

## **CONF 300, Conflict Resolution Techniques and Practice**

Tuesdays/Thursdays, 1:30-2:45

Robinson Hall, Room 243A

Instructor, Stacy Stryjewski; email:sstryje1@gmu.edu; (703) 993-4165

Office hours by appointment

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course further explores a variety of theories and frameworks for analyzing conflict. Students will move from conflict analysis to exploring techniques, process models, and third-party roles to constructively intervene in conflict. Emphasis will be placed on what it means to be a “reflective practitioner” and how knowledge is generated in the field.

Because this class emphasizes building conflict resolution skills and abilities, a significant portion of the class will be experiential-based. Much of the class will involve engaging in simulated conflict scenarios and subsequent reflection and critical analysis. The class will also introduce students to conflict resolution practitioners, giving students the opportunity to meet, question, and learn from professionals who are active in the work being studied.

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.). Mediation and facilitation training manual: Foundations and skills for constructive conflict transformation (4th ed.): Mennonite Conciliation Service, 2000.

Wilmot, W., & Hocker, J. Interpersonal Conflict (7th ed.). Boston: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2005. (NOTE: Used copies and previous editions (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>) are acceptable to use for this course. Do what you need to keep the cost down!

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

## Assignments and Evaluation

---

### Participation

15 %

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 in class discussions and exercises.

### Reflection Papers

20 %

Twice during the semester, there will be prompts given for a short (3-5 page) reflection paper. These reflection papers should draw heavily on course discussions, in-class exercises, and course readings. You will often be sharing these papers with your peers. Assignments will usually be given out on Thursdays and due at the beginning of class on Tuesdays.

### Midterm Exam

20%

Students will have an option for the midterm based on your own preferences/interests. You may choose to:

A. Conduct an assessment of a written conflict scenario (to be distributed two weeks in advance of due date) using assessment tools discussed in class and presented in the readings. The goal is to critically analyze the scenario and explain why you chose your approach and then offer suggestions for further intervention. (4-6 pages, double spaced)

B. Interview a practitioner in the field and present the information you gather. Interview questions are a key component to this exercise and should be part of your review (sample questions will be distributed). The purpose of this is to give students the opportunity to explore potential career options. Your paper should reflect what you learned from the interview and personal reflections about whether or not you agree with the approach, might feel comfortable in this capacity as a third party, and assess your own style (values, beliefs, approaches) as it may fit/not fit with this role. And explore "Why?" (4-6 pages, double spaced)

\*\*Note: We will discuss proper interview etiquette and legalities to ensure appropriate recording, questions, discussion and disclosure.

### Group Work: Videotaped Role-Play & Reflection

20 %

Students will partner with three to five of their peers and work on a video taped project together. The group will construct a conflict role-play, videotape themselves running through the role-play, and then write up individual evaluations of the conflict resolution skills displayed (or not) by team members. Your reflection paper, 2-3 pages, is due by May 5<sup>th</sup> along with one copy per group of your video taped role play (on CD format). We will discuss equipment needs, logistics early in the term.

### Final Exam

25 %

The written exam for this course will be an open-book, take home essay exam. The exam will be distributed May 5th and will be due May 11th.

\*\*\*\*\*Cell phones and Computers: As a courtesy to all, please keep cell phones OFF during class. Use of computers is not permitted as this course is experiential, requires full participation and class slides are provided for notes. Thanks for your cooperation.

---

## Class Topics & Readings

---

- Date**    **Topics & Readings**
- 1/22    **Class Introduction**
- 1/24    **Approaches to Conflict & Role Play**  
Approaches & personal orientation toward conflict  
Dual concern model (Killman)  
*Readings:* Chapter 1, Hocker & Wilmot  
Personal Style Conflict Inventory, Kraybill in MFTM, pp. 64-67
- 1/29    **Class will meet at Climate Change Session (Dewberry Hall, JC) facilitated by CAR. (Note takers needed—extra credit provided!)**
- 1/31    **Conceptions of Conflict**  
RP1    Conflict management, resolution, and transformation  
Practice as both science & art – starting to think about “reflective practice”  
*Readings:* Lederach's "Conflict Transformation" in MFTM, p. 52  
"Conceptions of Peace" in MFTM, pp. 84-85  
Chapter 2 “Perspectives on Conflict,” Hocker & Wilmot
- 2/5    **Introduction to Third Party Roles (Overview)**  
RP1    *Readings:* Folger, Joseph P., Marshall Scott Poole and Randall K. Stutman,  
Due    “Third-Party Intervention” Working Through Conflict. New York: Longman, Inc., 2001. 283-318. (e-reserve)
- 2/7    **Frameworks for Analyzing Conflict**  
Levels of analysis; SPITCEROW; positions, interests, values, worldviews, & needs; Moore’s conflict typology & satisfaction triangle  
*Readings:* Chapter 6, “Conflict Assessment” in Hocker & Wilmot
- 2/12    **Frameworks cont. (exercise)**  
*Readings:* Lederach, John Paul. “Structure” and “Process.” Building Peace. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997. 37-71 (e-reserve)
- 2/14    **Negotiation, Power, Building Trust (exercise)**  
Fisher, Ury, & Patton’s “The Negotiation Paradigm” in MFTM, p. 160  
Chapter 8 “Negotiating for Mutual Gain”, in Hocker & Wilmot  
“Negotiation” in MFTM, pp. 146-148
- 2/19    **Power, Emotions, Listening in Intervention**  
Intervening to help others hear and be heard, build empathy and trust.  
*Readings:* “Feelings” thru “Emotional Dynamics” in MFTM, pp.53-55  
Speaking material in MFTM, pp. 76-77  
LeBaron's "The Open Question" thru “Anger” in MFTM, pp. 137-142  
Kolb, Deborah and Associates (Eds.) “Albie Davis: Community Mediation.” When Talk Works. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994. 258-277. (e-reserve)

