

**CONF 625: Engaging Conflict**  
**Section 002: Building Mutual Understanding after the 2016 US Election**

School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution  
George Mason University  
Spring 2017

**Class Meeting Times**

7:20- 10:00 pm

Mondays January 23- May 1, 2017

No Class during Spring Break Monday March 13.

No Class during Reading Day Monday May 8.

**Class Meeting Location**

Arlington Campus – Founders Hall, Room 308.

**Instructor**

Dr. Susan Allen

[sallen29@gm.edu](mailto:sallen29@gm.edu) (E-mail is the preferred contact method.)

703 993-3653 (office phone)

Office hours by appointment.

Metropolitan Building, Room 5108A

**Introduction**

Prerequisite: CONF 600, and acceptance in the graduate certificate program or graduate program in Conflict Analysis and Resolution, or permission of instructor. **Success in this course requires competence in the course objectives of CONF 600. In addition, it is highly desirable that students have completed CONF 657 Facilitation Skills, or have otherwise developed significant facilitation skills.**

This course will provide students an experiential opportunity for engagement in a variety of forms with real world conflict and to consider social science theories in the context of conflict analysis and resolution work. Each Engaging Conflict course provides students the opportunity to engage in research and practice activities, choosing the appropriate modalities for the conflict they are engaging with. This particular section of the course will utilize action research to:

- Build understanding across the various post-election divides in our GMU and local community
  - Utilize in-depth interviews and other forms of research to learn about the post-election divides and opportunities for healing in our community
  - Utilize various forms of dialogue and other engagement to build mutual understanding across the post-election divides.

- Appropriately document the research and practice.

Substantial course activities will take place in group work outside of class. Class participants will be required to work as a team with their group to implement a conflict resolution intervention (e.g. a dialogue) outside of class time.

### **Engaging Conflict Course Learning Objectives**

- Students learn to identify and select appropriate practices(s) (as advocates, activists, scholars, analysts and conflict resolution practitioners)
- Students learn to develop research and/or practice projects and skills necessary to implement them
- Students learn to assess the intervention and its resolution and outcomes
- Students are able to identify and develop strategies to address ethical dilemmas encountered while engaging with conflicts

### **Course Expectations**

1. Consistent attendance. Barring exceptional circumstances, you are expected to attend all class meetings for the full time scheduled.
2. Effective preparation. Class discussions and activities depend on your preparation.
3. Appropriate participation. Engage actively in the course: thorough reading and preparation for class, group projects, discussions, class exercises, class dialogues, and out-of-class activities.
4. Course completion. In keeping with departmental policy, incomplete grades will be given only in cases of personal or immediate family illness and unforeseen emergencies. It is important to complete all work on schedule, but if there are extenuating circumstances such as sickness, family issues or religious observances that conflict with our schedule, please let me know as soon as possible and I will try to accommodate your needs.

### **Academic Integrity and Collaboration**

George Mason University has an Honor Code with guidelines regarding academic integrity and which is designed, “to promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community” ([www.gmu.edu/catalog/policies](http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/policies)). The Honor Code lays out strict penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

Plagiarism is a serious offense, and all written work for this course should include proper citations in a standard citation CONF 625 Section 002 Syl Spring 2017.docx format (MLA, APA, etc.). *If you are unsure about how to cite a direct quotation or concept from course or outside readings, then ask for help.* “I wasn’t sure how to cite a source,

so I left out the reference,” is not an acceptable defense for plagiarism. Copies of common style manuals are available at the GMU library reference desk.

For individual class assignments, you may discuss your ideas with others or ask for feedback; however, you are responsible for making certain that there is no question that the work you hand in is your own. You may not submit papers or presentations from other courses to fulfill assignments for this class.

For group class assignments, the names of all participants should appear on the work. While it's fine for groups to divide project work among team members, the final product that's submitted should represent a single, conceptually-linked piece of work. With rare exception, each student working in a group is given the same grade for an assignment. *If a group is having trouble with a member not fulfilling their work obligation, then the group needs to bring the problem to the instructor's attention immediately.*

### **Disability Accommodations**

If you have a documented learning disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with Office of Disability Services (SUB I, Rm. 4205; 993-2474; <http://ods.gmu.edu>) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) talk with me to discuss your accommodation needs.

### **Diversity**

This course embraces the Mason Diversity Statement (<http://ctfe.gmu.edu/professional-development/mason-diversity-statement/>): George Mason University promotes a living and learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty and staff. Through its curriculum, programs, policies, procedures, services and resources, Mason strives to maintain a quality environment for work, study and personal growth.

