

Formative Multi-perspective Case Study

Note to Instructor

This assignment is designed as a low-stakes, first opportunity for students to apply multiple theoretical perspectives to analyze a single conflict situation. As a way to reduce anxiety, it is only worth 10% of the final grade and I provide very detailed individual feedback to each student on their submission. I have found that for many students, this assignment gives them their first real “ahaa” moment about how to connect abstract theories to real, concrete, conflict situations.

This assignment is organized in a manner that is almost identical to the final case analysis assignment given at the end of the term. This gives students a dry run on what to expect and what the instructor is looking for. Because it is at the mid-point in the course, students will only have been exposed to the early theories studied. Despite this limited exposure, I only use four theories so they are not overwhelmed. I have included a set of four different worksheets (“observation forms”) that you can distribute to students at the beginning of the assignment. These forms help them learn how to observe with purpose. I do not distribute such forms again after this assignment.

Selection of Case Study

Any of a number of films could be suitable for this assignment. I use a 50-minute documentary on the Troubles in Northern Ireland entitled “Mirror, Mirror, Blood and Belonging” produced by Michael Ignatieff. It includes interviews and footage that give students quite a lot about which to write. Also, because many students are not familiar with the conflict, they tend to approach the assignment with open curiosity (and few predispositions). This film is accessible free on YouTube at this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_OiF2kpKAvI&t=224s

Because many students are not familiar with the Troubles in Northern Ireland, it is helpful to give a very brief history and context help orient students to the conflict. If you do not have this background, there are a variety of short YouTube descriptions. For example, here is a brief (5 minute) YouTube video explanation of the history of the conflict which you can either preview yourself or show to your class:: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNT-oz5NkSM>

Multi-perspective Case Study

To be assigned following Module 4

Two of the competencies you are developing in our course are:

- The ability to understand how a specific theory reveals its own insights into conflict situations; and
- The ability to apply multiple specific theoretical approaches to analyze a single conflict situation.

The purpose of this case study is to give you the chance to build these competencies by practicing applying multiple perspectives to a single conflict situation and to see whether and what different insights you can gain about the conflict from each of the different perspectives you apply.

For this assignment, you will be doing the following:

1. Watching a documentary in class on the conflict in Northern Ireland. You do not need to have any prior background in this conflict in order to complete the assignment (you may actually benefit by not having any pre-established opinions about the conflict).
2. While you watch the documentary, use the theory-specific observations forms provided to document what observations and evidence you notice that may be relevant to offer insights into the conflict from one or more the theoretical perspectives you are using for this assignment. It is very possible that one piece of evidence may be relevant from more than one theoretical perspective (in which case, you might write the same observation on more than one form).
3. After viewing the documentary you will have time to discuss the documentary in class in small groups. Then, working individually, complete the written assignment. This assignment has three parts:
 1. In your own words, for each of the theories used in this assignment, write a one paragraph description of what you understand to be the central focus of the theory and what kinds of evidence would be relevant to look for when applying the theory to a conflict situation.
 2. For each of the theories used in this assignment and referring to your own observation forms, describe at least two examples each of **specific evidence** that may be relevant from each theoretical perspective. In addition to giving examples, **discuss why and how the evidence you describe may be relevant** to

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the selected theories and what kinds of insights you might gain as a conflict practitioner about the conflict.

3. In a separate paragraph, discuss how these multiple theories add to ***YOUR*** insights and skills as a conflict practitioner?

There is no minimum or maximum length to this assignment. However, keep in mind that section 3a will be at least four (4) substantial paragraphs long and section 3b will include multiple specific examples and clear analysis from each of the five (5) theories you are applying. Section 3c requires some serious reflection. Please type your submission using Times New Roman (12 point type) with 1 inch margins. Please include your name on the top of the paper.