

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

ORLJ 4859

Conflict Resolution & the Psychology of Humiliation

Fall 2004

November 12, 13 and 14, 2004

Friday 4 pm – 8 pm

Saturday & Sunday 9 am – 5 pm

1 Credit or Non-credit

Evelin Lindner, M.D., Ph.D., Ph.D.

ICCCR Office: (212) 678-3402

E-Mail: e.g.lindner@psykologi.uio.no

Course Summary:

The course will cover the role played by the phenomenon of humiliation in the context of globalization, culture differences, inter-group conflict, cooperation and competition, negotiation and mediation, trust, violence, and power. It will highlight why the phenomenon of humiliation gains importance as the world develops towards an ever more interdependent global village. The coming into being of the global village replaces Realpolitik with humiliation politics. The message of human rights is central to this process and to the topic of humiliation. Human rights ideals stipulate that each human being possesses an inner core of dignity that ought not to be humiliated. As soon as this message is heard, circumstances may be perceived as deeply humiliating that previously were accepted and endured as divine or natural fate.

Current discussion on terror, both local and global, is polarized as to its root causes. Poverty, deprivation, marginalization, ethnic incompatibilities, or conflicts of interest and on resources are pinpointed. However, why do we then see well-to-do and educated terrorists organizing and perpetrating atrocities? Why do poverty, deprivation, marginalization, ethnic incompatibilities, or conflicts of interest and on resources sometimes lead to violence, and sometimes not? Humiliation is presented as the “missing link” that explains why such conditions at times are perceived as illegitimate violations justifying violence, and at other times not, and why wealthy people may organize and perpetrate terror.

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, as well as a supervised out-of-class project.

Course Requirements:

Readings, discussions and exercises, in-class presentations, and papers (all double-spaced and 12 pt. font):

- one page of notes of an incident - on humiliation - that you experienced, witnessed, or reflected upon,
- one self-reflective monitoring journal of the course of 10 pages in length,
- one paper of 10-20 pages on your out-of-class project

Course texts are available at the bookstore and required reading packets at the TC Duplicating Center.

Other Course Reminders:

The College will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students are encouraged to contact the Office of Access and Services for Individuals with Disabilities for information about registration (166 Thorndike Hall). Services are available only to students who are registered and submit appropriate documentation. As instructors, we are happy to discuss specific needs with you as well.

A grade of "IN" (Incomplete) is used when attendance requirement has been met but granting of a grade has been postponed because, for reasons satisfactory to the instructor, certain course assignments are outstanding. If the outstanding work is not completed within one calendar year from the date of the close of term in which the incomplete was received, the grade will remain as a permanent incomplete on the transcript. Extensions of time for completion, based upon compelling reasons, are to be recommended by the instructor and approved by the Registrar. If the assignments are completed within the year and a grade submitted, a final grade will be recorded on the permanent transcript. The original mark of Incomplete will not be expunged from the student's record. (This statement may also be found in the TC Catalog.)

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.

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:

Each student is asked to prepare in advance a short presentation (based on notes of less than a page) of an incident of humiliation that you experienced, witnessed, or reflected upon. You are asked to link this to the books and articles on humiliation in the reading

packet (humiliation at the personal level, group level, or international level). Students will present their experiences with humiliation and their views on the reading material in the subgroups during class (10 minutes for each student). Each group will present a summary of their group discussion to the plenum (10 minutes for each group). Students will furthermore present their experiences and reflections with regard to the out-of-class project (10 minutes for each student in the sub-group, and 10 minutes in the plenum for each group). Students will also be asked to continuously participate in interactive learning modules.

Assignments due:

1. Notes:

Please prepare notes (less than a page) of an incident of humiliation that you experienced, witnessed, or reflected upon, and link it to the books and articles on humiliation in the reading packet (humiliation at the personal level, group level, or international level).

2. Self-reflective journal, first paper:

Furthermore, please write a self-reflective journal (maximal 10 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.

3. Out-of-class assignment, second paper:

Please write a paper of 10-20 pages, 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. Your paper may also include the following topics, or you may propose an alternative one:

- The applications of the lessons of humiliation from an American perspective
- Analysis of the relationship between human rights and humiliation
- Analysis of the relationship between globalization and humiliation
- Differences and similarities of the concepts of shame and humiliation
- Differences and similarities of the concepts of humility and humiliation
- Differences and similarities of the concepts of equality, egalitarianism, equity, and equal dignity
- Culture-dependence of the notion of humiliation
- A historic analysis of the notion of humiliation

- Humiliation as part of the American ethos (e.g., immigrants having fled from humiliating living circumstances so as to build a better world)
- Analysis of slavery
- Why it is that humiliation sometimes is sought rather than avoided (e.g. in religious rites)?
- Analysis of a film of your choice with regard to the occurrence of humiliation
- Analysis of a book of your choice with regard to the occurrence of humiliation

5. Pre-readings: To be read prior to the first day:

6. Required readings:

Reading Packet (in TC's Duplicating Center): "ORLJ 4859: Conflict Resolution and the Psychology of Humiliation." (6 articles)

Hartling, Linda M., Rosen, Wendy, Walker, Maureen, and Jordan, Judith V. (2000). Shame and humiliation: From isolation to relational transformation. *Work in Progress*, No. 88, Wellesley, MA: Stone Center Working Papers Series.

