

CONF 300 Section 002
Conflict Resolution Techniques & Practice

When: Fridays, 10:30 am - 1:10 pm
Where: Innovation Hall, 133
Instructor: Megan Price
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SCAR Doctoral Candidate
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Office hours by appointment (feel free to call or email anytime)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Building on what you have learned in CONF 101, this course provides a comprehensive introduction to an analytical and practical framework for conflict analysis and resolution that will help you build necessary skills as you emerge as practitioners in the field.

The course will progress from micro to macro—looking first at understanding conflict from the perspective and experience of the individual. Here, you are your own best test case. We will be paying close attention to how we operate in and out of conflict in order to discern common patterns that will be useful as we build skills for practice. We will move from conflict in the individual to interpersonal conflict to larger-scale social conflict as the course progresses. Be sure to be thinking about how the various levels of conflict relate to each other.

This course is primarily focused on skill development. You will have opportunities throughout the term to practice and experiment with techniques for changing conflict dynamics. The class will be highly experiential and will require both patience on the one hand and risk-taking on the other.

COURSE MATERIALS

There are no required textbooks for this course (in fact, you're not even assigned reading every week!) The readings you are assigned, though, are important for building your capacity in CAR and honing your CAR skills. Please come to class having read all assigned materials and ready to discuss them. All required readings are available on Blackboard (mymasonportal.gmu.edu) and listed in the bibliography below.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Participation: 25%

Participation is a critical component to learning in this skills-based course. You will be evaluated on the quality of your engagement in class discussions and activities, and your preparation for class. Some weeks you will be assigned readings, other weeks you will be assigned homework that is essential to the activities planned for the following class.

Please give these all assignments—reading and homework—adequate time and consideration. Your collaboration will enhance both your own learning and the learning of the entire group. Your participation grade, therefore, depends on participation both in and out of the classroom.

Learning Journal: 25%

A Learning Journal is a place for reflection and discovery. As a tool it helps solidify and clarify insights and questions. It provides the space and opportunity to work in your own mental lab. Each week you will be asked to write an entry in your Learning Journal that responds to a particular prompt relevant to the week's discussion or skill. Please respond to the prompt, but know that you are free to travel where you will with your thoughts, as long as you remain reflective and intentional about what you are doing as you travel those thought paths. Your journals are on blackboard and each journal is due to be submitted by 10am the day of class. Each week's session will open with the reflections and insights you captured in your journals.

Midterm Project: 25%

You will be assigned to a small group to prepare roles for an interpersonal conflict role play. The role play will be performed by your peers in Week 9 (October 25, 2013). Role plays are due prior to class, submitted to me on blackboard, on Wednesday, October 23 at 10am. You will also write a short 3-5 page reflection paper on the collaborative process to be submitted to me on blackboard on Monday, October 28 at midnight.

Final Paper: 25%

The final paper, 8-10 pages in length, is a cumulative exercise that uses the conflict analysis and resolution framework and skills developed over the course as applied to a large group, social conflict. The final paper will be assigned on November 22. You will make brief paper topic presentations on the last day of class—December 6 and the final paper is due to me on blackboard on December 13 at 10:30am.

On Writing: As in all writing, presentation is a key component in adequately conveying your message. Please write in 12 pt font (I prefer Times), double space with 1" margins, number your pages and use a consistent citation style. I prefer the Chicago Manual of Style (CMS) but others are acceptable as long as you use *one* consistently throughout your writing. The Library website has a helpful infoguide on writing and citing in the social sciences. Use this link to access it:

<http://infoguides.gmu.edu/content.php?pid=25047>. Also, if you haven't discovered Zotero, a citation management tool offered through Mason, now is the time. Find info here: <http://infoguides.gmu.edu/content.php?pid=23687>.

