

CONF 657: FACILITATION SKILLS

**Spring Semester 2011
Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution
George Mason University
Founder's Hall Room 318**

Instructor Contact Information

Dr. Jarle Crocker
Telephone: 703-343-0431
E-mail: jpcrocker@aol.com
Office hours by appointment

Class Schedule

March 26, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm
April 2, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm
April 16 and 17, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm
April 30 and May 1, 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Course Purpose:

To provide certificate students with the knowledge, skills, abilities, values and behaviors to:

- Assess group dynamics, development, and goals
- Plan and prepare for dialogue activities, and
- Manage interactions and groups to accomplish goals.

Course Objectives:

- Participants will learn the principles and ethics of participatory decision-making.
- Participants will learn how to assess group dynamics, development, and goals.
- Participants will learn how to and will practice drafting agendas, ground rules, role definitions, and logistics.
- Participants will learn about a range of techniques to manage interaction and will practice applying tools, tactics, and strategies in exercises.
- Participants will also practice tools, tactics, and strategies in work or community settings and reflect upon their experiences.

Prerequisites or co-requisites:

CONF 501 or CONF 502, and acceptance in the graduate certificate program in Conflict Analysis and Resolution, or permission of instructor.

Course Expectations:

The class will meet during four intensive weekend sessions throughout the semester. The activities in these sessions will vary between small lectures, group activities, and skills-building exercises. In between weekend sessions, students will actively engage in weekly online discussions on current class themes and complete assignments as described.

- Consistent attendance. You must attend all weekends for the full time scheduled, barring unforeseen and exceptional circumstances.
- Effective preparation. Class will involve discussions and activities that depend on your preparation.
- Course completion. In keeping with departmental policy, I will only give incomplete grades in cases of personal or immediate family illness.
- Integrity I expect integrity of every student in all academic work.

If you have not done so, please familiarize yourself with the Honor Code at <http://www.gmu.edu/departments/unilife/honorcode.html>

Class Policies and Procedures:

Students are responsible for completing individual and group assignments on time. You will be penalized the equivalent of a full letter grade for each day the assignment is late.

I will send some class assignments and readings by e-mail and students are responsible for keeping up-to-date with these.

University Resources and Assistance:

Writing Center: The Writing Center provides tutors who can help you develop ideas and revise papers at no charge. It can sometimes accommodate walk-ins, but generally, it is best to call for an appointment. The services of the Writing Center are also available online.

Location: ARL212 (in the main SPP suite)

Contact: (703) 993-3762 <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

Disability Resource Center: The Disability Resource Center assists students with learning or physical conditions affecting learning. Students with learning differences that require special conditions for exams or other writing assignments should provide documentation provided by the Disability Resource Center. Please see one of the instructors the first week of classes.

Location: SUB I, Room 222 **Contact:** 703-993-2474 www.gmu.edu/student/drc/

Grading:

On-Line and In-Class Discussions (30%)

This class is interactive and elicitive. Attendance and participation in class activities is important. It will account for thirty percent of your grade. I expect all students to participate actively in discussions in this class. Your participation in on-line discussions will be due by 5:00 pm on the Friday before each class weekend.

Skills Development (30%)

Participants will practice facilitation skills at each class. We will practice tactics, strategies, and skills through exercises, scenarios, and case studies. I will evaluate your efforts each weekend based on the level of effort, use of appropriate tool, tactic or strategy and how you integrate class materials into the exercises. These practice assignments counts for thirty percent of your grade. I will provide written feedback to

you three times during the semester via email (after the 4/2, 4/16-17, and 4/30-5/1 classes).

Facilitation Portfolio (40%)

Students must develop and hand in a facilitation portfolio. The portfolio must include:

1. Two facilitation training exercises either developed by the student or adapted from secondary sources that will include the materials necessary for the exercise (roles for role plays, handouts, etc), one to two pages of instructions for how to run the exercise, and instructions for debriefing the exercise (**due 4/17 and 5/1**).

