

**Conflict Resolution Techniques & Practice**  
**CONF 300 (Section 002) – Fall 2009**

Class Time: Wednesday, 4:30 pm – 7:10 pm    Location: Robinson A 106

**INSTRUCTOR**

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Office Hours: After class or by appointment

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course explores a variety of theories and frameworks for analyzing conflict at the interpersonal, small group, organizational, community and international levels. It builds on what students have learned in CONF 101 by exploring techniques, process models, and third-party roles to constructively intervene in conflict at all layers of society, including protracted social environments.

The course will be experiential-based, with the core emphasis on building conflict resolution skills and abilities. Students will be introduced to different techniques and forms of practice that enhances their hands-on experience. Much of the class will involve engaging in simulated conflict scenarios and subsequent reflection. On occasion students will get the opportunity to meet with active conflict resolution practitioners.

At the end of the course, students will have learned theories and techniques for assessing conflicts, be able to make informed summaries of conflict intervention options, and have a set of skills and techniques to help parties in conflict have constructive conversations in order to move conflicts toward resolution. While students will learn and practice several conflict resolution process models and roles, the goal is not to be fully trained 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 OBJECTIVES**

During the course class participants will: Q

- Develop an appreciation of the dynamic relationship between conflict analysis and resolution.
- Gain an understanding of reflective practice in both personal and professional terms.
- Explore specific practices and techniques as they build upon conflict analysis and move conflict toward resolution. Q
- Consider aspects of culture, gender, power, and ethics as they affect both conflict as well as resolution attempts. Q
- Practice various conflict resolution techniques. Q
- Increase critical thinking abilities.

### Course Expectations

1. *Consistent attendance.* Barring exceptional circumstances, you will be expected to attend class on a regular basis.
2. *Effective preparation.* Class involves discussion and activities that depend on advance preparation. All assigned readings should be completed PRIOR to class.
3. *Classroom etiquette.* Please come to class on time and prepared. Turn off cell phones, pagers, beepers, etc. Remain in class unless you have an emergency. Allow others and yourself to learn by refraining from side conversations, passing notes, playing video games, instant messaging, reading e-mail, browsing websites, etc. Open discussion and dialogue are class goals but please be mindful of the sensitivities of others.
4. *Course completion.* In keeping with departmental policy, incomplete grades will be given only in cases of personal illness, or illness of an immediate family member. Class assignments that are submitted late can be penalized by one point for each day thereafter. If a student has a documented emergency, special arrangements can be made with the instructor.
5. *Paper format.* Papers should be typed, double-spaced, have 1” margins, and use Times New Roman 12-point font. The pages should be numbered and stapled together. Headers should include only the course number (CONF 300), your name, and paper title. The first page of the paper should have the title. Edit your papers carefully as spelling and grammatical errors will lower your overall score.

### **COURSE MATERIALS**

#### Required Texts

1. Mayer, Bernard, ed. 2000. The Dynamics of Conflict Resolution. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.
2. Docherty, Jayne S. 2005. The Little Book of Strategic Negotiation. Intercourse, PA: Good Books.
3. Kraybill, Ron and Evelyn Wright. 2006. Cool Tools for Hot Topics: Group Tools to Facilitate Meetings When Things are Hot. Intercourse, PA: Good Books.
4. Schirch, Lisa and David Camp. 2007. The Little Book of Dialogue for Difficult Subjects. Intercourse, PA: Good Books.

#### **Electronic and Other Materials**

Course materials including syllabus, PowerPoint slides, reflection paper questions, and other relevant documents will be made available in class. Additional readings will be placed on 2-hour reserve at the Johnson Library and on e-reserve. The password to access e-reserve materials will be given in class.