NB. As you likely have noticed, I am expecting a baby! She or he is due at the end of October, and I have scheduled 2 classes to be conducted online in order to accommodate the new life's arrival. These classes are November 1 and 8. As online modules, they will not take place during one time block on one day. Rather you are assigned activities to complete throughout the week. These modules will be interesting and fun—the first one consisting of virtual mediation role-plays, and the second a discussion of scaling up

conflict resolution skills from the micro to the macro scale. I will be available for any questions that come up during these weeks and I will be monitoring and grading your participation.

NB. I am thrilled to be your teacher this term. Please come to me with any questions, concerns, brilliant ideas, fascinating insights, and so on as they arise. I have a phone, so please call me. I also have a computer—email is equally acceptable. I have an office in Arlington, which may be tricky to get to, but we can always arrange a time to meet in person.

ACADEMIC POLICIES AND INFORMATION

Honor Code and Plagiarism

All George Mason University students have agreed to abide by the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code. You can find a copy of the Honor Code at academicintegrity.gmu.edu. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee for review. With specific regards to plagiarism, three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. If you have questions about when the contributions of others to your work must be acknowledged and appropriate ways to cite those contributions, please talk with me.

S-CAR requires that all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit a student's work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. S-CAR's policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace or substitute for it.

Late Work/ Missed Classes

You are expected to attend every class and submit all assignments by their due dates. Missing class adversely affects your participation grade and submitting class assignments late can incur penalties of one letter grade for each day late. Please address any scheduling conflicts before you reach a deadline so that accommodations may be made. If you have a documented emergency, you may make special arrangements with me. As with all things, upfront communication works best.

STUDENT RESOURCES

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 SCAR program library liaison is Sarah Sheehan at Fenwick library. She is available by email at ssheehan@gmu.edu and by phone at 703-993-3709. Do not hesitate to contact her with specific questions about holdings and research.

English Language Institute

The English Language Institute offers free English language tutoring to non-native English speaking students who are referred by a member of the GMU faculty or staff. For more information contact 703-993-3642 or malle2@gmu.edu.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center is a free writing resource that offers individual, group, and online tutoring. For general questions and comments please contact wcenter@gmu.edu or call: 703-993-4491.

CLASS TOPICS, READINGS and ASSIGNMENTS

Week 1 August 30, 2013

Introduction—Self-Appropriation, Social Construction and Conflict

**** PLEASE READ BEFORE CLASS**:**

Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, Part 1, Ch. 1 and Ch. 2
(available on Blackboard).

Week 2 September 6, 2013

The Insight Approach as a Framework for Conflict Analysis and Resolution

Readings: Price, "Method in Peacemaking" in *Peacemaking from Practice to Theory*,
Vol. 2.

Price, "Explaining Conflict" in *Conflict Resolution and Human Needs*.

Week 3 September 13, 2013

Insights and Critical Reflection in Conflict Resolution

Readings: Picard and Melchin, "Chapter 3" in *Transforming Conflict Through Insight*.
Rosenberg, "Communication that Blocks Compassion" and "Observing without Evaluating" in *Nonviolent Communication*.

Week 4 September 20, 2013

Introduction to Conflict Resolution Skills

Readings: Bruneau and Saxe, "The Power of Being Heard: The Benefits of 'Perspective Giving in the Context of Inter-Group Conflict'" in *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*.
Stone and Patton, *Difficult Conversations*, Ch. 1 and 2
"Basic Tools" (Pg. 7-13) in *Cool Tools for Hot Topics*.

Week 5 September 27, 2013

Conflict Resolution Skills—Reflective Practice and Curious Questioning

Readings: Cheldelin and Warfield, "Reflections on Reflective Practice."
Pearce and Littlejohn, "New Forms of Eloquence" in *Moral Conflict*.

Week 6 October 4, 2013

Conflict Resolution Skills—Deepening for Dire Future Narratives

Readings: Picard and Jull, "Learning Through Deepening Conversations: A Key Strategy of Insight Mediation" in *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*.
Picard and Melchin, *Transforming Conflict Through Insight*, Pp 98-100.
Price, "Explaining Conflict" in *Conflict Resolution and Human Needs*.
[Reread]

Week 7 October 11, 2013

Conflict Resolution Skills—Mindfulness and the Body

*Guest Instructors: Alexandra Arbogast, Mind-Body Medicine Program, Walter Reed
Agatha Glowaki, SCAR Doctoral Candidate

Readings: Linden, "Introduction" in *Embodied Peacemaking: Body Awareness, Self-Regulation and Conflict Resolution*.