And **one** of the following three options (**due May 6**):

- *Class Participant Facilitated Meeting*: Plan, prepare for, and facilitate an activity or meeting. The facilitated meeting must last at least two hours. The portfolio must include context or design information, invitations and logistics information, ground rules, agendas, meeting materials, and your reflection on why you chose those particular tools, tactics or strategies. The portfolio must include your description of and analysis of the outcome of the meeting. You must use materials from your readings to support your design, facilitation, and reflections;
- *Observation/Interviews/Reflections*: Find a facilitator and interview them for 1 hour about why they use particular tools, tactics, or strategies. Then observe them facilitate. Using class experiences and readings reflect on the choice of tools, tactics, and strategies. Reflect on what other tools, tactics or strategies would have accomplished similar objectives. The portfolio must include context or design information, interview questions and interview notes, meeting agendas and materials, observation notes and reflections. The portfolio must include your description of and analysis of the outcomes of the meeting. You must use materials from class readings to support your interview, observation, and reflection; or
- *Case Study Facilitation Design*: I will provide you with a sample case based on a real event (designing a facilitated strategic planning session for 100 participants) that you will use as the basis for responding to the questions issues listed in the first option.

Required Texts (additional readings will be posted on Blackboard)

Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making, Sam Kaner with Lenny Lind, Catherine Toldi, Sarah Fisk, and Duane Berger. Jossey Bass, 2007.

The Skilled Facilitator: A Comprehensive Resource for Consultants, Facilitators, Managers, Trainers, and Coaches by Roger Schwarz Jossey-Bass, 2002

The IAF Handbook of Group Facilitation, Sandy Schuman (Ed) Jossey Bass, 2005.

March 26, 10:00 am-4:00 pm

Topics:

- Collaborative process goals, designs, and frameworks
- Principles of participatory decision-making
- Self Assessments and individual development plan
- Clarifying your role, commitments, authority, and contracting
- Accountability and ethics

No readings for the first class

April 2, 10:00-4:00

Topics:

- Assess group dynamics, development, and goals
- Planning and preparing for meetings
- Developing agendas

Before Saturday, please read:

- Pages 271-295 of Roger Schwarz *The Skilled Facilitator*
- pages vii-37 of Sam Kaner *Facilitators Guide to Participatory Decision Making*
- pages 1-62 of Roger Schwarz *The Skilled Facilitator: Comprehensive Resource*
(or pages 1-66 of *Practical Wisdom for Developing Effective Groups*)

April 16 Topics:

- How much structure?
- Ground rules
- Participation formats
- Managing information-group memory and information sharing
- Managing presentations and reports
- Choosing Tools

Before Saturday Please Read:

Pages 7-20 “The Big Picture: Creating an Ongoing Client Relationship” Chapter One, Nadine Bell and Susan Nurre in *The IAF Handbook of Group Facilitation*, Jossey Bass, 2005.

Pages 35-53 “Facilitation: Beyond Methods” Chapter Three, David Wayne in *The IAF Handbook of Group Facilitation*, Jossey Bass, 2005.

Pages 96-135 of Roger Schwarz *The Skilled Facilitator*

April 17, 10:00am -4:00 pm

Topics:

- Facilitative listening skills

Reading Assignments

Pages 41-55, Sam Kaner *Facilitators Guide to Participatory Decision Making*

April 30 and May 1, 10:00-4:00

Topics:

- Facilitating Open discussions (who goes when, stacking, managing divergent perspectives, focusing the discussion, tracking different lines of thought, silence)
- Guiding a Flow
- Problem solving
- Reaching and Documenting Outcomes
- Accountability and ethics

Reading Assignments:

Pages 67-99, 122-145 in Roger Schwarz, The Skilled Facilitator

Pages 55-84, 139-245 in Sam Kaner Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision Making