

Conflict Assessment: Theory and Practice

Course number GLOB1-GC-2005

Center for Global Affairs, School of Professional Studies

M.S. in Global Affairs Program

New York University

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Tuesday 12:30-3:10 pm, September 8-December 15

Room 230 Woolworth Building

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Office Hours: Monday 5:30-7 pm; Thursday 12-2 pm, and by appointment

Course Description

International actors take many different approaches to learning about conflicts. Practitioners use different various methods to help them formulate policies and practices aimed at addressing conflicts in order maximize opportunities for preventing or alleviating crises. Scholars study conflict cases in order to develop new knowledge and theories about violent conflict, its causes, and possible responses to it, and sometimes contribute this knowledge directly to organizations working in settings of violent conflict. This course examines how international actors – both practitioners and scholars – approach research and analysis of conflict-affected settings using an approach commonly referred to as conflict assessment.

Actors that commonly use conflict assessment include United Nations agencies, bilateral donors and NGOs in an attempt to analyze conflicts and the interaction between conflict dynamics and their own engagement in given countries or regions. The class will explore how different research techniques and analytical frameworks can be used to assess the interactions between peacebuilding and development interventions and existing conflict factors and dynamics. Emphasis will be placed on understanding the core concepts and the skills and approaches needed to successfully carry out meaningful conflict assessments. As such, the course will be conducted in partnership with World Vision International, a worldwide non-governmental organization that utilizes conflict assessment as a core part of its approach to humanitarian and peacebuilding work. Students will have the opportunity to analyze specific conflict cases and to submit their preliminary analyses to World Vision for use by staff working in the contexts studied.

Rationale for the Course

The linkages between conflict and peacebuilding, international development, and humanitarian interventions are marked by great complexity. Most situations hold the potential for these interventions to help transform conflict into a constructive force by strengthening mechanisms and resources for managing or resolving differences, enhancing systems that may lead to positive change, or by addressing factors that are causing tensions and that could lead to destructive outcomes. In addition, research has shown that development and humanitarian interventions have the capacity to exert negative and harmful impacts on conflict dynamics, deepening cleavages that exist in societies and exacerbating inter-or intra-group tensions.

Conflict assessment is the application of analytical tools to identify factors that intensify conflict, to understand the interaction between different factors and actors in conflict, and to gauge the potential for conflict to become destructive and lead to violence. These tools can be used by development and humanitarian organizations for strategic planning in order to identify opportunities for initiatives that explicitly can address conflict factors and incorporate peacebuilding into their objectives. They also can be used to assess the impact of already-designed or implemented development, humanitarian and peacebuilding programs or projects on existing conflict factors and dynamics.

Conflict assessment also is one approach for integrating conflict sensitivity into a broad range of development, humanitarian and peacebuilding initiatives, whether they are being implemented in a location where destructive conflict is occurring or they have an explicit intention to contribute to conflict transformation and prevention of future violence.

Seminar Description

Understanding a conflict before taking action to address it is a primary responsibility of policymakers, diplomats, activists, and development actors among others. Misled interventions inadvertently may feed underlying causes of conflict or strengthen actors using violent means, and create new opportunities for violence. On the other hand, well-conceived and thoughtful interventions may contribute to reductions of conflict factors that may help de-escalate deadly violence.

This seminar focuses on:

- Understanding the concept of conflict assessment, its development and implementation
- Exploring different research methods that can be used in conflict assessment
- Analyzing conflict: causes, actors, dynamics and triggers
- Identifying and responding to conflict: indicators, data sources, and responses
- Developing policy recommendations for different actors (international organizations and agencies, governments, NGOs, businesses, etc.)
- Writing policy papers and making presentations on the assessment of a specific conflict case

Course Objectives

These contents are translated into four course objectives:

1. To develop a firm understanding of the concept and practice of conflict sensitivity;
2. To learn methodological and analytical skills needed to assess conflicts;
3. To develop in-depth knowledge about a specific conflict case;
4. To gain experience with the process of conflict assessment as a part of the broader practice of peace and conflict research, and to enhance research skills (with a particular focus on the practical application of these skills);
5. To learn how to evaluate the effectiveness of peace and conflict research and to encourage learning from peer review.

