

Conflict Resolution Techniques & Practices CONF 300 Section 001 – Fall 2015

Class Time: Tuesday & Thursday 3:00 to 4:15 pm

Location: Robinson Hall B205

Instructor: Patricia Maulden, Ph.D.
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Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description & Objectives

Welcome! This course explores a variety of theories and frameworks for analyzing and responding to conflict. Students will move from conflict analysis to exploring techniques, process models, and third-party roles to constructively intervene in conflict. Because this class emphasizes building conflict resolution skills and abilities, a significant portion of the class will be experiential, engaging in simulated conflict scenarios and subsequent reflection.

The class will also introduce students to unique forms of practice and allow time for students to use analytic frames to assess a conflict and then design a resolution process based upon context dynamics, theories of change, and critical analysis. Interpersonal, small group, organizational, community, and international conflict will all 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 environments and with diverse stakeholder groups.

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 have a set of skills and techniques to help parties in conflict have constructive conversations in order to 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.

During the course class participants will:

- * Develop an appreciation of the dynamic relationship between conflict analysis and resolution.
- * Gain an understanding of reflective practice in both personal and professional terms.
- * Explore specific practices and techniques practices
- * Consider aspects of culture, gender, power, and ethics as they affect both conflict as well as resolution attempts among diverse stakeholder groups.
- * Practice various conflict resolution techniques.
- * Increase critical thinking abilities.

Course Expectations

1. **Consistent attendance.** Barring exceptional circumstances, you will be expected to attend class on a regular basis.
2. **Effective preparation.** Class involves discussion and activities that depend on advance preparation. All assigned readings should be completed by Tuesday PRIOR to class.
3. **Classroom etiquette.** Please come to class on time and prepared. Keep cell phones out of sight; use laptops only for note taking and in-course work. Open discussion and dialogue are class goals but please be mindful of the sensitivities of others.
4. **Course completion.** In keeping with departmental policy, incomplete grades will be given only in cases of illness, either personal or in an immediate family member. Class assignments that are submitted late can be penalized. If a student has a documented emergency, special arrangements can be made with the instructor.
5. **Paper format.** Papers should be typed, double-spaced, have 1” margins, and use 12-point font. The pages should be numbered and stapled together. The first page of the paper should have the title. Edit your papers carefully as spelling and grammatical errors will lower your overall score. Use section headers throughout your paper to give clarity and organization to your argument.

Course Materials

Required Texts

Bolton, Robert. 1986. *People Skills: How to Assert Yourself, Listen to Others, and Resolve Conflicts*. New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc.

Costantino, Cathy A. and Christina Sickles Merchant. 1996. *Designing Conflict Management Systems: A Guide to Creating Productive and Healthy Organizations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Trujillo, Mary Adams, S. Y. Bowland, et al. editors. 2008. *Re-Centering Culture and Knowledge in Conflict Resolution Practice*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

Articles (on Blackboard)

Assessment

Mason, Simon and Sandra Rychard. 2005. *Using Conflict Analysis Tools*. Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Conflict Prevention and Transformation Division (COPRET).

Theories of Change

CARE International UK. ND. *Peacebuilding with Impact: Defining Theories of Change*.

Church, Cheyanne and Mark Rogers. 2011. Chapter 2, Understanding Change. *In Designing for Results: Integrating Monitoring and Evaluation in Conflict Transformation Activities*. Search for Common Ground.

Lederach, John Paul, Reina Neufeldt, and Hal Culbertson. 2007. *Reflective Peacebuilding: A Planning, Monitoring, and Learning Toolkit*. Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame. <http://kroc.nd.edu>.

Critical Conflict Resolution

Hansen, Toran. 2008. Critical Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice. *In Conflict Resolution Quarterly*. Vol. 25, No. 5(403-427).

Jones, Wendell and Scott H. Hughes. 2003. Complexity Conflict Resolution, and How the Mind Works. *In Conflict Resolution Quarterly*. Vol. 20, No. 4(485-494).

Learning & Ethical Reflection

Cheldelin, Sandra, Wallace Warfield, and January Makumba. 2004. Reflections on Reflective Practice. *In Research Frontiers in Conflict Analysis and Resolution*, George Mason University, 64-78.

Eilertsen, Soren with Kellan London. 2005. *Modes of Organizational Learning*. Kollner Group. <http://www.kollnergroupp.com>.

Warfield, Wallace. 2002. Is This the Right Thing to Do? A Practical Framework for Ethical Dilemmas. *In A Handbook of International Peacebuilding: Into the Eye of the Storm*. John Paul Lederach and Janice Moomaw Jenner, eds. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Practice

Kraybill, Ron. 2004. *Facilitation Skills for Interpersonal Transformation*. Bergdorf Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management. <http://www.berghof-handbook.net>.

