

Conflict Resolution Techniques & Practice

CONF 300 Section 002, Fall 2011

COURSE MEETINGS

Tuesdays, 10:30 am - 1:10 pm
Robinson Hall A243

INSTRUCTOR

Susan Allen Nan
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phone (703) 993 3653

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1:15-2:15 pm
In or nearby Robinson B CAR office
Please pre-arrange office hours appointments by e-mailing before class on Tuesdays, or request an office hours session at the end of class.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

GMU Course Catalog description:

“300 Conflict Resolution Techniques and Practice. Prerequisites: CONF 101 and 60 credits. Advanced consideration of CONF 101 topics, introduction of the core notion of reflective practice, [critical thinking], conflict resolution techniques practice, third party roles, and ethics.”

Building on what students have learned in Conf 101, this course further explores a variety of theories and frameworks for analyzing conflict. Students will move from conflict analysis to exploring techniques, process models, and third-party roles to constructively intervene in conflict. Reflective practice is introduced as a core skill supporting many conflict resolution practices and techniques.

Because this class emphasizes building conflict resolution skills and abilities, a significant portion of the class will be experiential. Much of the class will involve engaging in simulated conflict scenarios and subsequent reflection. The class will also introduce students to unique forms of practice and on occasion, give students the opportunity to meet, question, and learn from professionals who are active in the work being studied.

Interpersonal, small group, community, and international conflict will be discussed in the course, but special emphasis in practice will be placed on interpersonal and small group conflicts as the building blocks for doing conflict resolution in larger and more complex social conflicts. The emphasis will be on enhancing the ability to engage in reflection and think critically in the midst of conflict dynamics.

Reflective practice is the process of becoming aware of and exploring a pattern of action, making adjustments during the action, or thinking about past action. In an elemental sense, most of us perform some form of reflective practice virtually every day. To the extent that reflective practice incorporates theory, experience, and awareness, even the most mundane of activities engages aspects of awareness, experiential learning, and nascent theory.

Conflict resolution is frequently a process that involves emotional intensity and relational complexity. This can be a factor in dyadic disputes, but is significantly present in deep-rooted multiparty conflicts. Because of this, it is critical that practitioners be skilled at integrating awareness, theory, and experiential learning into practice at three stages of an intervention: (i) in analyzing or assessing the conflict in preparation for intervention; (ii) during the intervention itself; (iii) and post intervention reflection. In this way, reflective practice is a form of "meaning making"—attempting to make sense of phenomena occurring around you through an interdependence of theory, conscious experience and practice.

Awareness is crucial to reflective practice: awareness of self, of other, of conflict dynamics, etc. A variety of contemplative practices support conflict resolution practitioners in cultivating awareness within reflective practice. Each practitioner may find particular practices more conducive to increased awareness and reflective practice than others.

Utilizing discussion, laboratory and simulation work, and exploring various contemplative practices, conflict resolution techniques, and conflict resolution practices, course participants will have the opportunity to engage aspects of reflective practice as noted above. The objective is to build an understanding of and personalized skill in reflective practice that can be utilized in a variety of conflict settings.

Successful course participants will conclude the course with increased facility in their own practice of reflective practice, and increased ability to articulate their reflective practice within a community of conflict resolution practitioners. At the end of the course, students will have learned theories and techniques for assessing conflicts, be able to make informed summaries of conflict intervention options, and will have a set of skills and techniques to help parties in conflict have constructive conversations and move conflicts toward resolution.

While students will learn and practice several conflict resolution process models and roles, the goal is not to be fully trained as mediators or facilitators, although this course will be an excellent introduction should students decide to pursue further training or credentialing in such areas. Rather, by the end of the course, students should be more comfortable with reflective practice, and with the process of continuing improvement of their abilities to work with conflict in various roles, processes, and contexts.

COURSE MATERIALS

Required texts:

Mayer, B. (2000). *The dynamics of conflict resolution: a practitioner's guide*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Furlong, Gary T. (2005) *The Conflict Resolution Toolbox: Models and Maps for Analyzing, Diagnosing, and Resolving Conflict*. Mississauga, Ontario: John Wiley and Sons.

Additional required readings will be available through e-reserves or on indicated internet pages.

ACADEMIC POLICIES AND INFORMATION

Honor Code and Plagiarism

All George Mason University students have agreed to abide by the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code. You can find a copy of the Honor Code at academicintegrity.gmu.edu. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee for review. With specific regards to plagiarism, three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. If you have questions about when the contributions of others to your work must be acknowledged and appropriate ways to cite those contributions, please talk with the professor.

S-CAR requires that all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit a student's work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. S-CAR's policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace or substitute for it.

Late Work

Class assignments that are submitted late can be penalized by one letter grade for each day they are late. If a student has a documented emergency, special arrangements can be made with the instructor. Please seek any special arrangements prior to reaching a deadline, if at all possible.