Assignments and Grading

The seminar seeks to enhance student capacity for original research, oral and written presentations, and for developing conflict sensitive practice. Assignments are intended to enhance the skills required to undertake conflict assessment, including: developing an understanding of conflict context; generating a synthesis report; critically evaluating different methods of conflict assessment; delivering an oral presentation, and; providing as well as receiving and integrating peer feedback.

The assessment report and oral presentation assignments are intended to give students the opportunity to critically explore and apply research and analysis methods in assessing a specific conflict case. The objective of these assignments is to produce a multidimensional picture rather than to take a position on a specific conflict. The objective of providing policy recommendations is to propose realistic and plausible options for the use of conflict assessment to identify and subsequently address factors contributing to conflict, and finding long-term approaches to strengthening of sustainable peace and development.

****Important note.** Because conflict assessment generally is a team exercise, students must work in **two-person teams** on their conflict cases for both their oral presentations and final draft reports. The partner and case you choose for your presentation should be the same as for your final report.

Student Responsibilities

Attendance: All students must attend class regularly. Your contribution to classroom learning is essential to the success of the course. More than two absences (with or without an explanation) likely will lead to a need to withdraw from the course or a failing grade.

Reading/discussion: Students will be responsible for completing all assigned reading in advance of the class session in which they will be discussed. Because the class will be discussion-oriented, it is essential that students read assigned materials with an eye for themes and connections to broader ideas that will come up during the course. This will not be a lecture class. Learning of the material will occur through engagement with fellow students and the instructor on the online forum, during class sessions, and

through completion of assignments. Therefore, thorough preparation and active participation in discussions – both online and in-class – will be necessary and expected. Each week, at least one student will serve as online discussion leader on the class discussion board. The discussion leader should post major themes and important questions for discussion by each Friday evening before class, and be prepared to remain engaged with the discussion. All students will be required to make weekly meaningful posts on the course discussion board.

Student presentations: All students will be expected to make one in-class presentation with her/his partner on the actual international conflict case they are studying, and to present a basic assessment of it, drawing on conflict assessment approaches they are exploring for their final reports. These presentations must be no more than 15 minutes and students must be prepared to answer questions from their classmates and the instructor. A variety of formats may be used. Presenting teams will be asked to identify and assign readings [maximum 10 pages] on the chosen context for the class to read beforehand and to prepare visual aids to support their presentations. Further details of this assignment will be discussed in class. Presentation topics must be submitted to the instructor by Week 3 (September 22). **Due date:** Specific dates of each’s team’s presentation also will be set in Week 3.

Midterm examination: There will be a written take-home midterm examination. Students will be asked to choose from a list of questions and answer them in short-essay form. Students will have 72 hours to complete the exam, and should not consult sources beyond assigned class readings and class notes. The exam will test students’ knowledge and understanding of concepts discussed in the class as well as comprehension of assigned readings. **Due date:** Distributed by 5 pm, Monday October 5; due 5 pm, Thursday October 8.

Read Ahead document: Students will work in pairs to develop a Read Ahead document as the first step in developing a conflict assessment for World Vision International, using WVI’s Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts (MSTC) analytical framework. These brief documents will be developed in cooperation with WVI’s Associate Director of Peacebuilding and will be submitted to WVI for use by MSTC workshop facilitators. **Due date:** October 20 for half the class, and October 27 for the other half. Cases should be chosen from the following, which have been designated as 2015-2016 priority cases for WVI:

MSTC high likelihood	MSTC medium likelihood	MSTC low likelihood
Central African Republic - multiagency MSTC	Colombia - multiagency MSTC	Mali - multiagency MSTC
Interim South West Administration, Somalia - multiagency MSTC	Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), Iraq - multiagency MSTC	Afghanistan - WV MSTC
Interim Juba Administration, Somalia - multiagency MSTC	South Sudan - WV MSTC	
	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, Pakistan - multiagency mini-MSTC	
	Eastern DRC - multiagency MSTC update	

Choosing a case from this list will maximize the possibility that student-produced reports will be utilized by WVI.