Lindner, Evelin Gerda (2003a). *Definitions of Terms As They Are Used in Lindner's Writing*. Oslo: University of Oslo, unpublished manuscript.

Lindner, Evelin Gerda (2003b). Humiliation or Dignity: Regional Conflicts in the *Global Village*. In *The International Journal of Mental Health, Psychosocial Work and Counseling in Areas of Armed Conflict*, 1 (1, January), pp. 48-63, see also http://www.transnational.org/forum/meet/2002/Lindner_RegionalConflicts.html.

Lindner, Evelin Gerda (2003c). Peace? Not As Long As Humiliation Reigns! In *ICCCR Newsletter*, January, <http://www.tc.columbia.edu/icccr/newsletter5.htm>.

Lindner, Evelin Gerda (2004a). Human Rights, Humiliation, and Globalization. In *Journal of Human Rights*, Special Issue "Humiliation and Human Rights", forthcoming.

Lindner, Evelin Gerda (2004b). Humiliation, killing, war, and gender. In Fitzduff, Mari and Stout, Chris E. (Eds.), *Psychological Approaches to Dealing With Conflict and War*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press and Praeger Publishers, forthcoming.

Books (1 Book)

Lindner, Evelin Gerda (2003). *Humiliation: A New Basis for Understanding, Preventing, and Defusing Conflict and Violence in the World and Our Lives*. Oslo: University of Oslo, unpublished book manuscript (Downloadable from www.humiliationstudies.org, Who we are > Evelin Lindner > book on humiliation).

7. Recommended readings:

- Feuerverger, Grace (2001). *Oasis of Dreams: Teaching and Learning Peace in a Jewish-Palestinian Village in Israel*. London, New York, NY: Routledge/Falmer.
- Gilligan, James (1996). *Violence: Our Deadly Epidemic and How to Treat It*. New York, NY: Putnam.
- Margalit, Avishai (1996). *The Decent Society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- 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. and 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. (1994). *Bloody Revenge: Emotions, Nationalism and War*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Staub, Ervin (1989). *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Steinberg, Blema S. (1996). *Shame and Humiliation: Presidential Decision Making on Vietnam*. Montreal/UK: McGill-Queen's.
- Volkan, Vamik D. (1997). *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Zehr, Howard (2002). *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books.

Course Outline

1. Conflict and Humiliation - General Orientation

Friday, November 5 (4pm-8pm)

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).

2. Conflict and Humiliation: Introduction

Saturday, November 6 (9am-5pm)

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.

The various facets of the notion of humiliation will be illuminated by interactive learning modules following an introductory presentation given by the instructor.

Furthermore, research on humiliation will be embedded in a larger academic framework. The coming into being of the global village transforms relationships between individuals and groups, both globally and locally. Globalization, if defined as push towards ever growing interdependence, changes definitions of what is in- group and what is out-group. Personal and group identities are transformed. Difference, be it cultural, ethnic, economic, or religious difference, acquires new salience in what we call the global village.

International relations theory and cross-cultural studies will be used to highlight why the phenomenon of humiliation gains importance in the course of a process that turns the world into an ever more interwoven place. The more people feel connected to being part of one single human family, the more psychology plays a role. Political science has to transform theories of Realpolitik and include the psychology of close human relationships. Humiliation as potentially strongest creator of hatred acquires central significance in the course of this development. The point is made that social and also environmental sustainability therefore require the dynamics of humiliation to be recognized and heeded.

Students will be presented with models to enable them to understand and tackle relationships in this newly evolving world with people from different cultural, ethnic, religious, economic, and gender backgrounds.

3. Conflict and Humiliation: Theory and Practice

Sunday, November 7 (9am-5pm)

The theoretical concept of humiliation will be developed in this part of the course. Feelings of humiliation have the potential to lead to acts of humiliation perpetrated on the perceived humiliator, setting off cycles of humiliation in which everybody who is involved feels humiliated, and is convinced that humiliating the humiliator is a just or even holy duty. Initially, feelings of humiliation come about when deprivation is perceived as an illegitimate imposition of lowering or degradation perpetrated by somebody who intentionally inflicts this debasement, a debasement that cannot be explained in constructive terms.

Current historic times are characterized by a specific form of humiliation. The human rights message indicates that every human being has a right to live in enabling circumstances, that equal dignity is the ruling idea and not the hierarchical ranking of human worthiness, and that every person has an inner core of dignity that ought not be humiliated and lowered. This message is indeed listened to around the world. However, it has not, at least not in the short term, had the effect that many human rights advocates hope for, namely to decrease suffering. On the contrary, in the first instance, it has the potential to augment feelings of humiliation, because inequalities and deprivation that were accepted before, as God's will or nature's order, turn into unacceptable acts of humiliation.

Ethnic, religious, cultural, economic differences, or conflicts of interests and on resources, do not create rifts by themselves; on the contrary, conflicts of interests can best be solved through cooperation, and diversity can be a source of mutual enrichment – however, cooperation and diversity are possible and enriching only as long as they are embedded within relationships that are characterized by respect. It is when respect and recognition are failing, that those who feel victimized are prone to highlight differences in order to “justify” rifts that were caused, not by these differences, but by something else, namely by humiliation.

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 suggested reading). If we aim at a “decent society” (Margalit, see suggested reading), 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.