### **Additional Readings available on e-reserve**

- Alexander, Nadja. 2008. The Mediation Metamodel: Understanding Practice. In Conflict Resolution Quarterly. Volume 26, No. 1: 97-123. (E-Journals)
- Beale, Ruby L. and David Schoem. 2001. The Content/Process Balance in Intergroup Dialogue. In Intergroup Dialogue: Deliberative Democracy in School, College, Community, and Workplace. Schoem, David and Sylvia Hurtado, eds. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press. (E-Reserve)
- Cheldelin, Sandra, Wallace Warfield, & January Makamba. 2004. Reflections on Reflective Practice. ICAR: George Mason University. (E-Reserve)
- Fisher, Simon et al. 2000. Tools for Conflict Analysis. In Working with Conflict: Skills and Strategies for Action. New York: Zed Books. (E-Reserve)
- Kravis, Jeffrey. 2006. Memories. In Improvisational Negotiation: A Mediator's Story. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. (E-Reserve)
- Kravis, Jeffrey. 2006. A 'Hat's-On' Approach. In Improvisational Negotiation: A Mediator's Story. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. (E-Reserve)
- Laue, James and Gerald Cormick. 1978. The Ethics of Intervention in Community Disputes. In Ethics of Social Intervention. Gordon Bermant et al. eds. London Hemisphere Publishing Corporation. (E-Reserve)
- Maiese, Michelle. 2006. Engaging the Emotions in Conflict Intervention. In Conflict Resolution Quarterly. Volume 24, No. 2: 187-195. (E-Journals)
- Marsick, Victoria and Alfonso Sauquet. 2000. Learning Through Reflection. In The Handbook of Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice. Morton Deutsch et al. eds. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. (E-Reserve)
- Mayer, Bernard S. 2004. The Conflict Specialist. In Beyond Neutrality: Confronting the Crisis in Conflict Resolution. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. (E-Reserve)
- Moser, Caroline and Fiona C. Clark, Gender, Conflict and Building Sustainable Peace: Recent Lessons from Latin America, *in* Gender and Development, Vol. 9, No. 3 (e-reserve)
- Stamato, Linda. 1992. Voice, Place, and Process: Research on Gender, Negotiation, and Conflict Resolution. In Mediation Quarterly. Volume 9, No. 4:375-386. (E-Journals)
- Warfield, Wallace. 2002. Is it the Right Thing to Do? In A Handbook of International Peacebuilding. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. (E-Reserve)
- Watkins, Jane Magruder and Bernard J. Mohr. 2001. Appreciative Inquiry as a Process. In Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer. (E-Reserve)
- Wassara, Samson, March 2007. Traditional Mechanisms of conflict resolution in Southern Sudan, Berghof Foundation for Peace Support, (e-Reserve)

## **ACADEMIC POLICIES & 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/policies](http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/policies)). 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, Chicago Style, 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 or online at <http://library.duke.edu/research/citing/workscited/>.

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 is fine for groups to divide project work among team members, the final product 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 his/her work obligation, then the group needs to bring the problem to the instructor’s attention immediately.

## **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 CAR library liaison is Melissa Johnson (703.993.2212). Do not hesitate to contact her with specific questions about holdings and research in these areas or whom to contact for materials still in the Fenwick Library on the Fairfax Campus.

### **Campus Maps**

From time to time, class will be held in rooms other than Innovation Hall 206. Please refer to the links below to determine where on campus classes will occur.

Links to find SUB I & II Rooms Campus Map Explorer:

<http://eagle.gmu.edu/map/fairfax.php> Student Union I & II Maps (Third Floors):

<http://www.gmu.edu/operations/facilities.htm> - FloorMaps

## **ASSIGNMENTS & EVALUATION**

### Participation 10%

Because much of this course involves in-class, experiential learning, active participation counts significantly towards your overall grade total. 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%

Students will be responsible for the submission of 2 (10 point) reflection papers, each between 4 (complete) and 5 pages in length. These papers will correspond to the course themes throughout the semester and should draw heavily from course discussions, in-class exercises, and course readings. A formal citation style should be used for these papers. The first paper is due **September 23** and the second on **October 14**.

### Practitioner Interview Summary 10%

Each student will interview a conflict resolution practitioner and write a summary of the experience. The purpose of this assignment is to give students the opportunity to discover and experience conflict resolution in practice. The interview questions should be written in advance of the interview and a copy of the interview schedule (the questions) should

accompany the summary. The interview report should be between 2 (complete) to 4 pages in length. It should include details on what preconceived ideas you had, what was learned, what your interviewee added to your understanding of conflict resolution, and how you have adjusted your attitudes towards conflict resolution as practice and potentially as a career. The summary paper is due **October 28**.

### Learning Groups

Throughout the session, students will partner with 3-4 of their peers in learning groups. Each learning group will work together on two projects as well as to summarize select readings before the class.

### Learning Group Practitioner Interview Presentations 10%

Each group will give a brief (15 minute) presentation based on the individual interviews conducted by group members that included personal reflections about what was learned. Each group member must participate in both the preparation for and the delivery of the presentation. Evaluation forms will be given to each student to be turned in the class period following the presentation. The presentation will be on **October 21** and the completed evaluation form is due on **November 11**.

### Learning Group Videotaped Role-Play 10%

Each group will write a short conflict role-play that highlights a particular intervention type relating to core ideas and skills covered in the class. The group will then videotape themselves running through the role-play. Videotaping is scheduled in the STAR Lab, Johnson Center Room 229. Each group must bring a DVC tape to the session scheduled for **November 18**. The taped role-plays will be viewed in class on **December 2**. Students who do not attend class on this day will be expected to write individual evaluation papers (2-complete-to 3 pages) detailing the conflict resolution skills displayed by team members.

### Individual Role Play Evaluation 5%

Each group member will write a 2 page evaluation of the group video role-play experience – from choosing the intervention strategy to writing the scenario to the taping experience. The paper is due on **December 9**.