Final Report: The final assignment will be a longer critical report focusing on the process of conducting an MSTC. This paper will not be used by MSTC facilitators, but may still be shared with WVI. The paper should describe how the MSTC should be undertaken, considering the team's knowledge of the case. The paper may investigate the possible use of other conflict assessment frameworks and methodologies that could be useful for the particular case being studied. The paper should offer some initial analysis about important issues that must be taken into consideration at each stage of the MSTC process. The final reports should be no longer than 3000 words, total, excluding bibliographical references. Reports must include full citations. MLA style is preferred. *All papers **must** be submitted electronically through the NYU Classes Assignments tool.* Submitting a hard copy is unnecessary.

Proposed approaches to the final reports must be approved by the instructor. It is each team's responsibility to present a brief two-paragraph summary of the final report to the instructor by email by **November 3**. The summary should explain briefly but specifically the conflict case being examined, the main issues you hope to explore in your final report, as well as the identity of the people who will serve as your first-person research participants. Methods used during the preparation of the draft report as well as those recommended for further research briefly should be addressed.

Your final paper should include:

- Discussion of the MSTC Analytical Framework, including its strengths and weaknesses compared to other frameworks we have studied for the particular case you are exploring
- Critical discussion of the process that an MSTC analysis would require in the case you are studying, including the potential benefits and challenges of conducting an MSTC as you have come to understand them. Completing a full analysis of the case you are studying is unnecessary; demonstrating knowledge of how the process would be carried out in your case should be your goal. Your paper should focus on elements of the MSTC process that would be particularly important or sensitive in your particular case, including
 - Rapid Historical Phase Analysis
 - Actor Group and Characteristics Analysis
 - Actor Group Relationships Analysis
 - Symptoms of Instability Analysis
 - Political Economy of Instability Analysis
 - MSTC Mapping
 - Triggers and Scenarios Analysis
 - Strategic Implications
 - Operational Implications

Before writing your paper, you must be fully familiar with the Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts conflict assessment process.

****Please note that as part of their research each team will be **required** to collect data from at least two first-hand sources who are experts in or stakeholders in the case. Wherever possible, MSTC's Associate Director of Peacebuilding will request that each national office participate in a Skype call with student teams of each case being studied. Other data sources could be country or regional experts, nationals from the countries being studied or current or past field staff from NGOs working in the region. This data collection may occur in-person, by telephone, videoconference or by email.**

Due date: Friday December 4. Each student team should submit a preliminary draft of its final paper by 5 p.m. the Friday before the next-to-last class session via the Assignments tool on NYU Classes. These drafts will be used for the in-class peer review process (described below). These drafts will not be graded. Students will be encouraged to take the commentary and feedback from the peer review into consideration during the revision of their assessment reports prior to submitting the final report. Your final report is due **December 15, at noon**, via the Assignments tool on NYU Classes. Submitting hard copies of final reports is unnecessary.

In-class Peer Review: The next-to-last class session (December 8) will be dedicated to a peer review, during which students will work in pairs to evaluate one of their classmates' final reports. Students will have to review each report with a critical eye and provide written feedback that demonstrates their ability to distinguish between insightful writing and work that is lacking in critical analysis, fails to provide clear and concise information to the reader and/or does not meet the requirements of the assignment. A review form will be provided for this process. A student's care and effort in performing this peer review will be part of the final class grade. The instructor will review every report along with peer-reviewer comments to ensure the propriety of the process. This exercise has several advantages for students: 1) to practice evaluating and providing commentary on policy reports; 2) to learn about several different conflict cases; and 3) to gain the experience of having their own work peer reviewed.

Grading and Evaluation

Final grades will be determined in the following manner:

25 percent: Reading and discussion participation

20 percent: Midterm exam

15: Read Ahead document

40 percent: Final critical assessment report (including critique of fellow student's report)

Evaluation Criteria

- **Final Paper:** Clear evidence of wide and relevant research and critical thinking about the data and sources; a strong grasp of the analytical framework, and its relationship to other frameworks; effective analysis that leads to a compelling conclusion; good, accurate and persuasive writing.
- **Read Ahead document:** Familiarity with the Read Ahead format, and evidence of thorough research to obtain information from multiple, credible sources; well-organized and judicious presentation of needed data and information.
- **Mid-term Exam:** Mastery of the concepts underlying conflict assessment and the purposes of it, the strengths and weaknesses of particular approaches to conflict assessment, and the reasons for undertaking certain types of assessment.
- **Class Participation:** Active, respectful and collegial engagement during class discussions and class exercises; evidence of reading and preparation; consistent and insightful contributions to online discussion forum.

