Conflicts are found in all human communities. As Nader and Todd wrote, "In all human societies there are persons who have problems of debt, of theft, of infidelity, of employment, of consumption, and of personal injury. Many of these people seek to do something about their problems, and in so doing resort to remedy agents that the society has previously developed to deal with them." When we look at who or what these remedy agents are we find great variety. However, as Afghan writer and Pashtun elder Abdul Shukor Rashad has said, “Every country, every people of the world has something to solve its problems,” although we might add that some are more constructive than others. In some societies the original disputants settle the matter themselves, sometimes in a peaceful fashion, sometimes resorting to physical force or threatening its use. In other cases third parties are quickly brought into a dispute and the members of a community work towards the achievement of a settlement. Some third parties are specialists, while in other cases the third parties include all members of the community. Similarly, we can observe variation in how individuals, groups, and societies deal with conflict. How can we understand the great variation in conflict and its management that we find in the world?

Goals. This course has several major conceptual goals: first it aims to provide an awareness and understanding of the range of variation in the conflict and dispute management processes starting with an examination of small scale, preindustrial societies, typically studied by anthropologists, and a consideration of ways in which insights gained from these societies, quite different from our own, can help in understanding conflict and dispute settlement in more familiar settings. Second, it seeks to compare and contrast different explanations of the causes and persistence of conflict emphasizing ways that each contains partial truths. To do this, we note that at the most general level, conflicts are about divergent interests and threatened identities that are often revealed in the competing, often hostile and threatening, narratives of a dispute the parties recount which means that listening to how participants understand a conflict is important to any analysis or attempted intervention. Third, a central issue is the extent to which conflicts in very different cultural settings that look very different on the surface share important common elements. To do this, we need to consider various ways to understand conflict including: the distant vs. proximate causes of disputes, an appreciation of the sequences or stages through which conflicts go, a sense of the ways in which external and internal community dynamics affect the course and outcomes of conflict, and the role of perceptions and group dynamics in conflict processes. Finally, all theories of conflict contain underlying theories about conflict management that may help us better understand how conflicts can be managed constructively. Making these assumptions explicit helps us to link an analysis of conflict to strategies for managing them effectively.

The general strategy the course employs to achieve these goals is to examine a variety of theories of conflict and conflict management in a diverse case materials and methodological approaches. To assist in this process, we draw on a wide range of joint readings. Class discussions will draw on them as well as contemporary news reports. You are expected to regularly read follow current conflicts in newspapers, web sites or magazine to be able to participate in analyses of unfolding world events and to apply the analytic frames we consider in class to them. The material covered in the course is wide ranging. There is a great deal of reading to do; don't take this course if you are not sure you have the time or commitment to do it.

Organization and assignments. The class meetings will be organized around issues raised in the assigned readings. Students are expected to complete all reading assignments before each class and be prepared to ask questions and discuss the material in the readings in class. Active class participation is an important part of this course and your grade. On some occasions there
Conflict and conflict management

will be short lectures to present additional background. Most of the time, however, will be devoted to developing ideas from the readings through group discussion. Each student will hand in seven logs—short reactions to material in the readings, class discussions or recent events. They should be between a paragraph and a page in length. You may choose when to write them as long as you don’t go longer than two weeks without handing one in. The logs will not be graded but they must be completed in a timely manner to pass the course. There will also be several short (2-3 page) papers, an observational assignment, a research project on a local conflict and a self-scheduled final exam. Lastly, beginning in week 3, for many (but not all) class sessions two students will be responsible for making a brief (about 10 minutes) presentation that identifies a central analytic proposition in the readings for that class, that connects this idea something the class has previously discussed or read, and comments on the nature of the evidence that the author(s) provide or could provide that support or refute the proposition.

**REQUIRED BOOKS**

The required books can be purchased from the Bryn Mawr College Bookshop.


**BLACKBOARD RESERVE READINGS**


READING ASSIGNMENTS

I. Introduction

Weeks 1-2: January 20-29: The concept of conflict and contrasting cases of conflict in two small scale societies

January 20: Introduction and overview of the semester
In class video, “Dead Putting Society”

What is the conflict between Simpson and Flanders about? Consider how you might describe it differently from the perspective of each side. What is the difference between the ostensible basis of the conflict and its deeper roots and how you would describe each of these? What kinds of generalizations can you offer about the dynamics of escalation on the basis of this case?

January 22:

January 27:
1. Napoleon Chagnon. "Yanomamo Social Organization and Warfare"

What questions about the causes of conflict, its escalation, and its termination do you find in the Simpson’s episode? The Turnbull and Chagnon readings are old ethnographic accounts of one very peaceful and one was violent society. Over the years there have been a number of critiques of these pieces suggesting that each researcher presented only what they wanted to emphasize. Perhaps this is the case. For now, you should be less interested in whether each account is “right” than the narrative about human nature, society and conflict each offers. What is the theory of peace and conflict each author offers? What are their explanations for the relative peacefulness of the Mbuti and the fierceness of the Yanomamo. Is the social organization of each community a cause or an effect of patterns of conflict each author observes? What about the psychocultural dynamics in each community? How are they related to the patterns of social organization and conflict? Why is there more conflict and violence in some communities than others?

