

COURSE SYLLABUS – Spring 2013  
School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution  
George Mason University

CONF 795 -- Conflict Transformation from the Inside Out: Engaging Mindfulness  
and Intentionality for Practitioners

Location: Founders Hall, Room 475  
Arlington Campus  
March 2, 9:30 am – 5:30 pm and March 3, 9:30 am – 5:30 pm

**Instructor** Mark Thurston, PhD

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Enterprise Hall, Room 413, Fairfax campus

### **Content Summary**

To be optimal facilitators of conflict transformation in the world around us, we need to be conscious of our own, internal conflicts and to be actively engaged in healing and transforming those issues. This weekend course will **explore methods of practice** related to understanding, reframing, and beginning to transform our own internal conflicts. As we do so, it can potentially make us more objective and effective practitioners of our crafts as conflict analysts, mediators, peacebuilders, and catalysts for transformative change in the world.

We will be using some of the tools of consciousness studies and research – such the role of self-reflective mindfulness. This will include exploring various practices of mindfulness in the midst of daily life, as well as methods for practicing meditation. There will also be emphasis placed on the impact of personal volition (i.e., free will) and intentionality (the conscious and unconscious direction in life). “Intentionality” derives from the Latin word *intentio*, which means being directed towards some goal or thing; and we will explore practices that help us to clarify our own intentionality and its capacity to help transform our inner conflicts.

Completion of the course will involve attendance and participation in all sessions in March, plus a single paper of 2,000 words to be submitted by the end of the day on Sunday, April 7. That paper will address both theoretical considerations and personal application/practice of the principles presented at the March sessions plus those found in the reading assignments. A rubric for the essay will be distributed and discussed on March 3rd.

### **Course Objectives**

By the end of this course, the student will be able to

- To create a personal statement of intentionality applicable to personal growth and development, in addition to being instrumental to one’s orientation as a peacebuilder, mediator, or conflict resolution professional.
- Practice a variety of methods for meditation, and to create a personal approach to meditation which combines or synthesizes traditional methods into a practice that is personally optimal.
- Recognize and articulate how at least one internal, personal conflict could potentially impact one’s efforts to be an objective, unbiased party in helping to resolve external- world conflicts.

### **Readings**

The following two excerpts are from books that can be accessed through google books via a TinyURL address, and they should be **read before coming to class March 2, 2013**:

1) <http://tinyurl.com/conf795-1> Kabat-Zinn, Jon. (1994). *Wherever You Go, There You Are*. New York: Hyperion. **Read Only** "What is Mindfulness," "Simple But Not Easy," "Stopping," "This Is It," "Capturing Your Moments," and "Keep Your Breath In Mind." pp. 3-20.

2) <http://tinyurl.com/conf795-2> Krishnamurti, J. (1971). *Inward Revolution*. Boston; Shambhala Publications. **Read Only** "Can I Live in this Mad World without Effort." pp. 1-20.

The following short book excerpt is being sent to you as a PDF file attachment, and it should be **read before coming to class on March 2:**

3) Powell, Elinor (2003). *The Heart of Conflict*. Kelowna, BC: Northstone Publishing. (Read\_only: *The Preface, Introduction, and "Defining Our Terms"* pp. 7-26.)

The following essays are PDF files that are also being sent to you as file attachments and **can be read either before or after class:**

4) Gimian, James. (2006). "Taking Whole: The Art of Less War," in *Mindful Politics*, ed. Melvin McLeod. Somerville: Wisdom Publications. pp. 238-249.

5) Nhat Hanh, Thich. (2003). "We Have the Compassion and Understanding Necessary to Heal the World," in *Mindful Politics*, ed. Melvin McLeod (2006). Somerville: Wisdom Publications. pp. 128-138.

## Grading

This course will be graded on a standard grading scale with the following weighting:

- 65% Attendance and participation with an open mind. Attendance at both the days at Founders Hall is required in order to successfully complete this course.
- 35% 2,000 word paper

## Instructor Bio

Mark Thurston, Ph.D. is Senior Fellow at George Mason University's Center for Consciousness and Transformation. With an academic background in psychology, he is author of numerous books related to personal spirituality, dream psychology, meditation, and the transformation of consciousness.

He is the coordinator for Mason's undergraduate minor in consciousness and transformation. He teaches the two required courses for that minor: "Consciousness, Meaning, and Life-Purpose" and "Consciousness and Transformation in Action."

Mark is also an affiliate faculty member for S-CAR, a member of the Point of View Academic Committee, and a member of the leadership team for S-CAR's Center for Peacemaking Practice.