Mid-Term Assignment:

1) Role Plays: In groups of 2 or 3 (which I will assign) prepare the roles for two people in conflict. Come up with the experience, the valuing, the deliberating, the evaluating and the deciding of each in a situation of your devise. Sketch the dire future narrative. Where is each person now, what has he or she done? Work out the threat narrative that forms the basis for decisions that have been made, or are imminent. **Submit roles on Blackboard by 10am on Thursday 10/24.** On Friday, 10/25, other groups will perform and mediate the roles plays you came up with.

2) Short Paper: This paper is a 3-5 page reflection on your own operations of consciousness while developing your role plays in groups. What were the challenges and

*benefits of collaborating? How was your consciousness moving in the creation and execution of this project? What conflict arose? What did you notice about your operations of consciousness in those moments? **Due Monday 10/28 @ Midnight***

Week 8 October 18, 2013

Integrated Skills Practice—Mediating Interpersonal Conflict

Reading: Selection from Sargent et al. in *The Art and Science of Mediation*

Video: “The Straw that Broke the Camel’s Back: An Insight Mediation Simulation and Debrief”
http://edc.carleton.ca/cms_plugins/flash_video/video.php?height=480&width=640&url=http://vod.carleton.ca/pub/laws/mediation_simulation.mp4

*** Mid-Term Role Plays Due WEDNESDAY 10/23 @ 10am (2 days before class)**

Week 9 October 25, 2013

Mid-Term Role Plays

No Reading

*** Mid-Term Short Paper Due 10/28 at Midnight**

Week 10 November 1, 2013 (ON-LINE)

Integrated Practice On-Line—On-Line Mediation

Preparation: Role Play Roles. Groups, role plays and roles to be assigned on 10/28.

* Using Blackboard Collaborate, you will participate in 3 45-min role play sessions held between 11/1 and 11/8 at 10am (you must schedule these with your groups and notify me of the times by 11/2). You must debrief the role play with your group through on-line chat or video, asking, What worked? What didn’t? How were you looping? What did you notice about your partners? Freely share your observations about the process.

Week 11 November 8, 2013 (ON-LINE)

Scaling Up Our Skills—From Interpersonal to Group Conflict Resolution

Reading: Maire Dugan “Nested Conflict”
Conflict Case Readings TBD

* Using Blackboard, you will participate in on-line discussions: How would you use the Insight approach to address the conflict in the Conflict Case Readings? What questions come up? What difference does it make to be working with micro (individual) level conflicts vs. macro (social) level conflicts? Post at least 1 original post and 4 responses to posts of your peers.

Week 12 November 15, 2013

Analysis for Social Conflict

Readings: Avruch “Part I: Culture” in *Culture and Conflict Resolution*.
Howard Gadlin, “Conflict Resolution, Cultural Difference and Culture of

Racism” in *Negotiation Journal*.

Week 13 November 22, 2013

Large Group Conflict Resolution Processes

Readings: Carstarphen and Shapiro, “Facilitating Between Gang Members and Police” in *Negotiation Journal*.
 Kelman, “The Role of National Identity in Conflict Resolution” in *Social Identity, Intergroup Conflict and Conflict Resolution*.
 Michigan Roundtable for Diversity & Inclusion, “Declaration of Intent: Race, Residence & Regional Cooperation”

*Final-Paper Assignments Distributed. **Topic Presentations in Class, December 6; Paper Due December 13, 2013 10:30am**

Week 14 November 29, 2013 THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY NO CLASS

Week 15 December 6, 2013

Wrap Up

*Learning Journals Due
*Paper Topic Presentations in Class

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