Paper Format

Papers for the course should be typed, double-spaced, have 1" margins, and use a common 12-point font. The pages should be numbered and have a title, include your name and the instructor's name, and consistently follow a single standard academic citation format.

Papers should be submitted by e-mail to snan@gmu.edu by 10:00 am on the assigned due date.

STUDENT RESOURCES

Disability Support Services

Any student with documented learning disabilities or other conditions that may affect academic performance should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with the Office of Disability Support Services (703-993-2474) to determine the possible accommodations you might need; and 2) contact her or his instructor to discuss reasonable accommodations.

George Mason University is committed to providing appropriate services and accommodations that allow self-identified students with disabilities to access programs and activities at the university as stated in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

To achieve this goal, the university maintains and supports the Disability Resource Center Office which is responsible for assuring that students receive the services and accommodations to which they are entitled. The professional staff of the Disability Resource Center Office coordinate services for students with disabilities, determine reasonable services and accommodations on the basis of disability, and act as a liaison between students and faculty/administration on concerns relating to services and accommodations" (<http://www.gmu.edu/departments/advising/dss.html>).

Library Services

The CAR program library liaison is Melissa Johnson. Ms. Johnson is located at the Fenwick library. She is available by email at mjohnsh@gmu.edu and by phone at 703-993-2212. Do not hesitate to contact her with specific questions about holdings and research.

English Language Institute

The English Language Institute offers free English language tutoring to non-native English speaking students who are referred by a member of the GMU faculty or staff.

For more information contact 703-993-3642 or malle2@gmu.edu.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center is a free writing resource that offers individual, group, and online

tutoring. For general questions and comments please contact us at wcenter@gmu.edu or call: 703-993-4491.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

Participation

15 %

Because much of this course involves in-class, experiential learning, participation is a significant part of the course grade. Course attendance is expected and is part of your participation grade. *Just showing up for class does not represent 'A' participation work.* Students are expected to complete their reading assignments on time and to participate in class discussions and exercises.

Along with class attendance (**required**), students are expected to participate fully in all exercises and complete all weekly required readings in preparation for class discussion. Throughout the course there will be various learning experiences. Each week is expected to involve reading, writing, experience, contemplative practice, and conflict engagement (either in simulation/role-play or real life). Mediums will include videos, guest speakers, impromptu vignettes, lectures, simulations and role-plays, journaling, structured observation, class exercises, home exercises, and discussions.

Participation is required, however, each participant is required to monitor his/her own comfort level, and be responsible for his/her own healthy engagement in the class material. Each participant may choose, where necessary, to "participate" in particular exercises by observing and reflecting on one's own reaction to the assignment, rather than by regular "participation" in an exercise. If you choose not to actively participate on week in the regular course content, please submit a 2-3 page paper reflecting on your reactions to the course material within one week.

Reflection Papers

30 %

Students will be responsible for submitting **three (3) reflection papers of between 3 and 5 pages in length, each worth 10% of the student's overall grade**, for a total of 30 percentage points. These papers will be focused on making sense of applied conflict resolution skills or practices observed in the real world. Students must observe conflict resolution skills in action. Students are encouraged to participate, for example, in a Dialogue and Difference evening discussion, to attend a public meeting on a conflictual issue, or to participate in a private conflict resolution process (for example, at work, in their community, etc.). The papers should integrate course readings, as well as in-class discussions, with student reflections on the conflict resolution skills and practices evidenced (or not) ***with out-of-class observation or participation in conflict resolution processes.*** The objective of these papers is to practice and demonstrate *awareness* of conflict dynamics and *critical thinking* in the application of theory to practice in the real world, which is essential to effective conflict resolution. Each student should choose a formal citation style he or she prefers (e.g. APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.), and then employ it consistently throughout. Papers are due **on September 6 and October 18 and November 15 respectively.**

The reflection paper due September 6 is meant to offer students an opportunity to reflect specifically on their own roles in, habitual responses to, and reactions to conflict. *This paper should be completed prior to any of the course reading, as a self-awareness exercise, and with limited (or no) reference to scholarly theories.* The topic of this first paper should be observing yourself in conflict. Questions to consider in reflecting on your own practice in conflict include: What is an example of a conflict in which I was highly aware of myself and others, able to track conflict dynamics, notice my own emotional, somatic, and cognitive reactions, notice others' reactions to the conflict, and consciously choose how to engage? What allowed me this conscious engagement in that particular situation? What made it easier or harder? Reflecting on this and other situations, what do I know about myself in conflict? As I build my conflict resolution practice, what of my own conflict habits do I want to be aware of?

Learning Cells

35 %

Students will partner with 5-6 of their peers in learning cells and work on two projects together.

