

CONFLICT IN ORGANIZATIONS (CONF 731)

Course Syllabus – Spring, 2008

Instructor: Geoff Drucker

Overview

This seminar-style class explores the types of conflict that arise in organizations, the sources of these conflicts, and the methods available for resolving organizational conflicts constructively. You will have the opportunity not only to read and discuss organizational conflict, but also to develop and practice the skills for resolving these conflicts.

Course Requirements and Grading

Grading is based on merit. To earn a high grade, you must perform high-level work. If you minimally comply with course requirements will receive a passing grade and no more. If you fail to comply with course requirements, you will fail.

Class Participation (20%):

As much of the learning comes from classroom presentations, discussions, and exercises, attendance and active participation are critical. You will be graded on how well you prepare for classroom exercises and discussions and whether you are an active participant. You are expected to complete reading assignments in advance and show up ready, able, and willing to fully engage in class.

Research Presentations (50%)

You will write and present two papers on your choice of weekly topics. Each paper must be 5-8 pages and is due one week before your presentation. The class will provide constructive criticism of the paper during your presentation, which you may incorporate into your final draft. The final draft is due one week after your presentation. Grades are based primarily on the quality of the writing but I will also consider the quality of your oral presentation.

Fieldwork (30%)

You will complete at least one project with three components: (1) Conducting an interview, analysis, intervention, or training related to an organizational conflict; (2) writing a 5-8 page paper explaining the relationship between your project and theories discussed in class and/or assigned readings; and (3) presenting your

findings in class. As with the research presentations, you will submit your paper at least one week prior to the presentation. During the presentation, the class will provide constructive criticism which you may incorporate into a final draft which is due one week after the presentation.

Grades are based primarily on the quality of the writing, but I also will consider the quality of your oral presentation.

Required Reading

Bingham, L. (2003). *Mediation at Work: Transforming Workplace Conflict at the United States Postal Service*. Washington, D.C.: IBM Center for Business in Government. This report can be downloaded for free from:
http://www.businessofgovernment.org/pdfs/Bingham_Report.pdf

Block, P. (2000) *Flawless Consulting: a guide to getting your expertise used*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Costantino, C. & Merchant, C.S. (1995). *Designing Conflict Management Systems: A guide to creating productive and healthy organizations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Logistics

- Location

Arlington Original Building (ARLO), Room 246, George Mason University.

- Time

Wednesdays from 7:20 – 10:00 p.m. See class schedule for dates.

- Contacting the Instructor

Phone: 703-582-9971

Email: GDrucker@McCammonGroup.com

I will make myself available to meet with you before or after class with sufficient advance notice. I will do my best to address questions and concerns at other times as well. I *welcome* feedback and suggestions at any time about how the course could be improved. Please feel free to speak up either during or between classes.

- Missing Classes / Extensions

If you anticipate missing a deadline for submitting a written assignment, you must request an extension of time in advance. I will grant an extension only for illness or extraordinary events.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week	Date	Topics	Assignment
1	January 23	Nature of Organizations	
2	January 30	From Practice to Theory	read Mediation at Work
3	February 6	Culture	read student papers in advance
4	February 13	Group dynamics	read student papers in advance
5	February 20	Communication	read student papers in advance
6	February 27	Decision-making	read student papers in advance
7	March 5	Power and leadership	read student papers in advance
8	March 19	Diversity	read student papers in advance
9	March 26	Change	read student papers in advance
10	April 2	System Design	read Designing Conflict Management Systems
11	April 9	Intervention	read Flawless Consulting
12	April 16	Fieldwork presentations	read student papers in advance
13	April 23	Fieldwork presentations	read student papers in advance
14	April 30	Fieldwork presentations	read student papers in advance