

**Class Syllabus**  
Interpersonal Conflict Awareness  
CONF 399 005 CRN 79580  
NCLC 395 005 CRN 80097  
Krug Hall 253  
Monday 4:30pm – 7:10pm

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Office Hours: Scheduled upon request

Title of Course: Interpersonal Conflict Awareness

**Introduction**

This highly experiential and engaging course focuses primarily on increasing your self-awareness to elements of your motivations and behavior, how you address conflict, and use language. Equally important you will supplement the learning of self with a set of specific skills through a single model for improving dialogue. Specifically, you will learn to identify a situation where you are not getting the results you want, learn to spot the root causes of these and other problems, and effect change. Finally, you will be able to take these self-awareness principles and understanding of language and apply them in conflict situations.

**Required Textbook:**

- *Strength Deployment Inventory, Premier Edition. Understanding Personal Strengths in Relating to Others.* Personal Strengths Publishing. Purchase through GMU Bookstore
- *Charting Your Course for Effective Communications.* Aileen Ellis, Peggy Wallis, Susan Washburn, Personal Strengths Publishing Purchase through GMU book store
- *Crucial Conversations, Tools for Talking When Stakes are High.* Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillian, Al Switzer. McGraw Hill Publisher – Purchase through GMU Bookstore
- *Crucial Conversations Participant's Kit.* **\$100.00 Purchased directly from Instructor**

**Readings:** Supplemental articles, readings, and presentations will be shared and discussed in class from the following:

- *Language and the Pursuit of Happiness.* Chalmers Brothers
- *Dialogue; Rediscover the Transforming Power of Conversation.* Linda Ellinor
- *Leadership and the Art of Conversation; Conversation as a Management Tool.* Kim H. Krisko

- *Fierce Conversations* – Achieving Success at Work and in Life, One Conversation at a Time.
- *The Art of the Question*, Marilee C. Goldberg

Optional Readings:

- *What You Heard, What I Said*; Olin R. Jennings
- *Crucial Confrontations*: Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillian, Al Switzer

**E-reserve password = aware Do Not Use Spaces or Caps**

### Learning Objectives

The course has two primary objectives: self-awareness and development as a reflective practitioner; and language and dialogue skills as a conflict resolution practitioner.

1) Self-awareness and development as a reflective practitioner: You will gain self-awareness through Relationship Awareness Theory which addresses the motives that are behind everyday behavior when we are relating to others. Like Freudian theory, it assumes that there is meaning behind all behavior. By shifting our focus from only looking at behavior to looking at the motive behind the behavior, we can gain a clearer understanding of ourselves and others. Relationship Awareness Theory identifies seven general themes or clusters of motives. In looking at these clusters, students will learn the behaviors that are associated with each cluster. The behaviors, however, are not unique to any particular cluster. For example, one of the clusters has to do with a desire to be altruistic and nurturing. People who are motivated by this desire tend to exhibit behaviors that are seen by others as being helpful. Helpful behavior, though, can be exhibited by people who have other motive clusters. People who are motivated by a desire to be altruistic and nurturing are likely to behave more frequently in ways that are helpful to others than people who have other motive clusters. There is also more consistency over time in exhibiting helpful behaviors by those who are motivated by a desire to be altruistic and nurturing.”

This section of the course is structured around the *Strength Deployment Inventory, Charting Your Course for Effective Communications*; Aileen Eliis, Peggy Wallis, Susan Washburn and selected readings.

The learning objectives for this section of the course are:

- Identify the motivations behind the behaviors of yourself and others;
- Understand relating styles and potential sources of conflict;
- Learn how to choose behavior and communication that achieve your intended result and encourage positive relationships with others;
- Learn to identify the behaviors of others that might reveal they are in conflict;
- Learn to confront conflict with others in a way that achieves results satisfactory to all, and
- Learn to identify the strength behind an apparent weakness in yourself and others.

2) Use of Language: You will link the understanding of self with the understanding of essential elements of language. You will gain understanding of the distinctions between types of communications (speech acts, discussion, conversation, and dialogue, past-present-future conversations, advocacy and inquiry). Using and connecting communication theory with the use of the self-reflective tool, role-plays, and dialogue rehearsals, you will gain an understanding of specific models, skills and tools that are most effective. You will develop the skills to: “learn how to create conditions where people speak with complete candor (no matter the topic) and with complete respect (no matter the person). Gain skills that enable spirited dialogue and reduce deference and defiance. Begin stepping up to tough issues and sharing opinions, feelings, and information safely and freely. Learn how to promote the best ideas, save time with fewer meetings, have less disagreement, and build better alignment with better decisions.”

This section of the course is structured around *Crucial Conversations; Tools for Talking When Stakes are High*, and selective readings.

The learning objectives for this section of the course are:

1. To provide you with an understanding of the essential elements of effective dialogue;
2. To provide you with an effective model for dealing with high stakes, opposing positions, and high emotions that interferes with interpersonal relationships, community, or organizational goals;
3. To provide you with a basic understanding of, and competency in, effective use of specific tools for effective dialogue that lead to organization alignment and addressing all areas of conflict;
4. To strengthen your ability to identify when dialogue fails and how to reestablish an environment that surfaces the best ideas, makes the highest-quality decisions, and then act on the decision with unity and commitment; and
5. To provide you with an awareness of your own communication style.

### **Learning Forum:**

The academic learning component of this course is intended to complement and reinforce the skill-building learning component. The classroom will provide the first opportunity to apply the sensibility of self-awareness and our use of language to areas of dispute. At the center of such a sensibility is a profound respect for differences. In addition, to whatever substantive learning may take place, the course is designed so that you can learn to disagree, maintain mutual respect and share the mutual purpose of learning with others.

