

CONF 657: Facilitation Skills

Dr. Mazur

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Office Hours by Appointment

School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution

George Mason University

Arlington, VA

Spring Semester 2015 3 credits

Founders Hall Room 478

Class Schedule:

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| Saturday | March 21 | 9:00 am - 4:00 pm |
| Saturday | March 28 | 9:00 am - 4:00 pm |
| Saturday | April 4 | 9:00 am - 4:00 pm |
| Saturday | April 11 | 9:00 am - 4:00 pm |
| Saturday | April 25 | 9:00 am - 4:00 pm |
| Sunday | April 26 | 9:00 am - 4:00 pm |

Course Purpose:

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

Design facilitations

Conduct facilitations

Evaluate facilitation skills

Learn theories about group work

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 and practice how to draft agendas, solicit ground rules, clarify role definitions, manage time, and handle overall logistics.

Participants will learn a range of techniques to manage interactions and will practice applying tools, tactics, and strategies in class.

Participants will 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 on 6 specific weekend days during March and April (see specific dates above). The activities in these sessions will include a mixture of brief lectures, group activities, skill-building exercises, and discussion.

Related expectations of students include:

Consistent attendance. You must attend all 6 class sessions for the entire scheduled time, barring unforeseen and exceptional circumstances.

Effective preparation. Class will involve discussions and activities that require advance reading and other forms of preparation. Everyone will find class more productive, enjoyable, and worthwhile if each of us comes prepared. I am committed to doing so, and ask that you commit to this as well. There is a fair amount of reading involved. Please pace yourself, and feel free to read ahead.

Courtesy and civility. I seek to foster a positive classroom environment, characterized by shared enjoyment of the process of learning. I ask that we all treat each other with respect, listen carefully to each other's views, and seek to learn from one another's experience and insights.

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. You can expect the same of me. All George Mason University students have agreed to abide by the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee for review. 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 assignments on time. I may send some class assignments and readings electronically 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. Location: ARL212 (in the main SPP suite). Contact: (703) 993-3762. The services of the Writing Center are also available on-line. <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>.

Disability Resource Center: The Disability Resource Center assists students with conditions affecting learning. Students with learning conditions that require special circumstances for exams or other writing assignments should provide documentation provided by the Disability Resource Center. Please contact the instructor to discuss your needs well in advance of the first class if possible. Location: SUB I, Room 222. Contact: 703-993-2474 or www.gmu.edu/student/drc/.

Grading: Your grade in this class will be determined as follows:

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|----------------------|-----|
| Class Participation: | 40% |
| Journal: | 25% |
| Final Facilitation: | 35% |

Class Participation/Skills Development (40%)

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. You will be asked to facilitate learning and discussions around several readings. And, you will be asked to give constructive feedback to others who facilitate. The success of the class depends largely on your active participation.

Journal (25%)

You will have an ongoing writing assignment, i.e., keeping a journal of your reactions to class, the readings, and observations of facilitators throughout this time frame. This should include your analysis of what you are learning and experiencing. You should reflect on the facilitations in class; the readings; your own facilitations including goals, preparation, and self-assessment, and at least three facilitations that you observe outside of class (e.g. worship, meetings, classes, etc.). This should be at least ten pages in length and will be due on May 1.

Final Facilitation (35%)

Students will design a facilitation of their choosing to be conducted during the final class sessions. As soon as possible, but no later than April 4, please submit a short statement to me describing your final facilitation project. Please construct a facilitation experience for the class using the tools we have studied. This can be a dialogue that you set up, a difficult meeting with role-players, or teaching a conflict resolution or decision-making tool or game. I have many suggestions and materials, so please don't hesitate to discuss this with me. You will be expected to design something that will demonstrate your facilitation skills and techniques and contribute to the students' facilitation toolbox.

Each presentation should be no more than 40 minutes. Time management will be a major factor in completing this assignment successfully. The student should draft an agenda and create and bring the necessary materials. I will prepare a short evaluation. Please schedule a time with me to discuss your topic: 202.646.4094 or cmazur1@gmu.edu.