SPS Grading Scale

Grade	Meaning	GPA Conversion
A	Exceptional; superior effort	4.0
A-	Excellent	3.7
B+	Very good	3.3
B	Good; meets program standards	3.0
B-	Meets program standards in most respects	2.7
C+	Requires moderate improvement	2.3
C	Requires significant improvement	2.0
C-	Requires extensive improvement	1.7
F	Fail – Did not meet minimal course requirements	0

Final grades will be calculated according to the following scale: A (94-100); A- (90-93); B+ (86-89); B (83-85); B- (80-82); C+ (77-79); C (74-76); C- (71-73); F (70 and below).

Each student will receive a midterm grade, based on her/his midterm examination and class participation.

Incompletes will be granted only in extreme cases such as illnesses or other family emergencies and only when almost all work for the semester has been completed successfully. A student's procrastination in completing his/her paper will not be a basis for an Incomplete. If a student encounters a serious obstacle that will prevent him/her from turning in an assignment on-time, s/he must request an extension from the instructor in advance of the original due date. Otherwise, grades on late assignments will be reduced by one point for each day they are submitted after the due date.

SPS Definition of Plagiarism: *Plagiarism is presenting someone else's work as though it were one's own. More specifically, plagiarism is to present as one's own a sequence of words quoted without quotation marks from another writer; a paraphrased passage from another writer's work; creative images, artwork, or design; or facts or ideas gathered, organized, and reported by someone else, orally and/or in writing and not providing proper attribution. Since plagiarism is a matter of fact, not of the student's intention, it is crucial that acknowledgement of the sources be accurate and complete. Even where there is no conscious intention to deceive, the failure to make appropriate acknowledgment constitutes plagiarism. Penalties for plagiarism range from failure for a paper or course to dismissal from the University.*

Key Dates

Tuesday September 22:	Case topics due; dates for presentations set
Monday October 5:	Midterm examination distributed (5 pm)
Thursday October 9:	Midterm exam due (5 pm)
Tuesday October 20 or 27:	Read Ahead documents due
Tuesday November 3:	Two paragraph summary of final draft report due
November 17, 24; December 1:	Presentations
Friday December 4:	Draft final reports due (5 pm)
Tuesday December 15:	Final reports due (noon)

Contacting the instructor

Email will be the best method of reaching me. I will make every effort to reply to any questions or concerns expressed through email within 24 hours. If you wish to meet with me in person, please email me to schedule an appointment. In an emergency, please feel free to call my cell phone anytime before 11 p.m. at 718-838-4158.

Course Materials

Many of the course readings are available online or will be provided by the instructor on NYU Classes. Some readings will be from the following texts that may be purchased from the NYU Book Store or another online vendor. (Prices listed below are from Amazon.com.) Required texts also are on reserve at Bobst Library. Readings listed for each class session should be completed **before** the class session.

1. Goodhand, J. (2006). *Aiding Peace? The Role of NGOs in Armed Conflict* Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner. (\$23.50)
2. Anderson, M. (1999). *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace – or War* Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner. (\$13.24)
3. Schirch, L (2013). *Conflict Assessment and Peacebuilding Planning: Toward a Participatory Approach to Human Security*. Kumarian. (\$22.33)

Available electronically

4. Garred, M. et al. (2015). *Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts: Local Perspectives on Large-Scale Conflicts*. World Vision International [NYU Classes].