An emphasis upon diversity and inclusion throughout the campus community is essential to achieve these goals. Diversity is broadly defined to include such characteristics as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Diversity also entails different viewpoints, philosophies, and perspectives. Attention to these aspects of diversity will help promote a culture of inclusion and belonging, and an environment where diverse opinions, backgrounds and practices have the opportunity to be voiced, heard and respected.

The reflection of Mason's commitment to diversity and inclusion goes beyond policies and procedures to focus on behavior at the individual, group and organizational level. The implementation of this commitment to diversity and inclusion is found in all settings, including individual work units and groups, student organizations and groups, and classroom settings; it is also found with the delivery of services and activities, including,

but not limited to, curriculum, teaching, events, advising, research, service, and community outreach.

Acknowledging that the attainment of diversity and inclusion are dynamic and continuous processes, and that the larger societal setting has an evolving socio-cultural understanding of diversity and inclusion, Mason seeks to continuously improve its environment. To this end, the University promotes continuous monitoring and self-assessment regarding diversity. The aim is to incorporate diversity and inclusion within the philosophies and actions of the individual, group and organization, and to make improvements as needed.

### **E-mail**

University policies require that course communications utilize the Mason e-mail system, rather than other personal e-mails. Please write to your instructors at their Mason e-mails, and please use your Mason e-mail for this class.

### **Student Support Services**

Please be aware of student support resources available at Mason. These are summarized online here: <http://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus/>

### **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. When possible, please make these arrangements prior to the assignment due date.

### **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 handed in on the assigned due date.

### **Grading Scale**

98-100 A+  
93-97 A  
90-92 A-  
88-89 B+  
83-87 B  
80-82 B-  
78-79 C+  
73-77 C

70-72 C-  
60-69 D  
0-59 F

## **Assignments and Evaluation**

### **Individual Participation 15 %**

Because much of this course involves in-class, experiential learning, participation is a significant 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 group work, class discussions, and exercises. Significant group work will take place outside of class meeting times.

### **Individual Preparatory Research Report 25 %**

Students will be responsible for the submission of a preparatory Research Report, due February 13. These 7-10 page papers will synthesize the insights gained by the class research on the post-election divides and possible ways to build mutual understanding. Each paper will assess post-election divides in our community, identify appropriate methods for building mutual understanding across those divides, and propose a specific initiative to engage in this conflict with a conflict resolution initiative in March and April. *A passing grade on the Research Report is required to move on to the next phases of the course.* Any class participant receiving a grade of C or lower will be required to re-do the paper.

While data for these research reports will be shared amongst the class as a team, the papers will be individually written. Papers will be e-mailed to the full class, providing an opportunity for course participants to learn about each other's approaches and to consider areas of shared interest when forming course teams for engaging in conflict resolution interventions in March and April.

### **Learning Groups 50 %**

Students will partner with 5 of their peers in learning groups and work on three assignments together.

*Project Proposal (15%):* Each group will write a project proposal setting forth their rationale and plans for engaging in the post-election divide. Proposals will cover all the main areas covered by funding proposals, and will be very specific in laying out their intervention plans, risk analysis, ethics, etc. Proposals should be 17-20 pages. Proposals are due on March 6. A passing grade on the group project proposal is required prior to moving on to the implementation phase of the project. Any group receiving a C or lower

on the project proposal will be required to re-write it and receive a passing grade prior to commencing implementation of the project.

*Project Implementation (20%) and Project Report (15%):* Each group will implement their approved method of engaging in the post-election conflict during the second half of March and during April. Groups will report to class weekly with progress updates on their project implementation. A final group project report due May 1 will reflect on the project implementation, assessing the intervention and, to the extent possible, any progress towards resolution or outcomes. The group paper will identify and consider strategies to address ethical dilemmas encountered while implementing the intervention. The group paper will be presented in class on May 1, and also will be turned in as a hard copy and an e-mailed copy on May 1.

### **Individual Final Written Exam**

**10 %**

The written exam for this course will be an open-book, take home essay exam of 5-7 pages in length. The essay will be an individually written reflection paper, documenting the course participant's individual learning from the experience of preparing for intervention, designing an intervention, and implementing an intervention. The final exam is due by e-mail to [sallen29@gmu.edu](mailto:sallen29@gmu.edu) by 12 noon on Monday May 8, 2017.

### **Course Materials**

Bens, Ingrid. *Facilitating with Ease: Core Skills for Facilitators, Team Leaders and Members, Mentors, Managers, Consultants, and Trainers*. (Third Edition). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2013.