Effective teamwork is a vital element of conflict resolution practice in real life, and in order to prepare for that eventuality students will complete one small-group project by the end of the semester. In these groups (learning cells) of 5 or 6, students will complete two parts of this assignment:

1. *Videotaped Simulation*: Each group will create a short conflict simulation, similar to those conducted throughout the semester in class, in order to demonstrate core ideas and skills from the course. They will imagine a conflict scenario, select a form of intervention (e.g. negotiation, mediation, dialogue, etc.), and then play out the simulation, each taking on a role, *while videotaping*. The result will be presented in the second half of this assignment...

2. *In-Class Presentation*: **Each learning cell will then present their videotaped simulation to the rest of the class on one of two days set aside for this purpose (November 29 and December 6) at the end of the semester.** This will offer each group an opportunity to reflect openly about their intervention approach, and the outcomes, while also receiving feedback from their peers.

Final Written Exam

20%

The written exam for this course will be an open-book, take home essay exam of 6-8 pages in length. The exam will be distributed December 6 and will be due by e-mail at 10 am on December 13.

CLASS TOPICS AND READINGS

Date	Topics & Readings
08/30	Welcome, Introduction Overview of Conflict Resolution Techniques and Practices, emphasizing reflective practice. Distribution of Syllabus Completion of Participant Information Cards Assignment of first reflection paper. Please note: Please complete all reading PRIOR to the class period when the readings are listed.
09/06	Definitions, conceptions of conflict and practice. Approaches & personal orientation toward conflict. Conflict self-awareness and conceptions of conflict Practice as both science & art – starting to think about “reflective practice”, self-awareness in conflict FIRST REFLECTION PAPER DUE.
09/13	Frameworks for assessing/analyzing conflict Levels of analysis; positions, interests, values, worldviews, & needs; Moore’s satisfaction triangle. Dual Concern Model SPITCEROW (handout) Formation of Learning Cells Readings: Mayer, Chap. 1 Furlong, Chaps 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
09/20	Case Study: Matewan (film by John Sayles) Readings: Mayer, Chapter 2
09/27	Analyzing a Case Study: Applying Frameworks to Matewan Group exercise in conflict analysis Readings: review again Furlong, Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7
10/04	Conflict Analysis in Context; Comparing and Contrasting Georgian

and South Ossetian Conflict Analyses

Guest speakers: Archil Gegeshidze and Lira Kozaeva

Readings: Furlong, Chapters 8, 9, 10, 11, 12

Mayer, Chap 3 and 4

Additional reading: Familiarize yourself with the S-CAR website on The South Caucasus Project

NO CLASS OCTOBER 11—due to Columbus Day holiday the previous day

10/18 **Somatic Skills in Conflict Resolution**
Body Awareness in Reflective Practice
Guest Speaker: Stephen Kotev, mediator

SECOND REFLECTION PAPER DUE.

*** Readings:**

Linden, Paul (2003) Reach Out: Body Awareness Training for Peacemaking, CCMS Publications, Columbus. This text is available in PDF format as a free download from

<http://being-in-movement.com/reach-out>

Please come to class in comfortable clothing since you will be moving around and participating in multiple exercises. Please bring a towel.

10/25 **Communication**
Negotiation
Culture, values, and power

Readings:

Hocker & Wilmot, "Power: the structure of conflict (e-reserves)

Fisher, Ury, & Patton Getting to Yes, Ch. 1

Mayer, chapters 5, 6, and 7

11/01 **Third Party Roles-Mediation**
Third Party Roles inside/outsider; formal/informal
Process & roles: definitions and choices
The neutrality quandary

Readings:

Bush & Folger, "The Mediation Movement" (e-reserves)

Rifkin, et al, "Toward a New Discourse for Mediation" (e-reserves)

Mayer, Chap. 8, 9. 10

Moore, "Twelve Stages of Mediator's Moves" (e-reserves)

11/08 **Facilitation and dialogue : group exercise**
Extended Role play

Readings: Prepare for extended role play by reviewing roles and facilitation guidance distributed in class

11/15 **Advocacy, Activism, and Nonviolent Action**

THIRD REFLECTION PAPER DUE.

Readings:

Ackerman & Duvall, *A Force More Powerful*, Ch. 14 & Conclusion
Laue & Cormick, *The Ethics of Intervention in Community Disputes*
Review Mayer, Ch. 7

11/22 **Ethics, Best Practices, and Integration**

Learning cells team presentation prep

Readings:

Mayer, ch 11
Slim, *Dealing with Moral Dilemmas*

11/29 **Learning Cells presentations**

****Videotaped Role-plays due***

12/06 **Learning Cells presentations (continued)**

Class wrap-up
Written exam distributed

12/13 **Final Exam Due by 10 AM**