- 2/21 **Power, Emotions, Listening cont. (exercise)**  
Types of power; Power & context  
*Readings:* Chapter 4, “Power” in Hocker & Wilmot  
“Power and Conflict” thru “Three Domains of Power” in MTFM, p. 78-83.
- 2/26 **Mediation: Approaches and Models**  
*Reading:* Ch. 4, “Interpersonal Mediation: One Model” in MFTM, pp. 157-204  
**Assessment Option Scenario Distributed, Midterms Due 3/6**
- 2/28 **Mediation Role Play and Discussion**  
*Readings:* Bush, Robert A. Baruch and Joseph P. Folger, “The Mediation Movement: Four Divergent Views.” The Promise of Mediation. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994. 15-32. (e-reserve)
- 3/4 **Culture, Gender, Identity (social constructions of meaning & difference)**  
*Readings:* “The Cultural Dimension” (part 2 of Ch. 2) in MFTM, pp. 99-130.  
Avery's "Cultural Differences that Affect Conflict Expression" in MFTM, p. 144
- 3/6 **Third party roles: inside/outsider; formal/informal: the neutrality quandary**  
Exam Due!  
*Readings:* Kolb, Deborah and Associates (Eds.) “Linda Colburn: On the Spot Mediation in a Public Housing Project.” When Talk Works. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994. 395-425. (e-reserve)
- 3-11, 1-13 SPRING BREAK—ENJOY!**
- 3/18 **Dialogue**  
*Readings:* Schoem, et. al., “Intergroup Dialogue: Democracy at Work in Theory and Practice” (e-reserve) In-class viewing excerpts of “The Color of Fear”
- 3/20 **Narrative and Metaphor**  
*Readings:* Monk et. al. (Eds.) “The Theoretical Story of Narrative Therapy.” Narrative Therapy in Practice. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997. (e-reserve) **In-class viewing of taped facilitation.**
- 3/25 **Facilitation: Group dynamics and introduction to group facilitation**  
*Reading:* Ch.5, “Groups: Process, Conflict, Systemic Change” in MFTM, pp. 205-270.
- 3/27 **Facilitation cont. (practice)**  
RP2  
*Reading:* Dukes, E. Franklin, Marina A. Piscalish and John B. Stephens. “Common Practice with Ground Rules: How They Fail Us and We Fail Them.” Reaching for Higher Ground. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000. 39-57 (e-reserve)
- 4/1 **Facilitation (Practice)**  
RP2 Due  
Schwarz, Roger. “Group Facilitation and the Role of the Facilitator.” The Skilled Facilitator: Practical Wisdom for Developing Effective Groups. San Francisco:

Jossey-Bass, 1994. 3-18. (e-reserve)

- 4/3 **Mediation revisited (compare to facilitation)/Practice**  
*Reading:* Bush, Robert A. Baruch and Joseph P. Folger, "Solving Problems: The Limits of Current Mediation Practice." The Promise of Mediation. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994. 55-77. (e-reserve)
- 4/8 **Reflective Practice/30 minutes to meet with video group...start thinking about your role play.** *Reading:* Lederach, John Paul, Reina Neufeldt and Hal Culbertson. "Reflective Practitioners." Reflective Peacebuilding. Notre Dame, IN: The Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, 2007. 3-6. (Handout)
- 4/10 **More Practice**  
*Reading:* Rifkin, Janet, Jonathan Millen, and Sara Cobb, "Toward a New Discourse for Mediation: A Critique of Neutrality." Mediation Quarterly. 9(2):151-164, 1991. (e-reserve)
- 4/15 **In-class viewing of taped facilitation**
- 4/17 **Problem Solving Workshops**  
*Readings:* Kolb, Deborah and Associates (Eds.) "Jimmy Carter: The Power of Moral Suasion in International Mediation." When Talk Works. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994. 375-393. (e-reserve)
- 4/22 **Appreciative Inquiry and Future Search**  
*Reading:* Holman, Peggy and Tom Devane (Eds.) "Future Search: Acting on Common Ground in Organizations and Communities." The Change Handbook: Group Methods for Shaping the Future. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1999. (e-reserve)
- 4/24 **Restorative Justice**
- 4/29 **Class Time for Video Tape Role Play**  
*Readings:* Optional: Chapter 9, "Third Party Intervention" Wilmot & Hocker
- 5/1 **Ethics**  
*Readings:* Chapter 6, "Standards & Ethics for Practice" in MF<sup>TM</sup>, pp. 277-300.
- 5/5 **Wrap Up, Video Tapes Due (on CD format) and individual papers due  
Final Exams Distributed**
- 5/7 **No class—reading day**
- 5/11 **Final Exams Due**

## **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**

Class assignments that are submitted late will be penalized by one letter grade for each day they are late. If a student has a documented emergency, special arrangements can be made with the instructor.

### **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 can help you locate journal articles and other helpful outside reading for the course. They also maintain a list of CR-related library resources and a conflict resolution blog.