Carstarphen, Nike and Ilana Shapiro. 1997. *Facilitating between gang members and police*. *Negotiation Journal*, Spring #2.

Church, Cheyanne and Mark Rogers. *Designing for Results: Integrating Monitoring & Evaluation in Conflict Transformation Programmes*. Washington, DC: Search for Common Ground, 2005. [http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/ilr/ilt\\_manualpage.html](http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/ilr/ilt_manualpage.html)

Distinguishing Debate from Dialogue: A Table  
<http://www.whatisessential.org/sites/default/files/DebateDialogue.pdf>

Elliot, Pearson d'Estree, and Kaufman. "Evaluation as a Tool for Reflection," *Beyond Intractability*. [http://www2.beyondintractability.org/m/Evaluation\\_Reflection.jsp](http://www2.beyondintractability.org/m/Evaluation_Reflection.jsp)

Herzig, Maggie and Laura Chasin. *Fostering Dialogue Across Divides: A Nuts and Bolts Guide from the Public Conversations Project*. Watertown, MA: Public Conversations Project, 2006.

<http://www.intergroupresources.com/rc/Fostering%20Dialogue%20Across%20Divides.pdf>

Laue, James and Gerald Cormick. 1978. The Ethics of Intervention in Community Disputes. In *Ethics of Social Intervention*. Gordon Bermant et al. eds. London Hemisphere Publishing Corporation.

Lewin, K. (1946) Action research and minority problems. *J Soc. Issues* 2(4): 34-46.

Nan, Susan Allen. "Consciousness in Culture-Based Conflict Resolution" *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, Vol 28, No. 3, Spring 2011, p. 239-262.

Parker, Priya Nayaran. "Sustained Dialogue: How Students are Changing their own Racial Climate." *About Campus*. March-April 2006.  
<http://sustaineddialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/About-Campus.pdf>

Reaching Across the Red/Blue Divide. By Essential Partners. November 2016.  
[http://www.whatisessential.org/sites/default/files/Red%20Blue%20Divide%20Final%20-%20updated\\_1.pdf](http://www.whatisessential.org/sites/default/files/Red%20Blue%20Divide%20Final%20-%20updated_1.pdf)

Ross, Marc Howard. "Action Evaluation in the Theory and Practice of Conflict Resolution." <http://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/pcs/Ross81PCS.htm>

Rothman, Jay. "Action Evaluation" in *Beyond Intractability*. October 2003.  
<http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/action-evaluation>

Schirch, L. & Campt, D. *The little book of dialogue for difficult subjects*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2007.

*Additional timely readings may be assigned throughout the semester.*

### **Additional Resources:**

National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation: Resource Center <http://ncdd.org/rc/>

### **Course Meetings**

#### **Monday, January 23, 2017**

Introductions, Overview, Planning Research  
Interview Techniques  
Development of interview guide for preliminary research  
Introduction to Action Research  
Experiential in-class dialogue

No preparation for first class.

**Monday, January 30, 2017**

Review of facilitation skills

Reports on preliminary research, plans for further research

Identifying areas of background research necessary to inform intervention design

Forms of dialogue

Experiential in-class dialogue

Preparation:

Bens, Ingrid. *Facilitating with Ease: Core Skills for Facilitators, Team Leaders and Members, Mentors, Managers, Consultants, and Trainers*. (Third Edition). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2013.

Make arrangements for an interview, as discussed in the first class.

**Monday, February 6, 2017**

Sharing all data collected in preliminary research

Sharing analysis

Consideration of intervention options

Forms of dialogue continued

Preparation:

Following the interview guide developed in the first class, complete one interview with someone who has different political views than your own. Prepare a transcript of the interview. (Alternatively, if your interviewee refuses audio recording, take very detailed notes and type these instead of a transcript.) Bring your interview transcript to class and e-mail to all class members prior to class. Keep interviewee and all identifying information confidential. Only your name should identify who interviewed the person.

Schirch, L. & Campt, D. *The little book of dialogue for difficult subjects*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2007.

Herzig, Maggie and Laura Chasin. *Fostering Dialogue Across Divides: A Nuts and Bolts Guide from the Public Conversations Project*. Watertown, MA: Public Conversations Project, 2006.

<http://www.intergroupresources.com/rc/Fostering%20Dialogue%20Across%20Divides.pdf>

Any additional preliminary research, as agreed in class. (Various class members will be assigned separate research tasks, such as reaching out to groups that may want to participate in our dialogues, groups that may partner with us, potential dialogue venues, etc.)



