

**Conflict Resolution Techniques and Practice  
Conf 300, Fall 2007  
Loudoun Campus  
21641 Ridgetop Circle Room 219  
Thursdays, 4:30-7:10 PM**

**INSTRUCTOR**

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Office hours: By appointment

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Building on CONF 101, this course further explores theories and frameworks for analyzing conflict. Students will also 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 knowledge and skills, a significant portion of the class will be experiential-based. Much of the class will involve engagement in simulated conflict scenarios and subsequent reflection.

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 conflicts.

At the end of the course, students will have learned theories and techniques for assessing conflicts; they will be able to make informed summaries of conflict intervention options; and they will have a set of skills and techniques to help parties in conflict have constructive conversations and move conflicts toward resolution.

While students will learn and practice several conflict resolution process models and roles, the goal is not to fully train them as mediators or facilitators, although this course will be an excellent introduction should students decide to pursue further training or credentialing in such areas.

**COURSE MATERIALS**

Required texts (available in the GMU bookstore):

- Schrock-Shenk, C. (Ed.). (2000). *Mediation and facilitation training manual: Foundations and skills for constructive conflict transformation* (4th ed.): Mennonite Conciliation Service.
- Wilmot, W., & Hocker, J. (2005). *Interpersonal conflict* (7th ed.). Boston: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

Additional required readings will be passed out in class or distributed via the course web page.

## **ACADEMIC POLICIES AND INFORMATION**

### **Academic Honesty 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/apolicies](http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies)). 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 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.*

### **Late Work**

If a student has a documented emergency, arrangements should be made with the instructor to submit work late. Unexcused late submissions will be penalized.

### **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 stapled together. Papers

should have a title, include your name and the instructor's name, and consistently follow a single standard academic citation format (MLA, APA, etc.).

## **STUDENT RESOURCES**

### **GMU Writing Center**

"The Writing Center seeks to foster a writing climate on campus and beyond by offering free writing support to George Mason students, faculty, staff and alumni. No matter what your writing abilities are, writing specialists can help you develop the skills you need to become a successful writer....Free services include: One-on-one 45 minute sessions with a writing specialist; online writing lab; one-on-one sessions with an ESL specialist; workshops on such topics as documenting sources, grammar and punctuation; writing handouts on a variety of subjects; a library of handbooks and writing manuals; [and an] online chat with a tutor about papers submitted to the Online Writing Lab"

(<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>).

### **Disability Support Services**

Any student with documented learning disabilities or other conditions that may affect academic performance should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with the Office of Disability Support Services (993-2474) to determine the possible accommodations you might need; and 2) contact her or his instructor to discuss reasonable accommodations.

"George Mason University is committed to providing appropriate services and accommodations that allow self-identified students with disabilities to access programs and activities at the university as stated in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

To achieve this goal, the university maintains and supports the Disability Resource Center Office which is responsible for assuring that students receive the services and accommodations to which they are entitled. The professional staff of the Disability Resource Center Office coordinate services for students with disabilities, determine reasonable services and accommodations on the basis of disability, and act as a liaison between students and faculty/administration on concerns relating to services and accommodations" (<http://www.gmu.edu/departments/advising/dss.html>).

### **Library Services**

The ICAR liaison at Fenwick Library is Marissa Cachero Stone ([mcachero@gmu.edu](mailto:mcachero@gmu.edu)). Marissa can help you locate journal articles and other helpful outside reading for the course. She also maintains a list of CR-related library resources and a conflict resolution blog, both accessible through her website (<http://mason.gmu.edu/~mcachero/>).

## **Assignments and Evaluation**

### **Class Participation** **40%**

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 fully in class discussions and exercises.

### **Reflection Papers** **40%**

Five times during the course you will write a short (3-5 page) reflection paper. These papers will ask you to reflect on how the course discussions, exercises, and readings apply to one of two conflict situations: 1) situations you are familiar with; or 2) current events. You will choose the situation. Through these papers, you should demonstrate your availability to apply theories and techniques studied in the course to real-world conflict situations.

### **Final Exam** **20%**

The written exam for this course will be an open-book, take home essay exam. Your written response should demonstrate your ability to assess one or more conflict situations, plan for their intervention, explain your intervention plan, and evaluate conflict resolution theories and techniques. The exam will be distributed at the close of class on November 29<sup>th</sup> and will be due to the instructor at the beginning of class on December 6<sup>th</sup>.

## Curriculum

Date	Topics, Readings, and Assignments
<b>Aug 30</b>	<b>Class 1</b> Course overview: What is conflict? How do you know it when you see it? What do you do about it? Why? How do you feel about it?
<b>Sep 6</b>	<b>Class 2</b> Focus: Outcomes – Conflict termination, conflict management, and The Good Readings: MFTM chapter 1; IC chapter 10 Due: Reflection paper on your conflict orientation
<b>Sep 13</b>	<b>Class 3</b> Focus: Square One – Conflict assessment and analysis Readings: MFTM chapter 2; IC chapter 2 Due: Reflection paper on conflict termination
<b>Sep 20</b>	<b>Class 4</b> Focus: Square One – Conflict assessment and analysis Readings: IC chapters 3, 4
<b>Sep 27</b>	<b>Class 5</b> Focus: Driving with a Roadmap – Conflict intervention plans Readings: IC chapters 5, 6 Due: Reflection paper on conflict assessment and analysis
<b>Oct 4</b>	<b>Class 6</b> Focus: Driving with a Roadmap – Conflict intervention plans Readings: MFTM chapter 5, part 2
<b>Oct 11</b>	<b>Class 7</b> Focus: Bringing it all together: Conflict assessments, intervention plans, and outcomes Due: Reflection paper on conflict intervention plans

Date	Topics, Readings, and Assignments
<b>Oct 18</b>	<b>Class 8</b> Focus: Intervening in Conflicts – Negotiation Readings: IC chapter 3
<b>Oct 25</b>	<b>Class 9</b> Focus: Intervening in Conflicts – Negotiation Readings: IC chapter 7 Due: Reflection paper on negotiation
<b>Nov 1</b>	<b>Class 10</b> Focus: Intervening in Conflicts – Mediation Readings: MFTM chapters 3, 4
<b>Nov 8</b>	<b>Class 11</b> Focus: Intervening in Conflicts – Mediation Readings: IC chapter 9
<b>Nov 15</b>	<b>Class 12</b> Focus: Intervening in Conflicts – Facilitation Readings: Instructor packet
<b>Nov 22</b>	<b>Thanksgiving Break – No Class</b>
<b>Nov 29</b>	<b>Class 13</b> Focus: Intervening in Conflicts – Facilitation Readings: MFTM chapter 5, part 1
<b>Dec 6</b>	<b>Class 14</b> Focus: Reflect, recall, revise! Due: Final exam