

Conflict Resolution Techniques & Practice

CONF 300 Section 001 – Spring 2009

Class Time: Wednesday, 4:30 pm – 7:10 pm

Location: Enterprise 275

Instructor: Patricia Maulden, Ph.D.
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Office Hours: Tuesday 10:00 am to 11:00 am or by appointment

Course Description & Objectives

Welcome! Building on what students have learned in Conf 101, this course further explores a variety of theories and frameworks for analyzing conflict. Students will then 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 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. The class will also introduce students to unique forms of practice and on occasion, give 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 environments.

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.

During the course class participants will:

- * 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 practices as they build upon conflict analysis and move conflict toward resolution.
- * Consider aspects of culture, gender, power, and ethics as they affect both conflict as well as resolution attempts.
- * Practice various conflict resolution techniques.
- * 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 illness, either personal or in 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 Material

Course materials including syllabus, Power Point slides, reflection paper questions, and other relevant documents will be available on Blackboard. Additional readings will be placed on E-Reserve and the password will be given in class.

Additional Readings

- 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*. David Schoem 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. (Blackboard)
- Kravis, Jeffrey. 2006. Memories. In *Improvisational Negotiation: A Mediator's Story*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. (Hand-out)
- Kravis, Jeffrey. 2006. A 'Hat's-On' Approach. In *Improvisational Negotiation: A Mediator's Story*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. (Hand-out)
- 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. (Blackboard)
- 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)
- 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)

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). 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 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 their 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 ICAR 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 Enterprise 275. 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

Participation 10%

Because much of this course involves in-class, experiential learning and 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%

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. One of the formal citation styles mentioned earlier should be used for these papers.

Practitioner Interview Summary 10%

Each student will interview a practitioner in the field and write a summary of the experience. The purpose of this assignment is to give students the opportunity to discover 'real' conflict resolution through asking pertinent questions to a conflict resolution practitioner. 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 4 (complete) to five pages in length and examine preconceived ideas, what was learned through the interview process, what your interviewee added to your understanding of conflict resolution, and how you have adjusted your attitudes via conflict resolution as practice and potentially as a career. **The summary paper is due Wednesday, April 8.**

Learning Cells

Throughout the semester, students will partner with 4-5 of their peers in learning cells. Each learning cell will work together on two projects.

Learning Cell Practitioner Interview Presentations 10%

Each group will give a brief (15 minute) presentation of individual interview presentations including personal reflections about what was learned. Each group member must participate in preparation for the presentation as well as in the presentation itself. Evaluation forms will be given to each student to be turned in the week following the presentation. The presentation and the completed evaluation form are parts of this assignment. **Learning cell practitioner interview presentations take place on April 1. Completed evaluation forms are due April 8.**

Learning Cell 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. **The taped role-plays will be viewed in class on April 29.** 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 that are due Wednesday, May 6.

Individual Role Play Evaluation 10%

Each group member will write a 3 (complete) to 4-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 April 29.**

Final Written Exam 30%

The written exam for this course will be an open-book, take home essay exam, distributed in class on April 29. Answers to *each* of the three essay questions should be 4 (complete) to 5 pages in length. **Completed exams must be returned to Robinson A, Room 365 by Monday, May 11 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. LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED ONLY IN CASES OF DOCUMENTED PERSONAL ILLNESS OR FAMILY EMERGENCY.

Course Agenda

Week 1: January 21 Approaches to Conflict & Resolution

Readings: Mayer Chapters 1 & 2
In-Class: *Conflict Styles Exercise*

Week 2: January 28 Conflict Frameworks

Readings: Mayer Chapter 5
Fisher Reading (Blackboard)
Levels of Action (Maiese) <http://www.beyondintractability.org>
In-Class: *Conflict Mapping Exercise*

Week 3: February 4 Reflective Practice & Learning

Readings: Cheldelin et al. article (E-Reserve)
Marsick & Sauquet article (E-Reserve)
In-Class: *Reflection Exercise*

***First Reflection Paper Question Handed Out**

Week 4: February 11	Listening, Speaking, & Emotions	
Readings:	Mayer Chapter 6 The Personal Dimension (Hand-out) Maiese Article (E-Journals) Krivis 'Memories' Article (Hand-out)	
In-Class:	<i>Listening/Communications Exercise</i> *First Reflection Paper Due	
Week 5: February 18	Culture, Gender, Power, & Identity	
Readings:	Mayer Chapters 3 & 4 Stamato Article (E-Journals) Krivis 'Hat's On' Article (Hand-out)	
In-Class:	<i>Na-Za Activity</i>	
Week 6: February 25	Neutrality, Intervention, & Process	(Room TBD)
Readings:	Mayer Chapter 8 Mayer, 'The Conflict Specialist' (E-Reserve) Warfield Article (E-Reserve) What is Neutrality (Maiese) http://www.beyondintractability.org <u>Optional:</u> Laue & Cormick Article (Blackboard)	
In-Class:	<i>Intervention Activity</i>	
Week 7: March 4	Facilitation	(Room TBD)
Readings:	Kraybill & Wright Book	
In-Class:	<i>Facilitation Activity</i>	
Week 8: March 11	Spring Break	
Week 9: March 18	Dialogue	(Room TBD)
Readings:	Schirch & Camp Book Beale & Schoem Article (E-Reserve)	
In-Class:	<i>Dialogue Activity</i> *Second Reflection Question Handed Out	
Week 10: March 25	Negotiation	(Room TBD)
Readings:	Mayer Chapter 7 Docherty Book	
In-Class:	<i>Cambodia Simulation</i> *Second Reflection Paper Due	

