

Leadership in Conflict Analysis and Resolution
CONF 659 Spring 2008

Class Time: Saturday and Sunday, 10:00-4:00
February 16 & 17, April 5 and 6, May 3 and 4

Location: Arlington Campus – Original Building 269

Instructor: Robert C. Fisher, JD
703-765-0999, rcf@fisher.cs.com

Office Hours: By appointment

COURSE PURPOSE: This course focuses on the important role of leadership in conflict situations. This is a highly interactive course addressing three dimensions of leadership: knowledge, skills, and conduct. This course will expand the students' understanding of how effective leaders engage in collaboration and conflict resolution. Special emphasis will be devoted to both the practice and theory of leadership and our ability to shape and transform our lives and the lives of others.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: Students who successfully complete the requirements of the course will:

- Develop a broad understanding of the nature and scope of a collaborative leadership process;
- Explore and apply leadership skills and concepts in the interpersonal, organizational, community, and international contexts;
- Develop and articulate a personal philosophy of leadership; and
- Integrate reflective practice with personal leadership development.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS:

1. *Consistent attendance.* You are expected to attend all weekends for the full time scheduled, barring exceptional circumstances.
2. *Effective preparation.* Class will involve discussions and activities that depend on your preparation.
3. *Course completion.* In keeping with departmental policy, incomplete grades will be given only in cases of personal or immediate family illness.
4. *Integrity* is expected of every student in all academic work.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

1. *Participation.*

15 percent

Active class participation is expected and lively discussion is anticipated! We will use a variety of methods to provide experiential learning opportunities and add to the potential modes of discovery and application. In addition to small group work and in-class dialogue, there will be several discussion topics posted to the course online discussion board in WebCT. Your postings and responses are due on the discussion board by the due date specified, and they will be graded only as completed or not. Participation is a significant

aspect of the course and thus absences will mean loss of points and the possibility of a lower final grade.

2. *Book Review*

15 percent

Readings for each class will be assigned. Each student also will read and report (both in writing and orally in class) on one book selected from a bibliography provided and tailored to your individual leadership interests. Specific guidelines for the reading assignment will be provided. Due: April 5th.

3. *Leadership Interview*

15 percent

As a means to deepen your understanding of the leadership role, each student will interview a leader. Specific guidelines for conducting the interview will be provided. Due: April 5th.

4. *Journaling and Leadership Learning Agenda*

20 percent

Reflective writing is one way to keep a personal record of thoughts and the learning that occurs in an experiential learning environment. Students are expected to keep a journal and reflect on predetermined topics or questions as assigned. Students also are expected to meet (in-person or by phone) with me once or twice during the semester to talk about their reflective writing. Time also may be allotted at the end of each class session for students to complete a brief reflective writing piece. In addition, during the last class session, students will develop a personal learning plan describing goals for developing and improving their leadership skills. Journals and learning plans will not be handed in, and will be graded as incomplete, completed passing, or completed superior/excellent. Due: May 3rd.

5. *Group Project – Leadership in Action*

35 percent

Leadership is a group activity. Small groups will be formed during the first weekend to explore the leadership aspects of a particular conflict. The groups will work together to apply the concepts and skills presented in the course. Specific guidelines will be provided. Each student will take an active role and it will be necessary to commit some time outside regularly scheduled class sessions to complete the project. If time permits the groups also may meet during class. Each group will present its project to the class with supporting materials made available online. Due: May 3rd.

Grades will reflect the level of effort, depth of thought, and quality of final products.

READINGS:

Texts

Nancy S. Huber, *Leading from Within: Developing Personal Direction*, (Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Co., 1998).

David Chrislip and Carl E. Larson, *Collaborative Leadership: How Citizens And Civic Leaders Can Make A Difference*, (Jossey-Bass Publishing Co., 1994).

Mark Gerzon, *Leading Through Conflict: How Successful Leaders Transform Differences Into Opportunities*, (Harvard Business School Press, 2006).

Other Readings

You will be directed to several short articles and resources.

CLASS AGENDA

Weekend One: February 16 & 17

Introduction

- Class member introductions, interests
- Course overview and organization
- Premise and assumptions
- Views of leadership

Overview Of Leadership Theory and Models

Leadership Skills – Managing People and Relationships

- Effective communication, constructive feedback, delegating, goal setting, empowering, etc.

Protocols

- Develop interview questions (*see* Huber, pp. 10-11)
- Determine book review format
- Organize group projects

Reading for Weekend One:

Huber, Chapters 1-3

Gerzon, Part I, Part II – pp. 59-165

Chrislip and Larson, Part One

Assignments:

1. Journaling -- Huber, Questions for Reflection and Journaling, p. 10, #s 1 and 2; and p. 26, #s 1 and 2.
2. Online assignment, post to class discussion board on WebCT. Due: No later than February 14, in order to discuss in class:
 - Introduce yourself, including which ICAR program you are in;
 - Discuss your views of whether leaders are born or made; and
 - Identify a public dispute or controversy for potential study in the group project – Leadership in Action – described above.

Weekend Two: April 5 & 6

Leadership Skills – Collaborating in Teams and Partnerships

Collaborative problem solving, creativity, diversity, negotiation, team building, visioning, etc.

Leadership Interviews

Book Reviews

Reading for Class:

Huber, Chapters 4-7

Gerzon, remainder of Part II

Chrislip and Larson, Part Two

Assignments:

1. Journaling -- Huber, Questions for Reflection and Journaling, p. 39, #2; p. 62, #5; and p. 75, #1.
2. Interview presentation (*in-class*). Email to instructor directly or post on WebCT.
3. Book review presentation (*in-class*). Email to instructor directly or post on WebCT.
4. Online assignment, due date will be discussed during weekend one. Post to class discussion board.

Weekend Three: April 21 & 22

Leadership Skills – Collaborating in Teams and Partnerships (Continued)

Group Presentations

Learning Agendas

Summary and Integration

Course Evaluations

Reading for Class:

Huber, Chapters 8-9

Gerzon, Conclusion and Appendix

Chrislip and Larson, Part Three

Additional reading – short articles to be assigned

Assignments:

1. Journaling -- Huber, Questions for Reflection and Journaling, pp. 101-102 #s 1 and 2; and p. 112 #s 1 and 2. (*Bring journal to class*).
2. Group project presentation (*in-class*). Supporting materials posted to WebCT. Email to instructor directly.
3. Learning agenda (*completed in class*).
4. Online assignment, due date will be discussed during weekend two. Post to class discussion board.

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 academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.
- 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 Arlington Campus in the Original Building, Room 334C, by phone at 703 993-4491 or online at: <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>
- 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 sources appropriately. I strongly recommend that you review requirements regarding use and citation of sources prior to submitting your final work.