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Conflict Resolution Techniques & Practice

CONF 300, Spring 2010

Tuesdays 1:30-4:15 PM, Engineering, R. 1110

INSTRUCTORS

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

GMU Course Catalog description: “300 Conflict Resolution Techniques and Practice. Prerequisites: CONF 101 and 60 credits. Advanced consideration of CONF 101 topics, introduction of the core notion of reflective practice, [critical thinking], conflict resolution techniques practice, third party roles, and ethics.”

Building on what students have learned in Conf 101, 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.

Because this class emphasizes building conflict resolution skills and abilities, a significant portion of the class will be experientially-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, community, and international conflict will 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. The emphasis will be on enhancing the ability to engage in reflection and think critically in the midst of conflict dynamics.

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 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 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 MATERIALS

Required texts (available in the GMU bookstore):

Docherty, J. S. (2005). *The little book of strategic negotiations: negotiating during turbulent times*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books.

Kraybill, R. & Wright, E. (2006). *The little book of cool tools for hot topics*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books.

Mayer, B. (2000). *The dynamics of conflict resolution: a practitioner's guide*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Schirch, L. & Campt, D. (2007). *The little book of dialogue for difficult subjects*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books.

Additional required readings and material will be passed out in class or can be retrieved electronically from e-reserves. The e-reserve password is "peace". For the Stone reference, go to: <http://library.gmu.edu>. Go to Mason Library Catalog, type in title of book, go to Linked Resources. Once you have found the title of the book, click on appropriate chapter.

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/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.

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 can 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 have a title, include your name and the instructor's name, and consistently follow a single standard academic citation format. Papers should be handed in on the assigned due date.

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 (703-993-2474) 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 program library liaison is Melissa Johnson. Ms. Johnson is located at the Fenwick library. She is available by email at mjohnsh@gmu.edu and by phone at 703-993-2212. Do not hesitate to contact her with specific questions about holdings and research.

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

35 %

Students will be responsible for the submission of two (2) reflection papers no more than eight (8) pages in length. These papers will be keyed to the course themes spread throughout the semester and should draw heavily on course discussions, in-class exercises, and course readings. The objective of these papers is to reflect *critical thinking* in the application of theory to practice. One of the formal citation styles mentioned earlier should be used for these papers. Assignments will be given out on Tuesdays and due at the beginning of class on the following Tuesday.

Learning Cells

35 %

Students will partner with 5-6 of their peers in learning cells and work on two projects together.

Videotaped Role-play: The group will construct a short, conflict role-play that relates to core ideas or skills covered in the class, videotape themselves running through the role-play, and then write up individual evaluation papers of the conflict resolution skills displayed by team members. These papers should be no longer than 5 pages and are due on the day the group presents.

Class Presentation: The group will then present this videotaped role-play to the class on one of the three days set aside for this at the end of the semester, April 27, May 4 and possibly May 11 (***Check dates**).

Final Written Exam

15%

The written exam for this course will be an open-book, take home essay exam of 5-7 pages in length. The exam will be distributed April 27 and will be due May 4.

Class Topics & Readings

Date	Topics & Readings
1/19	<p>Class introductions</p> <p>Definitions, conceptions of conflict and practice.</p> <p>Approaches & personal orientation toward conflict.</p> <p>Conflict self-awareness and conceptions of conflict</p> <p>Practice as both science & art – starting to think about “reflective practice”</p>
1/26	<p>Frameworks for assessing/analyzing conflict</p> <p>Levels of analysis; positions, interests, values, worldviews, & needs; Moore’s satisfaction triangle.</p> <p>Dual Concern Model</p> <p>SPITCEROW (handout)</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Mayer, Chap. 1</p> <p>“Revolt Simmers at Church” (Washington Post article available at the following URL: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/17/AR2006011701781.html)</p> <p>*Exercise</p>
2/2	<p>Active listening and mindful speaking</p> <p>Listening as assessment; listening as a form of intervention</p> <p>*Hostage negotiations video</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Mayer, Chap.6, pp. 121, 122</p> <p>Mayer, Chap. 5, Framing/Reframing</p>
2/9	<p>Negotiation</p> <p>Interest-based negotiations (<i>Fisher & Ury</i> overview)</p> <p>Contextual and strategic negotiations</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Fisher, Ury, & Patton’s Interest-Based Negotiation (PPT)</p> <p>Mayer, Chap. 7</p> <p>Docherty</p> <p>*Exercise</p> <p><i>1st reflective paper prompt</i></p>
2/16	<p>Negotiation (cont’d)</p> <p>* Readings:??:</p> <p>Fisher</p> <p>*1st reflective paper due</p>
2/23	<p>Power, types of power; power & context</p> <p>*Exercise</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Mayer, Chap. 3</p> <p>Hocker & Wilmot, “Power: the structure of conflict (e- reserves)</p> <p>Theories of identity & identity’s role in conflict</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Cheldelin & Druckman, Chap. 7 (e-reserves under P. Black)</p> <p>“The Identity Conversation” in Stone, Patton, & Heen, pp. 109-128</p>

	(library)
3/2	Culture and difference Culture and the social construction of meaning Readings: Winslade & Monk, “The Theoretical Story of Narrative Therapy” (e-reserves) Forester, Chap. 3 Room Mates Exercise-emphasis on negotiations
3/9	SPRING BREAK
3/16	Third Party Roles-Mediation Third Party Roles (cont’d)- inside/outsider; formal/informal Process & roles: definitions and choices The neutrality quandary Readings: Bush & Folger, “The Mediation Movement” (e-reserves) Rifkin, et al, “Toward a New Discourse for Mediation” (e-reserves) Mayer, Chap. 9 Fig. 2.3, “Twelve Stages of Mediator’s Moves” (e-reserves) *Video
3/23	Facilitation and dialogue Group dynamics and introduction to group facilitation *Video-9/11 dialogue facilitation Readings: Schwarz, Chap. 1 & 2, “Group Facilitation and the Role of the Facilitator” and “Contracting: Deciding Whether and How to Work Together” (e-reserves) *exercise *2nd reflective paper prompt
3/30	*Video “The Color of Fear” Readings: Schirch & Camppt *exercise *2nd reflective paper due
4/6	Other Process Models-Appreciative Inquiry Readings: Watkins & Mohr, “Appreciative Inquiry: History, Theory, and Research” (e-reserves) *exercise (AI situational comparison)
4/13	Ethics Readings: Mayer, PP. 42-44. Warfield (PPT) *exercise * learning cells team presentation prep
4/20	Case analysis-Bringing it all together * learning cells team presentation prep
4/27	Learning Cells presentations

	<i>*Videotaped Role-plays due</i>
	Final exam handed out
5/4	Learning Cells presentations
	Class wrap-up
	Written exam due
5/11	Learning cells presentations if needed