Required Texts (additional readings may 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.
Selected sections of the IAF Handbook of Group Facilitation, Sandy Schuman (Ed). Jossey Bass, 2005.

March 21, Saturday 9:00 am-4:00 pm

Topics:

Collaborative process goals, designs, and frameworks
Principles of participatory decision-making

Values and group dynamics
Obtaining and giving feedback
Clarifying your role, commitments, authority, and contracting

Readings: Before coming to class, please read:

The Syllabus and skim

Pages vii-37 in Sam Kaner's Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision Making.

Please review the chapters 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 12, and 14 in the IAF Handbook of Group Facilitation so you can select one to teach the next week (March 28) for 20 minutes with a class partner.

March 28, Saturday 9:00-4:00

Topics:

Assess group dynamics, development, and goals

Planning and preparing for meetings

Developing agendas

Accountability and ethics

Readings: Before coming to class, please read:

Pages 41-87 in Sam Kaner's Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision Making.

Chapter 9 of Ingrid Bens, Facilitating with Ease! Core Skills for Facilitators, Team Leaders and Members, Managers, Consultants, and Trainers.

Come prepared to teach and facilitate discussion around your selected chapter of the IAF Handbook of Group Facilitation.

April 4 Saturday 9:00-4:00

Topics:

How much structure?

Ground rules

Participation formats

Managing information-group memory and information sharing

Managing presentations and reports

Choosing tools

Facilitative listening skills

Readings: Before coming to class, please read:

Pages 89-133 in Sam Kaner's Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision Making.

April 11 Saturday 9:00-4:00

Evaluating facilitators

Facilitating difficult people and stressful situations

Handling objections

Readings: Before coming to class, please read:

Pages 135-187 in Sam Kaner's Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision Making.

April 25 and April 26, Saturday and Sunday 9:00-4:00

Topics:

Facilitating open discussions (who goes when, stacking, managing divergent perspectives, focusing the discussion, tracking different lines of thought, silence)

Guiding the flow, Problem solving, Reaching and documenting outcomes

Readings: Before coming to class, please read:
Pages 203-241 in Sam Kaner's *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision Making*.

Bibliography

- Bens, Ingrid. *Facilitating with Ease! Core Skills for Facilitators, Team Leaders and Members, Managers, Consultants, and Trainers*. 3rd ed. Jossey-Bass, 2012. Print.
- Cloke, Kenneth, and Joan Goldsmith. *Resolving Personal and Organizational Conflict: Stories of Transformation and Forgiveness*. 1st ed. Jossey-Bass, 2000. Print.
- Cohen, Raymond. *Negotiating Across Cultures*. United States Institute of Peace, 2011. Print.
- Gudykunst, William B. *Communicating With Strangers*. 4th ed. McGraw Hill Higher Education, 2002. Print.
- Kaner, Sam. *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making*. 2nd ed. Jossey-Bass, 2007. Print.
- Maxwell, Kelly E., Biren Ratnesh Nagda, and Monita C. Thompson. *Facilitating Intergroup Dialogues: Bridging Differences, Catalyzing Change*. Stylus Publishing, 2011. Print.
- Saunders, Harold H. *A Public Peace Process: Sustained Dialogue to Transform Racial and Ethnic Conflicts*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2001. Print.
- Schoem, David, and Sylvia Hurtado, eds. *Intergroup Dialogue: Deliberative Democracy in School, College, Community, and Workplace*. U Michigan, 2001. Print.
- Schuman, Sandy, ed. *The IAF Handbook of Group Facilitation: Best Practices from the Leading Organization in Facilitation*. Jossey-Bass, 2005. Print.
- Schwarz, Roger M. *The Skilled Facilitator: A Comprehensive Resource for Consultants, Facilitators, Managers, Trainers, and Coaches*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002. Print.