

International B.A. in Liberal Arts
A SEMINAR IN POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY OF CONFLICTS AND THEIR RESOLUTIONS

Fall Semester, 2019-2020
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COURSE OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

What causes conflicts such as those in Bosnia, Rwanda, North Ireland Ukraine and the Middle East to erupt? How come people who live harmoniously for years, can one day commit heinous acts of barbaric violence against their neighbors? Why did 9/11 happen? Could Al Qaida survive without Bin Laden? Why are so many European Muslims joining the notorious Islamic State of Iraq and Syria- ISIS) organization? Is for Donald Trump likely to foster conflictual relationship with other countries?

These are some of the questions we will be grappling with in this seminar which combines political and social psychology perspectives regarding conflicts and their resolutions. The premise of this seminar is that understanding the psychological causes of political conflicts is essential if we are to affect patterns of behaviors that are harmful for humanity and promote patterns of behavior beneficial for humanity.

We will start by introducing the major concepts and theories of political psychology focusing on the role of personality, cognition, emotions, social identity, attitudes and intergroup relationships in the political arena. Thereafter, the seminar will be divided into two parts. The first part will focus on the underlying reasons for political conflicts with particular emphasis on violent conflicts. The second part will focus on theories and practices to resolve conflicts including understanding barriers and strategies for conflict resolution as well as issues regarding reconciliation and peace-building efforts. The seminar will not only introduce the students to theoretical and conceptual dilemmas in the field but will also attempt to address real life current political conflicts. The seminar will be comprised of didactic lectures, class discussions, and most importantly, analysis of case-studies regarding past of current political conflicts. Each student will be required to present a topic

from the textbook or other readings and to be responsible for facilitating a discussion or an experiential exercise regarding the topic.

REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and participation - Attendance in all classes is mandatory (students will be excused only with a special permission by the teacher). Active involvement in class discussions, role playing and simulations and is required.

Reading – For each class you will have to read the required reading. The course basic textbook is:

Bar-Tal, D. (2011). *Intergroup Conflicts and Their Resolution*, New York: Psychology Press.

Each class you will be required to read the assigned chapters + assigned articles given by the instructor.

Class Presentations – In order to facilitate active learning each student will prepare a short class presentation which will include three parts: 1) A theoretical exposition based on the reading materials 2) A class discussion which will engage the students in relating to the presented material or the experiential part. The instructor will help the students prepare these presentations

Final Paper – Students will pick up a topic from the materials learned in class (can be on the same topic as the presentation) and will apply it to explain a current phenomenon related to current or past political conflict. The Seminar papers are typically between 18 and 25 pages. Referat-papers for seminars taken as electives are typically between 8 and 13 pages long (double-spaced, excluding bibliography).

ASSESSMENT

Grading – The course grade will be based on three components:

- 1) Class participation (**15%**)
- 2) Class presentation (**15%**) – The class presentation can be the same as the seminar paper or different. The grade will be based on the instructor's evaluation regarding the depth and ingenuity of the presentation as well as the participation of the students in the experiential part and the class discussion.
- 3) Final paper (**70%**) – The topic of the paper will be approved by the instructor in advance and will be graded for the logicity, originality, creativity of the implementation of the topic to real life political conflict.

