

**International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution (ICCCR)  
Teachers College, Columbia University**

**ORLJ 4859A, Section 001:  
Conflict Resolution and the Psychology of Humiliation  
Summer A 2002**

**June 14: 4pm – 8pm  
June 15, 16: 9am – 5 pm  
1 Credit or Non-credit**

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***Course Summary:***

The course will cover the role played by the phenomenon of humiliation in the context of topics such as cooperation and competition, negotiation and mediation, trust, violence, power, culture and inter-group conflict. The structure of the course will consist of introductory presentations given by the instructor, as well as discussions, exercises, and in-class presentations performed by the students on the various topic areas that focus on the links of theory to practice.

***Course Requirements:***

Readings, discussions and exercises, in-class presentations, and two papers, both double-spaced and 12 pt. font (one self-reflective journal of about 5-7 pages in length, and a final term paper of about 10 pages that analyzes a conflict entailing humiliation of your own choosing). Course texts are available at the bookstore and required reading packets at the TC Duplicating Center.

***Discussions and Exercises:***

The class will be divided into several 6-7-person subgroups that will work together both inside and outside the classroom throughout the course. These groups will carry out short exercises and discuss their experiences.

***In-class Presentation:***

Students are asked to prepare in advance a short summary (notes of less than a page) of an incident of humiliation that they experienced, witnessed, or reflected upon, and link it to the articles on humiliation in the reading packet (humiliation at the personal level, group level, or international level). Students will then present their experiences with humiliation and their views on the reading material in the subgroups (10 minutes for each student). Each group will then present a summary to the plenum (10 minutes for each group).

***Assignments due:***

Please prepare a self-reflective journal (about 5-7 pages in length, double spaced, 12 pt. font) that documents what you have learned in all sections of this course including your pre-prepared case description of your experience of humiliation. The journal should integrate the theoretical

concepts that you have derived from the readings (please be specific; include author, chapter and page references), your in-class experience and the application of these concepts to your personal and professional life. By “self-reflective,” we mean for you not to tell us what happened, but rather what you felt during class, how you grew, what you resisted and learned, and how the material connects to your life. Please contrast the dynamics of humiliation from both your experience and a theoretical point of view.

Also, prepare a final term paper (about 10 pages in length, double spaced, 12 pt. font) that analyzes a conflict of your own choosing (such as school, industry, international, etc.) in which the dynamics of humiliation played a role. Your paper should integrate theory (with citations) and practice, but should emphasize the practical applications. Ideas for paper topics include conflicts at the personal level, community level or international level. Grades will be based on demonstrating the knowledge you acquired in the class. This includes integration of theory, both class and personal life experience, and the required readings. .

***Grading:***

1 Credit or Non-credit. Letter Grade or you may opt for Pass/Fail by filling out the Application for Elected Grade Option. Students who are registered for noncredit will automatically receive a Pass/Fail grade. 50% of the grade is based on active participation in class, and the other 50% is on written assignments.

***Pre-readings: To be read prior to June 14<sup>th</sup>.***

***Required readings:***

Reading Packet (in TC’s Duplicating Center): “ORLJ 4859: Conflict Resolution and the Psychology of Humiliation.”

Staub, Ervin (1989). *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Margalit, Avishai (1996). *The Decent Society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

***Recommended readings:***

Marshall, Monty G. (1999). *Third World War: System, process, and conflict dynamics*.

Lanham, MD and London: Rowman and Littlefield, see also on <http://members.aol.com/cspassoc/tww/index.html>.

Miller, William Ian (1993). *Humiliation and Other Essays on Honor, Social Discomfort, and Violence*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Nisbett, Richard E. & Cohen, Dov (1996). *Culture of Honor: The Psychology of Violence in the South*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Rapoport, Anatol (1997). *The Origins of Violence: Approaches to the Study of Conflict*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Scheff, Thomas J. (1990). *Bloody revenge: Emotions, Nationalism and War*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Volkan, Vamik D. (1997). *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

## **Course Outline**

### **I. Friday, June 14<sup>th</sup> (4pm-8pm): Conflict And Humiliation - General Orientation**

Please prepare in advance a short summary (notes of less than a page) of an incident of humiliation that you experienced, witnessed, or reflected upon, and link it to the articles on humiliation in the reading packet (humiliation at the personal level, group level, or international level). Present your experiences with humiliation and your views on the relevance of the reading material in the subgroups (10 minutes for each student). Each group will then present a summary to the plenum (10 minutes for each group).

### **II. Saturday, June 15<sup>th</sup> (9am-5pm): Conflict And Humiliation: Introduction**

Humiliation is a very complex phenomenon that is related to the violation of pride, honor, dignity, self-respect, and human rights. It plays a central role in conflict. Humiliation may be an action, an emotional state or a social mechanism. The concept of humiliation is to be found in many disciplines, for example, in anthropology, sociology, philosophy, social psychology, clinical psychology, and political science. The fact that humiliation is such an interdisciplinary concept explains why this phenomenon has not been studied much on its own account so far, and has rather been subsumed in research on conflict, violence, shame, or trauma.

### **III. Sunday, June 16<sup>th</sup> (9am-5pm): Conflict And Humiliation: Theory And Practice**

Cycles of humiliation are often set in motion and kept alive in an environment in which bystanders fail to grasp their potential role as mediating third party and guardian of societal values. Ervin Staub addressed the significance of bystanders' passivity for the Holocaust (see reading assignment). If we aim at a "decent society" (Margalit, see reading assignment), both at the national and global level, without humiliating institutions and relations, then this is dependent on empowered and pro-active citizens who understand that their participation is crucial for the creation and maintenance of sustainable social relations, and democratic structures. Students, and particularly students of conflict resolution, carry a prominent responsibility for society at large, in that they have to develop pro-active strategies to guard against the emergence of cycles of humiliation, as well as attend to those that already occurred. In this component of the course,

students will be invited to develop such pro-active strategies as well as strategies that address existing conflicts that entail cycles of humiliation.