### Final Written Exam 35%

The written exam for this course will be an open-book, take home essay exam, distributed in class on December 9. Answers to each of the three essay questions should be 4 (complete) to 5 pages in length. Completed exams must be returned to Robinson B, Room 365 by **Wednesday December 16** at 5:00pm in an envelope marked with instructor's name and course number. If the office is closed, drop the envelope through the mail slot in the door. Only hard copies will be accepted. **LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED ONLY IN CASES OF DOCUMENTED PERSONAL ILLNESS OR FAMILY EMERGENCY.**

## COURSE AGENDA

### Week 1 (September 2): Introduction to the Field of Conflict Resolution

Faculty and Student Introductions

Syllabus Review

Readings:

- Bernard Mayer Chapter 1: *Defining conflict*
- Bernard Mayer Chapter 2: *How people conflict*

In-Class: Conflict Styles Exercise, Schrock-Shenk, pgs 64-69

### Week 2 (September 9): Conflict Analysis and Resolution Frameworks

Readings:

- Bernard Mayer Chapter 5: *The Nature of resolution*
- Simon Fisher, *Tools for Conflict Analysis* (e-reserve)
- Michelle Maiese summarizing John Paul Lederach's "Levels of Action"  
[http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/hierarchical\\_intervention\\_levels/?nid=1338](http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/hierarchical_intervention_levels/?nid=1338),

In-Class: Conflict Mapping Exercise

\*First Reflection Paper Question Handed Out

### Week 3 (September 16): Reflective Practice & Learning

Readings:

- Cheldelin et al. article, *Reflections on Reflective Practice* (e-reserve)
- Marsick & Sauquet article, *Learning through Reflection* (e-reserve)

In-Class: Reflection Exercise

### Week 4 (September 23): Active Listening and Speaking

Readings:

- Bernard Mayer Chapter 6: *Communication*
- Jeffrey Krivis, *Memories*, (e-reserve)

In-Class: Listening/Communications Exercise

**\*First Reflection Paper Due**

### Week 5 (September 30): Culture, Gender, Power, & Identity (Guest Lecturer)

Readings:

- Bernard Mayer Chapters 3 & 4: *How do power & culture impact conflict?*
- Caroline Moser and Fiona C. Clark, *Gender, Conflict and Building Sustainable Peace: Recent Lessons from Latin America* (e-reserve)
- Jeffrey Krivis, *Hat's On*, (e-reserve)

In-Class: Na-Za Activity

**\*Second Reflection Paper Question Handed Out**

### Week 6 (October 7): Neutrality and Intervention

Readings:

- Bernard Mayer, *The Conflict Specialist* (e-reserve)
- Michelle Maiese, *What is Neutrality?*  
<http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/neutrality/?nid=6713>,
- Jim Laue & Gerald Cormick, *The Ethics of Intervention in Community Disputes*, (e-reserve)

In-Class: Intervention Activity

Week 7 (October 14): Facilitation

Readings:

- Ron Kraybill & Evelyn Wright: *The Little Book for Hot Topics (Chapters 1-4 & 6)*

In-Class: Facilitation Activity

**\*Second Reflection paper due**

**\*Practitioner Interview guidelines handed out**

Week 8 (October 21): Dialogue

Readings:

- Lisa Schirch & David Campt: *The Little Book of Dialogue for Difficult Subjects*
- Ruby Beale & David Schoem, *The Content/Process Balance in Intergroup Dialogue* (e-reserve)

In-Class: Dialogue Activity

Week 9 (October 28): Negotiation

Readings:

- Bernard Mayer Chapter 7: *Negotiation and Advocacy*
- Jayne Docherty, *The Little Book of Strategic Negotiation*

In-Class: Louisiana Stakeholders Conflict Resolution Forum simulation

**\*Practitioner Interview Summary Due**

Week 10 (November 4): Mediation

Readings:

- Bernard Mayer Chapter 9: *Mediation*
- Samson Wassara, Traditional Mechanisms of conflict resolution in Southern Sudan (e-reserve)

In-Class: Mediation Role Plays

Week 11 (November 11): Appreciative Inquiry



Readings:

- Jane Magruder Watkins & Bernard Mohr, *appreciative inquiry*, (e-reserve)

In-Class: \* **Practitioner Interview Evaluation Forms Due**

In class: Appreciative inquiry role plays

Week 12 (November 18): Role Play Recording (STAR Lab)

Please see **page 6** of this syllabus. More details will be provided in class.

Week 13 (November 25):

### **Thanksgiving**

Week 14 (December 2):

- In-class: **De-brief and reflection on role-plays.**
- **\*Role Play Tapes Due**
- **\*Individual role play reflections due**

Week 15 (December 9): Other Approaches/ course review

Readings:

- Bernard Mayer, Chapter 10: *Other Approaches to the resolution of conflict*

**\*Final Essay Questions Handed Out**

Week 16 (December 16):

**\*Final Essay due latest Wednesday December 16, 5:00 pm, at Robinson B365**

Grading Scale, Points Accumulated, Letter Grade

<b>Points Accumulated</b>	<b>Grade</b>
98-100	A+
93-97	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
74-82	B-
63-73	C
52-62	C-
41-51	D
0-40	F