5. Høglund, K. and Oberg, M. (2011). *Understanding Peace Research: Methods and Challenges*. New York: Routledge. (Book available electronically through BobCat at: <https://getit.library.nyu.edu/go/4984269>)
6. Wallensteen, P. (2011). *Peace Research: Theory and Practice*. New York: Routledge (Book available electronically through BobCat at: <https://getit.library.nyu.edu/go/5182719>).
7. Collier, P. (2003). *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil Wars and Development Policy* (Washington, DC: World Bank and Oxford University Press) [Book available electronically through BobCat at: <https://getit.library.nyu.edu/go/5182754>]
8. Robinson, G. and Smyth M. (2001) (eds). *Researching Violently Divided Societies: Ethical and Methodological Issues*, (Tokyo: United Nations University Press) [Book available electronically through Google Books].
9. Porter, E., Robinson, G., Smyth, M., Schnabel, A. and Osaghae E. (2005) (eds.), *Researching Conflict in Africa: Insights and Experiences* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press) [Book is available electronically through BobCat at: <https://getit.library.nyu.edu/go/5182757>]
10. Seale, C. (2004) (ed.). *Researching Society and Culture* (London: SAGE Publications) [required chapters available on NYU Classes]
11. Sriam, C. L. et al. (eds.) (2009). *Surviving Field Research: Working in Violent and Difficult Situations*. London: Routledge, [Book available electronically through BobCat at: <https://getit.library.nyu.edu/go/1909823>]

Other resources

Bobst Library currently is expanding its already-rich collection of books, journals and electronic resources in the fields of peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Many important titles can be found through BobCat. Of particular interest to students conducting research for their presentations and final papers are the following five journals

Journal of Peace Research
 Journal of Peacebuilding and Development
 Journal of Conflict Resolution
 Conflict Resolution Quarterly
 Peacebuilding

Off-campus you can search for the titles here:
<http://library.nyu.edu/collections/ejournals.html>

In addition, students may find relevant information and research about peacebuilding, international conflict resolution and specific international conflicts from publications produced by the following organizations:

The Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management:
http://www.berghof-center.org/std_page.php?LANG=e&id=11

Swisspeace: <http://www.swisspeace.ch/typo3/en/publications/index.html>

The United States Institute of Peace: www.usip.org

Writing Assistance

Some students find they have difficulty with writing academic papers in a clear, easy-to-read way. Because writing is one of the most important skills for a professional in Global Affairs, I highly recommend that any students experiencing difficulties with writing seek assistance in this area. One free, on-campus resource is The NYU Writing Center, located at 411 Lafayette St., 3rd Floor, Telephone: 212 998-8866 Email: writingcenter@nyu.edu. More information is available at: <http://ewp.cas.nyu.edu/page/writing.center>

Week 1 (Sept. 8): Introduction to the Course

This session will serve as an introduction to the seminar. We will review course objectives, seminar structure and assignments. Students will be invited to start thinking about the subject of their conflict case study. An introduction to the concept of conflict assessment, its relevance and applications will include a brief review of the evolution of the field and some of the analytical frameworks and research methods that will be covered during the semester.

Required Readings

Andrew Mack, [*Global Political Violence: Explaining the Post-Cold War Decline*](#), Coping with Crisis Working Paper Series (NYU Classes)

Michael Spagat, Andrew Mack et al. Estimating War Deaths: An Arena of Contestation. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 2009; 53; pp. 934-950. May be accessed at: http://www.hsrgroup.org/images/stories/Documents/JCR_EstimatingWarDeaths.pdf. (NYU Classes)

Kristine Hoglund and Magnus Oberg, *Understanding Peace Research: Methods and Challenges*, chap. 1, pp. 3-13.

Lisa Schirch, *Conflict Assessment and Peacebuilding Planning*, chap. 1, pp. 1-34.

Week 2 (Sept. 15): The Modern Practice of Conflict Assessment: World Vision International's Approach

World Vision International has devoted significant time and resources to developing and utilizing its Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts (MSTC) conflict assessment method and analytical framework. In this session, we will seek to understand WVI's interpretation and application of conflict sensitivity.

Guest speaker (via Skype): Michelle Garred, WVI Associate Director of Peacebuilding, Strategy & Innovation

Required Readings

Garred, M. et al. *Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts: Local Perspectives on Large-Scale Conflicts*, chap. 1-5 (pp. 6-99). World Vision International [NYU Classes].

