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PA 8610-- *Group Dynamics and Conflict Resolution*

Winter 2005

Human groups exhibit once again the familiar picture of an individual of superior strength among a troop of equal companions a picture [that] is also contained in our idea of the primal horde. The psychology of such a group, as we know it from the descriptions to which we have so often referred—the dwindling of the conscious individual personality, the focusing of thoughts and feelings into a common direction, the predominance of the affective side of the mind and of unconscious psychical life, the tendency to the immediate carrying out of intentions as they emerge—all this corresponds to a state of regression to a primitive mental activity, of just such a sort as we should be inclined to the primal horde. (Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, 1959, 1922)

Behind every work group is a mob. Freud's (1922) *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* intimates this verdict, a psychological truth often ignored by contemporary theorists and practitioners in their romance with teams and work-group cultures. In the shadow of every committee and staff meeting lurks the unconscious desires and aggressive feelings of executives and employees. (Allcorn and Diamond, *Managing People During Stressful Times*, Quorum Books, Greenwood Publishing, 1997)

Course Contents

The purpose of this graduate course in *Group Dynamics and Conflict Resolution* is to develop an understanding of the psychosocial and emotional roots of conflict, hatred, terror, and violence, within and between human groups. By exploring and constructing a psychodynamic framework for analyzing groups (cultural, ethnic, religious) and institutions, we will come to better identify and understand the simultaneously productive and destructive nature of intra- and inter-group dynamics. Then, we will discuss some models of conflict resolution and decide for ourselves whether or not these approaches are adequate responses or remedies for dealing with potentially violent clashes between and among groups, organizations, nations and communities in this era of new terrorism.

Some topics to be covered:

Psychoanalysis, political psychology, and group conflict—intra-personal, interpersonal, intra-group, inter-group, intra-organizational and inter-organizational—at multiple levels of analysis

Psychopathologies, socio-pathologies, hatred and violence

The collision between leadership personality and political and group behavior

New terrorism, globalization and violence

Ethnic, racial, religious, and cultural tensions between and among groups

Large group identity, leaders, followers, and violence

Group psychology and paradoxes of group experience

Identity-based conflict resolution

Narrative mediation and conflict resolution

In sum, the psychodynamics of conflict and conflict resolution in groups, organizations, nations and communities

Required Readings:

Weeks 2-4: Volkan, V. (2004). *Blind Trust: Large Groups and Their Leaders in Times of Crisis and Terror*. Charlottesville, VA.: Pitchstone Publishing.

Weeks 4-6: Post, Jerrold M. (2004). *Leaders and their followers in a dangerous world: the psychology of political behavior*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

Weeks 8-10: Smith, K.K. and Berg, D. N. (1997). *Paradoxes of Group Life: Understanding Conflict, Paralysis, and Movement in Group Dynamics*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Weeks 11-13: Rothman, J. (1997). *Resolving Identity-Based Conflict in Nations, Organizations, and Communities*. San Francisco, CA.: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Weeks 14-15: Winslade, J. and G. Monk (2000). *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution*. San Francisco, CA.: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Course Requirements:

Class participation and preparations = 10%

Work group application = 30%

Take-home midterm essay = 30%

Take-home final essay = 30%

If you need accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please inform me immediately. Please see me privately after class, or at my office.

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