January 29:
1. Dean G. Pruitt and Sung Hee Kim, Social Conflict: Escalation, Stalemate and Settlement. Chapters 1-2, pp. 3-36.

What is conflict and how might we investigate it? What do people fight about? How can we
describe conflict and cooperation in the daily life of any community? How is the study of conflict necessary to understanding conflict mitigation? What are some of the central distinctions Pruitt and Rubin and Nader and Todd make about the study of social conflicts? What are alternative bases of conflict? What are positive aspects of conflict? How is it important in the social life of all communities? Finally, what is a theory of conflict and how are theories useful for both understanding and practice? How do participants’ and analysts’ theories, or explanations, of conflict sometimes differ?

Week 3: February 3-5: Conflict and Escalation: The Disputing Process
   1. Beth Roy. Some Trouble with Cows. Chapters 1-5, pp. 1-122

Recounting the story of a conflict is often not a simple task. Roy takes us through the steps of reconstructing a conflict in a Bangladesh village from two generations earlier. How is her analysis relevant to make sense of conflicts elsewhere? While the specific events and the participants’ accounts at first seem very far away from your daily lives, another view is that there are some very universal features to the conflicts she describes. What might these be? Can you say what the conflict she examines is about? Why or why not? To what extent might different participants accept or reject your account? Consider how this case illustrates the multiple levels on which conflicts occur. If this conflict isn’t just about a cow and a neighbor’s grain, what would you say is at its core?

PAPER 1 DUE MONDAY FEBRUARY 9, 12 NOON

II. Key concepts in the study of conflict: Exploring the Roots of Conflict: Interests and Interpretations

Week 4: February 10-12: Structure and interests as sources of conflict

What are the key elements in an interest based game theoretical explanation for conflict and cooperation? What are the advantages to studying conflict and cooperation through games such as the Prisoner's Dilemma? When do nations seem to be similar and different in their behavior than the players in the PD game? How is the structure of the game similar or different than the “real world”? Consider how the nature of interests is similar here to those in more general social structural explanations as an account of conflict and warfare. How do both "determine" who fights with whom? What do we mean by interests? How do you know what an interest is and where do they come from? What are the forces for escalation of conflict associated with particular patterns of social organization? What are the forces for terminating interest conflicts?

Weeks 5-6: February 17-26 Psychocultural interpretations, identity and conflict

NO CLASS FEBRUARY 17: Conduct Observational Assignment

February 19: Basic concepts
   1. Vamik Volkan. Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Terrorism

OBSERVATIONAL ASSIGNMENT DUE MONDAY FEBRUARY 23 12 NOON

February 24: Group identity, and conflict narratives
   1. Herbert Kelman. “The Political Psychology of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: How Can We Overcome the Barriers to a Negotiated Solution?”
What is a psychocultural explanation for conflict? What are its key elements? Consider the role of early childhood experiences in the construction of social orientations such as basic trust, aggression, and attachment. How are these core building blocks in the development of social and group identity? Make sure you understand Volkan’s key concepts: chosen trauma, mourning, ethnic tents, shared reservoirs, time collapse and the narcissism of minor differences and how they are relevant for understanding bitter ethnic conflict such as those he is discussing. How is Northrup’s understanding of identity consistent with Volkan’s theory? How is Kelman's emphasis on group identity central to the list of prerequisites for peacemaking that he develops? How does Jamal’s analysis reinforce Kelman’s argument?

February 26: **Perceptions, interpretations and deterrence**

1. Robert Jervis. “Deterrence, the Spiral Model and Intentions of the Adversary”

Deterrence, in the form of mutually assured destruction (MAD) was the core of American defense policy throughout the post-World War II period and the theory still has great deal of credence for policy makers. Both Lebow and Jervis raise serious questions about the key assumptions underlying deterrence's effectiveness. What are the alternatives to deterrence? Although they are writing about the Cold War period, consider why their ideas are relevant to a far wider range of times and places.

Week 7: March 3-5: **Making sense of social conflict**


We return to Roy’s conflict in Bangladesh. This time our goal is to “make sense” of it? Why did such an apparently trivial incident spark a social event of such wide-ranging significance? What does her analysis tell you about the roots of social conflict and about prospects for its successful management? How are both interests and identities involved in the conflict she examines? How are each addressed or not addressed in the conflict’s termination? What is the role of “narrative” in a community’s social history?