**Monday, February 13, 2017**

Individual Research Report due at the beginning of class

E-mail research report to all class members and [sallen29@gmu.edu](mailto:sallen29@gmu.edu), AND bring a hard copy.

Formation of teams for group projects

Preparation:

Complete individual research report.

Reaching Across the Red/Blue Divide.

[http://www.whatisessential.org/sites/default/files/Red%20Blue%20Divide%20Final%20-%20updated\\_1.pdf](http://www.whatisessential.org/sites/default/files/Red%20Blue%20Divide%20Final%20-%20updated_1.pdf)

**Monday, February 20, 2017**

Return of individual research reports

Elements of project proposals

Teamwork to prepare project proposal

Forms of dialogue continued

Preparation:

Read sample project proposals distributed the previous week.

Parker, Priya Nayaran. "Sustained Dialogue: How Students are Changing their own Racial Climate." *About Campus*. March-April 2006.

<http://sustaineddialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/About-Campus.pdf>

Distinguishing Debate from Dialogue: A Table

<http://www.whatisessential.org/sites/default/files/DebateDialogue.pdf>

**Monday, February 27, 2017**

Continued teamwork to prepare project proposal

Ethics in interventions

Action research in conflict resolution interventions

Preparation:

Laue, James and Gerald Cormick. 1978. The Ethics of Intervention in Community Disputes. In *Ethics of Social Intervention*. Gordon Bermant et al. eds. London Hemisphere Publishing Corporation.

Lewin, K. (1946) Action research and minority problems. *J Soc. Issues* 2(4): 34-46.

Continued work on group project proposal.

**Monday, March 6, 2017**

Group Project Proposals due at the beginning of class. Bring one hard copy, and e-mail a copy to [sallen29@gmu.edu](mailto:sallen29@gmu.edu) and to the whole class.

Peer Review of group project proposals

Mid-Term evaluation—reflecting on the class and ways to improve it

Introduction to program evaluation

Preparation:

Complete group project proposals and prepare to present them with 10-minute proposal presentations.

SPRING BREAK- No Class Monday March 13, 2017

**Monday, March 20, 2017**

Return of group project proposals.

Begin group project implementation.

Program evaluation continued

Preparation:

Elliot, Pearson d'Estree, and Kaufman. "Evaluation as a Tool for Reflection," *Beyond Intractability*. [http://www2.beyondintractability.org/m/Evaluation\\_Reflection.jsp](http://www2.beyondintractability.org/m/Evaluation_Reflection.jsp)

Church, Cheyanne and Mark Rogers. *Designing for Results: Integrating Monitoring & Evaluation in Conflict Transformation Programmes*. Washington, DC: Search for Common Ground, 2005. [http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/ilr/ilt\\_manualpage.html](http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/ilr/ilt_manualpage.html)  
Required reading is only chapters 1, 4 and 8. Others are recommended additional material.

**Monday, March 27, 2017**

Group project implementation

Updates on group project implementation

Preparation:

Continue project implementation.

Nan, Susan Allen. "Consciousness in Culture-Based Conflict Resolution" *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, Vol 28, No. 3, Spring 2011, p. 239-262.

**Monday, April 3, 2017**

Group project implementation

Identifying and addressing ethical dilemmas encountered during project implementation

Preparation:

Continue project implementation.

Carstarphen, Nike and Ilana Shapiro. 1997. *Facilitating between gang members and police. Negotiation Journal*, Spring #2.

**Monday, April 10, 2017**

Group project implementation

Action evaluation

Preparation:

Continue group project implementation.

Conduct action evaluation of group project.

Jay Rothman. "Action Evaluation" in *Beyond Intractability*. October 2003.

<http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/action-evaluation>

Marc Howard Ross. "Action Evaluation in the Theory and Practice of Conflict Resolution." <http://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/pcs/Ross81PCS.htm>

**Monday, April 17, 2017**

Group project implementation

Updates on group project implementation

Preparation:

Continue group project implementation.

Document group project action research.

**Monday, April 24, 2017**

Group project implementation

Action research: learning from practice

Preparation:

Complete group project implementation

Complete action research documentation to share with class.

**Monday, May 1, 2017**

Last Class

Final Group Project Report due by the beginning of class. Bring one hard copy. Send the project report by e-mail to [sallen29@gmu.edu](mailto:sallen29@gmu.edu) and to all class members.

Class conclusions

Preparation:

Complete final group project report.

Prepare final group project presentation.

**Monday, May 8, 2017**

Final Exam Due: Monday, May 8, 2017 at 12 noon by e-mail to [sallen29@gmu.edu](mailto:sallen29@gmu.edu).

No Class.