World Vision International: Read Ahead Template

Conflict Sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Peacebuilding: Tools for Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment, [Resource Pack](#) (London: FEWER, International Alert and Saferworld, 2003) [Chapters 1 and 2]

Peter Wallensteen, "The Origins of Contemporary Peace Research," in Kristine Hoglund and Magnus Oberg (eds.) *Understanding Peace Research: Methods and Challenges*, pp. 14-32.

Week 3 (Sept. 22): Causes of Conflict, and their Linkages to Conflict Assessment

How do theories of conflict affect the practice of conflict assessment? In this session, we will explore links between assumptions about conflict and responses to it. We also will try to understand what is meant by "conflict-sensitive" approaches to development and humanitarian assistance.

Topics due for case studies; dates will be assigned for presentations.

Required Readings

Jonathan Goodhand, *Aiding Peace? The Role of NGOs in Armed Conflict*, chap. 2, pp. 27-47

Michael E. Brown, "The Causes of Internal Conflict," Michael E. Brown, et al. (eds.), *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), pp.3-25

Jos de la Haye and Koenrad Denayer, PCIA: A Tool to Move from Conflict Ignorance to Conflict Sensitivity within Development, Humanitarian Aid and Peacebuilding Work, *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2003), pp. 49-62. (NYU Classes)

Lisa Schirch, *Conflict Assessment and Peacebuilding Planning*, chap. 4, pp. 67-74.

Week 4 (Sept. 29): Do No Harm

Why does aid sometimes have unintended consequences on conflict? How can we know whether providing aid will increase or decrease levels of violence. The *Do No Harm* approach to programming in development and humanitarian assistance helps us to answer these questions, as well as serving as the foundation to much of what we now understand as participatory conflict assessment and conflict-sensitive programming.

Required Readings

Mary Anderson, *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace – or War* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999) [Chapters 2 – 6, pp.7 – 76 (remaining chapters are recommended)]

Saferworld and Conciliation Resources. From Conflict Analysis to Peacebuilding Impact. (NYU Classes)

Monday Oct. 5: Midterm examination distributed by 5 pm (due Oct. 8 at 5 pm)

Week 5: (Oct. 6) Political Economy and Conflict Assessment

One of the more popular lenses that has been used for conflict assessments over the past decade is rooted in the work of economist Paul Collier. In this session, we will explore the political economy dimension of conflict assessment, its implications, strengths and shortcomings.

Required Readings

Paul Collier, *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil Wars and Development Policy*, chap. 3 (pp.53-91) and chap. 5 (pp.121-172)

World Bank, [Conflict Analysis Framework \(CAF\)](#) (Washington, DC: World Bank, Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Team, 2005)

Nathan, L. (2005) '*The Frightful Inadequacy of Most of the Statistics*': A Critique of Collier and Hoeffler on Causes of Civil War, Occasional Paper Vol. 12, No. 5, The Center for Conflict Resolution, University of Cape Town, 2005. (NYU Classes)

October 13: No class

Week 6 (Oct. 20): Key Research Methods for Conflict Assessment

As an emerging, distinct field of research, conflict assessment calls for practitioners and scholars who engage in it to possess a particular set of research tools. In this session, we will explore some of the key methods used by contemporary conflict assessment researchers, including: interviews, focus groups, surveys and other approaches that encourage true participation by conflict stakeholders.

Required Readings

Lisa Schirch, *Conflict Assessment and Peacebuilding Planning*, chap. 2 (pp.39-58) and chap. 3 (pp. 59-66)

Byrne, B. (2004). Qualitative Interviewing. In Seale, C. (Ed.), *Researching Society and Culture* 180-192.

Karen Brouneus. In-depth Interviewing: The process, skill and ethics of interviews in Peace Research, in Kristine Hoglund and Magnus Oberg (eds.) *Understanding Peace Research: Methods and Challenges*, pp. 130-145.

Johanna Soderstrom. *Focus Groups: Safety in Numbers?* in Kristine Hoglund and Magnus Oberg (eds.) *Understanding Peace Research: Methods and Challenges*, pp. 146-164.

