foster critical thinking about social conflict, its analysis, and the possibilities for resolution. As noted above, much of the regular class sessions will involve group work committed to this purpose. In this class, the goal is for you to be an active learner—rather than a passive learner. In order for this to work, your preparedness to participate in the course exercises and large group discussions is pivotal.

## READINGS

The coursepack which comes in two parts (a course reading pack and course work book) includes many of the required readings as well as class exercises and materials that you will need to bring to class. Both parts are available at the BC Bookstore and you should obtain copies as soon as possible. In addition to the coursepack, we will be using the following texts (all available in paperback):

Fisher, Roger, and William Ury. 1991. *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Penguin.

Gamson, William A. 2000. *SIMSOC (Simulated Society): Participant's Manual*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: The Free Press.

Smith, Dan. 2003. *The Penguin Atlas of War and Peace*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Penguin.

## COURSE OUTLINE

### 1. **Rebellion** (~2 weeks)

(Focus on the dynamics of conflict. Case study: Berkeley in the Sixties)

#### Reading:

William A. Gamson and Andre Modigliani, "Why Do People Rebel?" [excerpts by Eric Hoffer, William Kornhauser, James C. Davies, and Charles Tilly optional] (coursepack)

William A. Gamson, "Social Protest and Social Change" (introduction, SIMSOC, p.75)

Saul D. Alinsky, "The Process of Power" (excerpt, SIMSOC, pp.75-78)

William A. Gamson, Bruce Fireman, and Steve Rytina, "The Theory and Practice of Rebellion" (excerpt, SIMSOC, pp. 78-80)

Robert A. Dahl, "Legitimacy and Authority" (excerpt, SIMSOC, p.80)

#### ACTIVITIES:

Film: *Berkeley in the 60's*

Rebellious Collective Action

Conflict Spiral

### 2. **Conflict and Conflict Resolution** (~3 weeks)

(Focus on theories of conflict; SIMSOC game; positive value of conflict; game theoretical models; framing conflicts; conflict resolution & transformation)

#### Reading:

*Prior to playing SIMSOC:*

William A. Gamson, "Rules" (SIMSOC, pp.3-32)

William A. Gamson, "On the Use of Simulation Games" (SIMSOC, p.41)

Clark C. Abt, "The Reunion of Action and Thought" (SIMSOC, pp.41-43)

John R. Raser, "What and Why is a Simulation?" (SIMSOC, pp.43-48)

*For post-game class sessions:*

"SIMSOC in Action: The Theoretical Model" (to be distributed in class after game is completed)

William A. Gamson, "Social Control" (short introduction, coursepack)

Máire A. Dugan, "Power" (coursepack)

Michelle Maiese, "Addressing Injustice" (excerpt, coursepack)

Bartos and Wehr, "Understanding Conflict" (coursepack)

William A. Gamson, "Social Conflict" (short intro, SIMSOC, p.83)

Lewis Coser, "The Functions of Conflict" (excerpt, SIMSOC, pp. 83-84)

Robert A. Dahl, "Conflict: A Paradigm" (excerpt, SIMSOC, pp. 85-87)

Roger Fisher and William Ury, *Getting to Yes* (whole book)

John Paul Lederach and Michelle Maiese, "Conflict Transformation" (coursepack)

ACTIVITIES:

SIMSOC

Game Theory Models of Conflict

Framing Conflict

Conflict Resolution Basics

### **3. Socialization and Culture (~1 week)**

Reading:

Francesca Cancian, "A Conversation on War, Peace, and Gender" (coursepack)

Elise Boulding, "History at Sword's Point? The War-Nurtured Identity of Western Civilization" (coursepack)

ACTIVITIES:

Film: *Tough Guise*

Socialization for War

(Midterm Exam: Tuesday, Feb. 24)

### **4. War and Peace (~3 weeks)**

(Positive and negative peace; characteristics of societies without war; war and democracy; international conflict management; the World Court; peacekeeping.)