III. **Conflict Management**

Week 8: March 17-19: **Thinking About Conflict Mitigation, Apologies and Resolution**

1. Marc Howard Ross. “Creating the Conditions for Peacemaking: Theories of Practice in Ethnic Conflict Resolution”

All conflicts end, but some produce constructive outcomes while others are costly and destructive. What are specific strategies of conflict settlement? How do different theories of conflict that practitioners or participants hold directly related to different conflict mitigation strategies? What are different ways that constructive outcomes come about? What is needed to not only bring about an end to any conflict, but to do this in such a way that the parties have a stake in insuring that the outcome is enduring. In other words, what is needed for the parties to feel that the outcome is better than the alternative of continuing to fight? de Waal provides some provocative evidence from non-human primates while Lind suggests some important cautions in how we talk about the potential values of apology and reconciliation in international conflicts.

**March 23, 4-5:30 pm: Jennifer Lind Lecture "Apologies and International Reconciliation"**
Week 9: March 24-26: **Conflict Transformation**

March 24: Apologies sometimes help and sometimes don’t: why and why not?

1. Jennifer Lind, *Sorry States: Apologies in International Politics*. Chapter 3 and Conclusion

Lind examines the post WW II German experience in confronting its past and apologizing for the actions of the Nazi regime. The story of German self-reflection and its construction of a united Europe that included the bitter wartime enemies and a strong durable partnership with France is complicated and nuanced. How did this happen? What, if any, are the lessons that might be applied to other cases following bitter war and conflict? Why did this work in the German, but not the Japanese case? Finally, is remembrance and reconciliation necessary for peace making and if so what does Lind’s analysis tell you about the form it should take?

March 26: **Language and conflict transformation**


Conflicts change over time in many ways such as the substantive issues that matter to the parties, the tactics they use, the number of people involved, and the strategies used to pursue goals. These two articles emphasize useful ways to examine such transformations. What do Felsteiner et al mean by a transformation perspective and why do they suggest that perhaps there is not enough conflict? Consider the ways in which Mather and Yngvesson talk about language and escalation pointing out important ways disputes change over time.

Week 10: March 31-April 2: **Escalation and intensification of conflict**

1. Pruitt and Kim, Chapters 5-8.
2. 

Escalations is a difficult pattern to break as events at one point in time then lead to more intense responses that continue to spiral upwards. What is not always clear to outsiders is why escalatory sequences are so difficult to break. Consider conflicts in which you have been involved that seemed to be unending and ask what was the dynamic that kept them going. What are the structural and psychological forces that promote or inhibit escalation?

Week 11: April 7-9: **Moving towards termination: Underlying processes**

1. Pruitt and Kim. Chapters 9-11
2. TBA

All conflicts end, but some produce constructive outcomes while others are costly and destructive. What are specific strategies of conflict settlement? How do different theories of conflict that practitioners or participants hold directly related to different conflict mitigation strategies? What are different ways that constructive outcomes come about? What is needed to not only bring about an end to any conflict, but to do this in such a way that the parties have a stake in insuring that the outcome is enduring. In other words, what is needed for the parties to feel that the outcome is better than the alternative of continuing to fight?

**PAPER 2 DUE APRIL 10 5 PM**

Week 12: April 14-16: **Mediation and International Conflicts**

Conflict management is a process that needs to address both divergent interests and hostile interpretations. What is required to do each? Consider how different a focus on each is and yet how successful conflict management often finds ways to combine the two. This short book looks at some of the world’s most difficult (intractable) conflicts and asks you to consider how third parties can sometimes help the different sides get to the table and work for a settlement. As you read this book ask yourself about the different roles third parties can play in negotiation, mediation and conflict transformation. What constitutes success in such interventions? How do you know it when you see it? What are the key elements in failure? What is successful conflict management and what are examples of it you can identify?

Week 13: April 21-23: **Peacemaking and Peacebuilding After Violent Conflict**
2. Vamik Volkan. “‘Hot Places,’ Memorials, Apologies, and Forgiveness”

Is peace possible after societies have experienced intense conflict and violence? Some people emphasize that if it is to occur, third parties need to be involved and that the United Nations needs to be an important player. What does this mean? How have the done to date and what accounts for their successes and failures? While their analysis emphasizes institutions and structures, Volkan raises question growing out of his psychocultural framework as he addresses questions about apologies and forgiveness following long-term conflict. Can this be achieved when not all members of a post-conflict society might need the same thing?

Week 14: April 28-30: **Promoting constructive conflict management**
1. Marc Howard Ross “Good Enough Isn’t so Bad”

The hypothesis that disputants' hostile interpretations must be modified before divergent interests can be addressed in severe conflicts is compelling. What does this mean in practice, however? What are critical questions about conflict and its management, which need additional attention? To what extent is a cross-cultural perspective helpful in developing a general framework in which you can place particular conflicts? Does a comparative understanding of conflict help you analyze the local dispute you are studying?