Kristine Eck, Survey Research in Conflict and Post-Conflict Societies, in Kristine Hoglund and Magnus Oberg (eds.) *Understanding Peace Research: Methods and Challenges*, pp.165-182.

Steifel, M. Participatory Action Research as a Tool for Peacebuilding. In *Peacebuilding: A Field Guide*.

Hill, T. (2010) *Conducting Participatory Conflict Assessment in Iraq*, unpublished draft.

Week 7 (October 27): Ethical Considerations in Conflict Assessment

Ethical lines are easily blurred in situations of violent conflict. So how can conflict assessment researchers ensure they behave ethically? What are the most daunting ethical challenges researchers face? In this session, students will consider how they would respond to a series of ethical dilemmas from the moment they consider beginning a conflict assessment until a final report is produced. This session also will seek to connect to the previous week's session on research methods by asking questions about what methods might be more or less ethical under particular circumstances.

Required Readings

Palluch, E.L. Methods and Ethics with research teams and NGO's: Comparing experiences across the border of Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In *Surviving Field Research*, pp. 38-56. [NYU Classes]

Robinson, G. and Smyth, M. (eds). *Researching Violently Divided Societies: Ethical and Methodological Issues*. ["Introduction," pp.1-11; Chapter 9: "Field Trip to Bosnia: The Dilemmas of a First-Time Researcher," pp.165-183; Chapter 11: "One Size Fits All? Focused Comparison and Policy-Relevant Research on Violently Divided Societies," pp.193-206]

Porter, E., Robinson, G., and Smyth, M. et al (eds) (2005). *Researching Conflict in Africa: Insights and Experiences* [Chapter 2: "Preventing and Managing Violent Conflict: The Role of Researcher," pp. 24-43]

Lisa Schirch, *Conflict Assessment and Peacebuilding Planning*, chap. 13, pp. 195-206.

Cheyenne Church and Mark Rogers, *Designing for Results: Integrating Monitoring and Evaluation in Conflict Transformation Programs, part 1*. Search for Common Ground (NYU Classes).

Optional Readings

Cheyenne Church and Mark Rogers, *Designing for Results: Integrating Monitoring and Evaluation in Conflict Transformation Programs, part 2*. Search for Common Ground (NYU Classes).

Cheyenne Church and Julie Shouldice, J. The Evaluation of Conflict Resolution Interventions: Framing the State of Play. *INCORE International Conflict Research, University of Ulster and UN University.*

Week 8: (Nov. 3): Identity and Conflict Research

The identities of those leading as well as those participating in conflict assessment research play an enormous role in research. Explicitly acknowledging identity issues, especially those that contribute to power imbalances is a necessity. This session specifically will consider how sensitivity to gender identities can be achieved in conflict research and resulting peacebuilding practice.

Required Readings

Porter, E., Robinson, G., and Smyth, M. et al (eds). *Researching Conflict in Africa: Insights and Experiences , Insider-Outsider Issues in Researching Violent and Divided Societies*” chap. 1, pp. 9-23

Peter Wallensteen, P. (2011). “Academics in Peacemaking,” *Peace Research: Theory and Practice*, chap 16, pp. 231-236.

Strickland, R. and Davvury, N. (2003). [Gender Equity and Peacebuilding. From Rhetoric to Reality: Finding the Way](#). Washington, DC: International Center for Research on Women.

USAID (2007). [Women and Conflict](#), *USAID Toolkit*. Washington, DC: USAID, Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation.

Sriam, C. L. et al. (eds.) (2009). *Surviving Field Research: Working in Violent and Difficult Situations*. chapters 13, 14, 15, pp. 204-254. [Book, available electronically at: <https://getit.library.nyu.edu/go/1909823>]

USAID (2004 and 2005). *Toolkits for Intervention: [Land and Conflict](#); [Minerals and Conflict](#); [Youth and Conflict](#), [Forest and Conflict](#), [Livelihood and Conflict](#)*. Washington, DC: USAID, Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation. [to be skimmed]

Week 9 (Nov. 10): Understanding Conflict Context and Stakeholders

Effective conflict assessments rest on some core elements: thorough understanding of context, actors and their motivations. In this session, we will consider how to develop meaningful research about these central assessment components.