Owen, Harrison. 1993. *Open Space Technology: A User's Guide*. [Open Space Technology](http://www.openspace-technology.com).

Owen, Harrison. ND. *Open Space Technology: An Introduction*. [Open Space Technology](http://www.openspace-technology.com).

Search for Common Ground. 2003. *A Conversation About Conflict: Facilitator's Guide*. <https://www.sfcg.org>.

UNDP. 2009. *Why Dialogue Matters for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding*. <http://www.undp.org>

World Café Resource Guide. <http://theworldcafe.com>

University Resources and Assistance

- * If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703.993.2474. All accommodations must be arranged through that office.
- * Students who celebrate religious holidays that are not reflected in the syllabus please let the instructor know as soon as possible for accommodation.
- * The Writing Center is available to all Mason students and offers online and individual consultations as well as workshops and mini-courses. Writers at all levels can benefit. You can find them on the Fairfax Campus in Robinson Hall 114A, JC Library 134L, and Enterprise Hall Room 076. For an appointment email wcenter@gmu.edu - to see a full menu of services go online at: <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>.
- * The S-CAR library liaison is Mary Oberlies (moberlie@gmu.edu). Do not hesitate to contact her with specific questions about holdings and research in these areas or whom to contact for materials still in the Fenwick Library on the Fairfax Campus.
- * Academic integrity: You are responsible for knowing, understanding, and following Mason's Honor Code, found at <http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/> - [Anchor12](#). Be sure that all work submitted is your own and that you use and cite sources appropriately.

All written assignments MUST be run through SafeAssign on the student Blackboard page and corrected for any possible plagiarism issues.

Assignments

<u>Participation</u>	<u>20%</u>
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. Students are expected to complete their reading assignments on time and to participate in class discussions and exercises. In addition, students will read the practice documents in the Blackboard folder as requested throughout the course.	
<u>Katrina Simulation</u>	<u>10%</u>
Students will watch 2 videos about Hurricane Katrina and prepare their role.	
<u>Essays</u>	<u>40%</u>
Students will be responsible for the submission of 2 (20 points each) analytic essays each between 4 (complete) and 5 pages in length.	
<u>Final Project</u>	<u>30%</u>
Students will design an intervention process for a specific conflict.	

Course Agenda

Week 1: September 1 & 3

Overview of course
Self in conflict & resolution
Assessment
Readings: Mason & Rychard

Week 2: September 8 & 10

Critical conflict resolution
Contextualizing conflict and practice
Readings: Toran
Jones & Hughes

Week 3: September 15 & 17

Communication & learning
Readings: Bolton Chapters 1 & 2
Eilertsen & London

Week 4: September 22 & 24

Listening & understanding
Readings: Bolton Chapters 3, 4, & 5
Trujillo Chapters 1 & 2
Essay Prompt 1 Distributed

Week 5: September 29 & October 1

Reflection, race, & gender
Readings: Cheldelin et al.
Trujillo Chapters 4 & 5
Bolton Chapters 6 & 7

Week 6: October 6 & October 8

Reflection & change
Readings: Care
Church & Rogers
Lederach
Search for Common Ground Facilitator's Guide
Essay I Due in Class

Week 7: October 13 (No Class) & October 15

Power, justice, & culture
Readings: Trujillo Chapters 8, 9, & 13

Week 8: October 20 & October 22

Culture, reconciliation, & justice
Readings: Trujillo Chapters 15, 19, 21, & 22
Essay Prompt 2 Distributed

Week 9: October 27 & 29

Conflict, systems, & organizations

Readings: Costantino & Merchant Chapters 1 through 4

Week 10: November 3 & November 5

Systems, design, & resolution

Readings: Constantino & Merchant Chapters 5 through 9

Essay 2 Due in Class

Week 11: November 10 & November 12

Resistance, culture, & change

Readings: Constantino & Merchant Chapters 12 & 13

Week 12: November 17 & November 19

Hurricane Katrina Simulation

Week 13: November 24 & November 26 (No Class)

Interests, needs, & culture

Readings: Trujillo Chapters 15 & 19

Week 14: December 1 & December 3

Reconciliation, justice, & conflict resolution

Readings: Trujillo Chapters 21 & 22

Week 15: December 8 & December 10

Course review

Student evaluations

Final exam due December 15 (pmaulden@gmu.edu)

Points Accumulated	Letter Grade
94-100	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-
77-79	C+
74-76	C
70-73	C-
60-69	D
0-59	F