Reading:

Francesca M. Cancian and James William Gibson, "Is War Inevitable?" (coursepack)

David Fabbro, "Equality in Peaceful Societies" (coursepack)

Margaret Mead, "Warfare is Only an Invention—Not a Biological Necessity;"

Michael Renner, “Security Redefined” (coursepack)

Dan Smith, *The Penguin Atlas of War and Peace* (read chapters 1-3; skim chapters 4-8 paying special attention to each region’s introductory pages, and in Africa, the colonial history and dispossession; read chap. 9)

Global Policy Forum, “World Court Marks 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, as its Case-Load Gets Heavier and Tougher” (coursepack)

Hilary French, Gary Gardner, and Erik Assadourian, “Laying the Foundations for Peace” (excerpt, coursepack)

#### ACTIVITIES:

Inevitable War

Secret Government

National Interests

Conflict in Labworld

Taking it to Court

Peace-Keeping

#### 5. **Genocide** (~1 week)

(Defining it and making important distinctions; preventing it; case study: Darfur; the tension between peace and justice.)

##### Reading:

Helen Fein, “Genocide: A Sociological Perspective” (coursepack)

Helen Fein, “Lessons from the Past: Preventing Genocide” (coursepack)

Kofi Annan, United Nations Press Release: “Genocide is Threat to Peace Requiring Strong, United Action...” (coursepack)

Eric Reeves, “A Darfur ‘Crash Course’” (coursepack – read part 1, skim the rest)

#### ACTIVITIES

What is Genocide?

Film: *Translating Genocide*

#### 6. **Possibilities for Peace after Genocide, War, and Other Atrocities** (~1 week)

(Justice, truth, forgiveness, reconciliation, and coexistence. Case study: South Africa after Apartheid)

##### Reading:

Eric Brahm, “Peacebuilding and Reconciliation Stage” (coursepack)

Priscilla Hayner, “The Truth and Reconciliation Commission” (excerpt from *Unspeakable Truths*, coursepack)

David Anthony, “A Comparative History of South Africa and the United States” & “The Rise and Fall of Apartheid: A Timeline” (coursepack)

Martha Minow, “Vengeance, Retribution, and Forgiveness” (coursepack)

Pumla Gobodo-Madikezela, "On Trauma and Forgiveness" (coursepack)  
Lynn Walker Huntley, "Conflict Resolution" (coursepack)

#### ACTIVITIES

Film: *Long Night's Journey Into Day*  
Discussion of film and readings

#### 7. **Peace Politics** (~1 week)

(Common security; an alternative vision of international relations; the role of peace movements)

##### Reading:

Pam Solo, Ted Sasson, and Rob Leavitt, "Outlining the Future: Principles of Common Security" (coursepack)  
Paul Joseph, *Peace Politics* (coursepack)

#### ACTIVITIES:

No More War?  
Do Peace Movements Matter?

### EVALUATION

Your course grade will be determined as follows:

Midterm and Final (20% each); Two Short Papers (20% each); Participation in SIMSOC and Class Exercises (20%)

*In-Class Exams* will consist of five short essay questions (as described in coursepack). The two *short papers* (suggested length: 3-5 double-spaced pages; one due Feb. 13 and the other due May 1) are also described in the coursepack. Most class sessions will have exercises to be completed in your learning groups. If you miss a class, *regardless of the reason*, you won't receive participation points for that session but in many cases, *you can do the exercise out of class for partial credit*. It is up to you to ask the instructor about make-ups. Note, however, that SIMSOC can only be made up by doing the optional research paper.

*Optional Research Paper*. You will be offered the chance to do a research paper involving an analysis of a past or present conflict. Details will come. If you don't do this paper, it won't affect your grade at all. The optional paper can be used for extra credit to raise your grade or to substitute for a low grade on the midterm exam or paper.

**FINAL EXAM: Friday, May 11: 12:30 p.m.**