Required Readings

Lisa Schirch, *Conflict Assessment and Peacebuilding Planning*, chap. 5 (pp.75-97) and chap. 6 (pp. 99-111) and chap. 7 (113-130)

American Friends Service Committee, *Conflict Assessment: Afghanistan*, (February 2009)

Week 10 (Nov. 17): Understanding Conflict Factors

Once researchers develop a nuanced understanding of conflict context and its key actors, the multitude of factors that contribute to conflicts must be explored: its drivers and mitigators, sources and uses of power, and possible triggers. This session will begin to develop the idea of conflict assessment from a systems perspective.

Student presentations will begin.

Required Readings

Readings related to each case study presentation

Lisa Schirch, *Conflict Assessment and Peacebuilding Planning*, chap. 8 (pp.131-140) chap. 9 (pp. 141-154), chap. 10 (pp. 155-163) and chap. 11 (pp.165-175).

Week 11 (Nov. 24): Conflict Assessment from a Government Perspective

The United States, the United Kingdom and Sweden are just three of the states that have developed their own conflict assessment frameworks. This session will review the evolution of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)'s Conflict Assessment Framework 2.0, the UK Department for International Development (DFID): *Conducting a Conflict Assessment* and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).

Student presentations will continue.

Required Readings

Readings related to each case study presentation

USAID. *Conflict Assessment Framework 2.0* (NYU Classes)

Department for International Development (DFID), *Conducting Conflict Assessments: Guidance Notes* (NYU Classes)

United States Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (2008). *Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework*. Washington, D.C. www.crs.state.gov. (NYU Classes)

Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. *Conflict Analysis Manual* (NYU Classes)

Week 12: (December 1): Innovative Approaches to Conflict Assessment

Many different organizations have begun to include conflict assessment in their professional practice in original ways. In this session, we will examine some of the more original uses of – and approaches to – conflict assessment.

Student presentations will conclude.

Required Readings

Readings related to each case study presentation.

International Peace Park Expeditions (2011). Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park: Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (and documentary film).

Belun (2008), Executive Summary, Suku Conflict Assessment, Timor Leste (NYU Classes)

Brand-Jacobsen , K.F. (dir), Ismael Al-Assaf, S. (res.) and Dhahir, Ali A. (res.) (2012). Searching for Peace in Iraq: Strategic Conflict and Peace Analysis, Improving Civil Society Peacebuilding Strategies and Impact. Available at:
http://issuu.com/nova_social/docs/searching_for_peace_in_iraq

Sigrid Gruener and Thomas Hill, *Introducing Conflict-Sensitive Community Development to Iraq* (2006). Journal of Peacebuilding and Development, Vol. 2, No.3. (NYU Classes).

Week 13 (December 8): In-class Peer Review

Working in pairs, students will receive drafts of their classmates' conflict assessment reports, and will be asked to provide detailed feedback that will demonstrate their own knowledge of the concepts and practices discussed during the course, as well as offering constructive criticism to their colleagues.

Week 14 (December 15): Synthesis and Reflection

What did we learn? What do we still need to know about conflict assessment and the tools and approaches needed to utilize it effectively and ethically? This wrap-up session will serve as a moment to take stock of the course, and to look ahead.

Additional Sources

Methods and Tools

MSTC (2007): Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts Analysis Facilitator's Manual. (NYU Classes)

SIDA (2004): How to Conduct a Conflict Analysis (NYU Classes)

UNDP (2003): United Nations Development Programme, Conflict-related Development Analysis (CDA), Working Document (NYU Classes)

Clingendael (2005): Suzanne Verstegen, Luc van de Goor, and Jeroen de Zeeuw, [The Stability Assessment Framework: Designing Integrated Responses for Security, Governance and Development](#) (NYU Classes)

Conflict Assessment Examples

Dirk Kruijt, *Bolivia Stability Assessment* (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', Conflict Research Unit, 2006)

Paul O'Brian, Benefits-Harms Handbook and Profile Tools (*Atlanta, GA: CARE, 2001*)
CHF International (August 2006). Grassroots Conflict Assessment of the Somali Region, Ethiopia.

Plus others available on NYU Classes.