



Conflict Studies 2 | SOU44012

Year	Senior Sophister
ECTS Credits	10
Contact Hours	One Lecture & One Tutorial per week
Pre-requisite	
Semester	2
Module Leader & Lecturer	Andrew Finlay
Contact Email	

Module Content/Outline:

In the aftermath of sustained intra-state political violence there is often a metaconflict about the conflict; ie disputation over the causes, nature, and consequences of the violence. Metaconflicts are fought over the rival collective memories and social theories developed by distinct social groups to frame and transmit their understandings of the conflict and who is to blame. Peace processes typically seek to address metaconflicts via 'transitional justice' processes which seek to discover the truth of the violence, address the needs of victims and promote reconciliation between victims and perpetrators.

The peace agreement signed in Belfast on Good Friday 1998 (GFA) has surprisingly little to say about victims, and there has been no 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission' (TRC) here. Since 1998 a meta-conflict about the conflict has raged unchecked; it has intensified since Brexit amid renewed calls for a referendum on Irish unity. The lack of a TRC reflects the consociational nature of the GFA which is based on the idea that the conflict was between two communities, equal and opposite, each with its own identity and associated regime of truth.

In the absence of a TRC there has been no societal reckoning with the past, instead grass-roots commemoration and storytelling has flourished. Individual narratives express real trauma, loss and a longing for truth and justice that will never come, but through processes of silencing and appropriation, memory and narrative becomes part of the metaconflict, reflecting the communal binary between so-called 'cultural Catholics' and 'cultural Protestants'.

The social and human sciences are not above the metaconflict, they are part of it, and therefore cannot arbitrate. What then is a sociologist to do? Rather than assess truth claims, maybe we need to step back, gain reflexivity, explore how the communal binary and associated regimes of truth, memory, narrative are socially constructed; maybe consider other narratives that unsettle the communal binary? Especially given that the votes of such others will be crucial in a putative referendum on a united Ireland.



Learning Objectives:

On successful completion students will:

- appreciate that in every armed conflict there is a meta-conflict about the conflict.
- recognise the GFA as a binary arrangement between ‘two communities’ each with its own ‘identity’ and regime of truth about the conflict.
- understand the challenges that metaconflict presents to people trying to deal with the aftermath of political violence.
- understand the challenge that conflict and metaconflict presents to social science (‘crisis of representation’) and reflexivity as a response to that.
- critically assess the role of narrative and memory in the aftermath of violent conflict.
- Contrast narratives based in the lived experience of political violence with the sanitised abstractions of social theory.

Assessment:

In line with the substance of the module, assessment will be by means of a reflexive assignment. To explain: you are asked to take notes on lectures and readings from week to week documenting your learning from week to week. You can think of it like a learning diary. Drawing upon these notes you will be asked to submit - as one document – edited extracts of diary entries from three of the weeks: one from before reading week and one after reading week and a third from either part of the module [eg 500 words each]. These diary entries might explore the most interesting or challenging or irritating thing you learnt in each of these three weeks. In addition to the edited extracts, the document you submit for assessment should have an introduction explaining why you choose these three weeks [eg 500 words] and a conclusion devoted to an honest reflection/discussion on the relationship [or lack thereof] between the three edited extracts from your learning diary [eg 500 words]. The reflexive assignment should be submitted as one document (strictly 3000 words max, exclusive of bibliography) by 12noon on **22 April 2023** (tbc). Further instructions will be issued. For the moment all you need to know is that you are required to document your learning week to week in a diary format and do one tutorial presentation based on a diary extract

Lectures & Tutorials/ Contact hours:

One lecture and one tutorial per week.



Recommended Texts/Key Reading:

- Finlay, A. (2011) *Governing Ethnic Conflict*, Routledge [eBook tcd library accessible from home]
- Alexander, J. [et al] (2004) *Cultural Trauma*, polity [chapter 1]
- Finn D. (2019) *One Man's Terrorist: A Political History of the IRA*, Verso
- McAtackney, L and Ó Catháin M [eds] (2023) *The Routledge Handbook of the Northern Ireland Conflict and Peace*. Routledge.
- Mamdani, M. (2020) *Neither Settler nor Native*, Harvard University Press, [Introduction and conclusion] [eBook tcd library]
- If your knowledge of Irish history is scant, it is well worth viewing: "Once upon a time in Northern Ireland, on RTE Player".