

CONFLICT ISSUES: ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

About this class:

This course is designed to be a case study of conflict analysis, which I think is the necessary precursor to any conflict intervention. In the class we will use the conflict environment that exists between Israel and the Occupied Territories of Palestine as the living case for our analysis. This subject is, by its very nature, controversial. Even the choice of what to call the land on the other side of the border from Israel is fraught with political and social overtones: Palestine? The West Bank? The Palestinian Territory? The Occupied Territory? Each of these names, innocuous in and of themselves, bring supporters and objectors, with cultural and political reasons for accepting or rejecting labels for the geography ostensibly governed by the Palestinian Authority.

If the name is controversial, we should expect that discussions related to the relationship between Israel and Palestine will be very controversial, and that discussions regarding relationships among interest groups on both sides of the border will be equally controversial.

In this class you will, no matter what your political view of the region, be confronted with ideas and opinions that differ from your own. I will ask – no, I will insist – that all viewpoints and all persons who express them be treated with respect and civility. Comity does not equal agreement, and agreement is not the goal of this course. The goal of any conflict analysis is to understand, as best it is possible to do so, the complex set of relationships and actions that have created ongoing conflict, and, again as best it is possible to do so, to understand the positions taken by those who disagree with us.

We will attempt to accomplish this by interacting with a series of guests, all of whom are working and/or living in the region, and by using a standard conflict analysis framework to discuss, item by item, the elements of the conflict environment.