

Conflict Resolution Techniques & Practice

CONF 300 Section 001, Spring 2010

COURSE MEETINGS

Thursdays, 10:30 am - 1:15 pm
West Building 1008

INSTRUCTOR

Susan Allen Nan
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Office Hours: Thursdays, 1:30-2:30 pm
In Robinson B CAR office

Please pre-arrange office hours appointments by e-mailing before class on Thursdays, or request an office hours session at the end of class.

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.

Rosenberg, Marshall B. (2005). *Speak Peace in a World of Conflict: What you say next will change your world*. Puddledancer Press.

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

Additional required readings can be retrieved electronically from e-reserves. The e-reserve password is tech2010. Directions for accessing e-reserves: Go to library.gmu.edu. Under the category of "Services", click on "E-Reserves." Click on "Search electronic reserves." At the **Bottom**, click on "Search items placed on reserve for **Fall 2010**." Select a course, Select an instructor, Enter password, and click on "Submit." You will see the e-reserve list in a few seconds.

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 the professor.

ICAR 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. ICAR'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

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 submitted by e-mail by 10:00 am on the assigned due date.**

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 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.

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 us at wcenter@gmu.edu or call: 703-993-4491.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

Participation

15 %

Because much of this course involves in-class, experiential learning, participation is a significant part of the 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

30 %

Students will be responsible for submitting **two (2) reflection papers of between 5 and 8 pages in length, each worth 15% of the student's overall grade**, for a total of 30 percentage points. These papers will be focused on making sense of applied conflict resolution skills or practices observed in the real world. Students must observe conflict resolution skills in action. Students are encouraged to participate, for example, in a Dialogue and Difference evening discussion, to attend a public meeting on a conflictual issue, or to participate in a private conflict resolution process (for example, at work, in their community, etc.). The papers should integrate course readings, as well as in-class discussions, with student reflections on the conflict resolution skills and practices evidenced (or not) ***with out of class observation or participation in conflict resolution processes.*** The objective of these papers is to practice and demonstrate *critical thinking* in the application of theory to practice in the real world, which is essential to effective conflict resolution. Each student should choose a formal citation style he or she prefers (e.g. APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.), and then employ it consistently throughout. Papers are due **on October 7 and November 18 respectively.**

Learning Cells

35 %

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

Effective teamwork is a vital element of conflict resolution practice in real life, and in order to prepare for that eventuality students will complete one small-group project by the end of the semester. In these groups (learning cells) of 5 or 6, students will complete two parts of this assignment:

1. *Videotaped Simulation*: Each group will create a short conflict simulation, similar to those conducted throughout the semester in class, in order to demonstrate core ideas and skills from the course. They will imagine a conflict scenario, select a form of intervention (e.g. negotiation, mediation, dialogue, etc.), and then play out the simulation, each taking on a role, *while videotaping*. The result will be presented in the second half of this assignment...

2. *In-Class Presentation*: **Each learning cell will then present their videotaped simulation to the rest of the class on one of two days set aside for this purpose (December 2 and December 9) at the end of the semester.** This will offer each group an opportunity to reflect openly about their intervention approach, and the outcomes, while also receiving feedback from their peers.

Final Written Exam

20%

The written exam for this course will be an open-book, take home essay exam of 6-8 pages in length. The exam will be distributed December 9 and will be due by e-mail at 10 am on December 16.

CLASS TOPICS AND READINGS

Date	Topics & Readings
09/02	<p>Welcome by ICAR Director Dr. Andrea Bartoli (Guest speaker) Overview of Conflict Resolution Techniques and Practices Distribution of Syllabus Completion of Participant Information Cards</p> <p>Please note: Dr. Nan will not be in class this first day, as she has a pre-scheduled conference presentation in Chicago at the Association of Conflict Resolution's annual convention. Dr. Nan will review your information cards in preparation for class Sept 9.</p> <p>Please complete all reading PRIOR to the class period when the readings are listed. Rosenberg Chapters 1, 2, and 3, Mayer chapter 1, and Lederach chapters 1 and 2 should be completed before September 9's class.</p>
09/09	<p>Class introductions Review of syllabus Definitions, conceptions of conflict and practice. Approaches & personal orientation toward conflict. Conflict self-awareness and conceptions of conflict Practice as both science & art – starting to think about “reflective practice”</p>

Frameworks for assessing/analyzing conflict

Levels of analysis; positions, interests, values, worldviews, & needs; Moore's satisfaction triangle.

Dual Concern Model

SPITCEROW (handout)

Readings:

Mayer, Chap. 1

Rosenberg, Part I (Chapters 1, 2, and 3)

Lederach, Chs. 1 and 2

09/16 **Active listening and mindful speaking**

Listening as assessment; listening as a form of intervention

Readings:

Mayer, Chap.6,

Mayer, Chap. 5,

Rosenberg, Part II (Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9)

09/23 **Negotiation**

Interest-based negotiations (*Fisher & Ury* overview)

Contextual and strategic negotiations

Readings:

Fisher, Ury, & Patton *Getting to Yes*, Ch. 1

Mayer, Chap. 7

Docherty

09/30 **Education for Conflict Resolution Techniques and Practices**

Techniques and Practices at the United States Institute of Peace

Guest Speaker David Smith, The United States Institute of Peace

* **Readings:**

Online reading: *Graduate Education and Professional Practice in Peace and Conflict*

<http://www.usip.org/resources/graduate-education-and-professional-practice-in-international-peace-and-conflict>

***1st reflective paper due by e-mail to snan@gmu.edu**

10/07

Advocacy, Activism, and Nonviolent Action

Guest speaker for part of class: Prof. Ethan Finley

Readings:

Ackerman & Duvall, *A Force More Powerful*, Ch. 14 & Conclusion

Rosenberg, Ch. 10

Laue & Cormick, *The Ethics of Intervention in Community Disputes*

Power, types of power; power & context

Readings:

Mayer, Chap. 3

Hocker & Wilmot, "Power: the structure of conflict (e-reserves)

10/14 **Culture and values**

Culture and the social construction of meaning

Readings:

Mayer Ch 4

Forester, Exploring values-based disputes

Avruch, Culture

10/21 **Third Party Roles-Mediation**

Third Party Roles inside/outside; 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

Moore, "Twelve Stages of Mediator's Moves" (e-reserves)

10/28 **Facilitation and dialogue**

Group dynamics and introduction to group facilitation

*Video-9/11 dialogue facilitation

Readings:

Shirch and Camp

Kraybill and Wright

11/04 **Facilitation and dialogue continued**

Review readings from previous week

11/11 **Other Process Models-Appreciative Inquiry**

Readings:

Watkins & Mohr, "Appreciative Inquiry: History, Theory, and Research"

**2nd reflective paper due*

11/18 **Ethics, Best Practices, and Integration**

Learning cells team presentation prep

Readings:

Rosenberg, Ch 11, 12, and 13

Mayer, ch 11

Slim, Dealing with Moral Dilemmas

Menkel-Meadow, What's Fair in Negotiation

THANKSGIVING RECESS

12/02 **Learning Cells presentations**

**Videotaped Role-plays due*

12/09 **Learning Cells presentations**

Class wrap-up

Written exam distributed

12/16 **Final Exam Due**