Part of each class will be devoted to lecture and discussion of conceptual issues, and the remainder of the class involves experiential exercises, group dynamics, working with a learning partner and practice of self-reflection. Also, exercises and activities with a learning partner should be expected in almost every class, so you should be ready to learn by doing. The exercises are not graded so you can have the confidence to experiment with and enhance your skill base and create self-reflective opportunities in a safe environment. The goal of this class is to not only acquire a deeper awareness of self to become a reflective practitioner but apply these skills in interpersonal situations.

## **Office Hours:**

I believe my role as your instructor is to be present and available to each of you as much as feasibly possible. I am committed to assist you in your learning and respond to any concerns you may have during the semester. I will make myself available to meet with you before or after class or schedule a time that works for each of us. I am typically available by email and phone.

## **Participation**

Given the importance of active and engaged participation, regular and prompt attendance is expected. The class follows the university policy on attendance and you are expected to attend all class periods. In-class participation is important not only to you, but to the class as a whole. Class participation is defined as full engagement in class exercises; intelligent, thoughtful articulation of ideas in discussion; respectful listening to others' points of view; asking relevant questions; and neither too dominant nor too passive involvement in discussions. It is also defined as proactive preparation and active participation in class and class activities.

This class includes multiple group exercises, learning groups, and working with a learning partner; therefore, you are expected to attend and participate in all class discussions and activities without exception. Because class participation will be a factor in grading, unexcused absence, tardiness, or early departure will be de facto evidence of nonparticipation resulting in deduction from the overall points possible under "participation".

Pop quizzes based on the readings will be considered in the overall class participation component of the total class grade. Given the nature of this course, and that certain skills are learned "by doing", you are expected to willingly and earnestly participate in all exercises and class discussion. Since these are "in-class" exercises, it will not be possible to make them up or compensate by doing supplementary readings or extra credit work.

## **Absences**

An absence is excused when due to serious illness, religious observance, participation in University activities at the request of University authorities, or compelling circumstances beyond your control. To claim an excused absence, you must provide a signed letter by a person in a position to make an authoritative determination as to the validity of the cause of the absence upon your return from that absence. It is the your responsibility to provide notice in cases where you know you will be missing class, You are responsible for all announcements, assignments, and date changes made in class and for all material covered in class while you were absent. Remember, being absent impacts your learner partner as well.

## **SCHEDULE:**

The instructor will try to closely follow the schedule as designated below. It may be modified in some cases because of emergency, illness, weather, etc. The instructor may announce changes to this schedule at any time. If you miss a class, you should check with a classmate to find out if the schedule or assignments for the following class have been revised. Each reading, homework and journal assignment is due at the beginning of the class unless otherwise noted. If classes are cancelled for whatever reason, you are expected to complete that day's assignment as if class was held.

**August 30, 2010**

Review class expectations, classroom norms, syllabus, Honor code, "learning partners"

Lecture: Introduction to Relationship Awareness

- Overview of Theory
- Understanding the 4 Premises

Readings: SDI Reading Packet – provided via email from instructor

**September 6, 2010**

**Labor Day University Closed**

**September 13, 2010**

Lecture: Relationship Awareness Concepts; Motivational Value Systems, Value Relating Styles, Borrowing, Masking

Readings: Pages 12-13 of SDI Premier Edition

SDI Reading packet: Masking and Motivation: A Perspective from Relationship Awareness Theory

Pages 1-78, *Charting Your Course for Effective Communications*.

Class Activities: Self Administer SDI Premier Edition. Complete in Class

Assignment: Journal #1 due in class

### **September 20, 2010**

- Lecture: 7 Habits – Steven Covey  
Guess Speaker: Nathalie Thompson
- Readings: To be provided by Instructor before class
- Assignment: Journal # 2 due  
Journals submitted via  
Email to [dwest1@gmu.edu](mailto:dwest1@gmu.edu)  
For only this class

### **September 27, 2010**

- Lecture: Portrait of Personal Strengths, Overdone, and Managing One's strengths  
  
Conflict Sequence  
  
Communication During Conflict and Using Language Effectively
- Readings: Read Pages 79-102 *Charting Your Course for Effective Communications*
- Class Activities: Identify your Conflict Sequence, Portrait of Personal Strengths
- Assignment: Journal # 3 due in class

### **October 4, 2010**

- Lecture: "Dialogue" and "The Learner Self and Judger Self"
- Readings: e-reserve: *Dialogue; What is Dialogue? Page 19-27; The Current Practice of Dialogue, Page 35-64*  
  
e-reserve *The Art of Question*, Chapter 8 and Chapter 9, Marilee Goldberg Pages 143-178
- Class Activity: Choice Map – Developing Questions
- Midterm exam distributed Due Oct 12, 2010**
- Assignment: Journal #4 due in class

**October 12, 2010 (meet on Tuesday)**

Lecture: What is a Crucial Conversations; Mastering Crucial Conversations

Readings: Chapter 1 and 2 Crucial Conversations

Activity: Modules 1 Participants Kit

Assignment: Journal 5 due in class  
Midterm exam due in class

**October 18, 2010**

Lecture: Start with Heart – Learn to Look

Readings: Chapter 3-4 *Crucial Conversations*  
*e-reserve Change Your Questions; Change Your Life, Marilee Adams, Pages 150-167*

Activity: Module 2-3, Participant's kit

Assignment: Journal 6 due in class

**October 25, 2010**

Lecture: Make it Safe

Readings: Chapter 5, *Crucial Conversations*

Activity: Module 4-5, Participant's Kit

Assignment: Journal 7 due in class

**November 1, 2010**

Lecture: Master my Stories,

Readings: Chapter 6, *Crucial Conversations*.  
*e-reserve Language and the Pursuit of Happiness, Chalmers Brothers, Chapter 5, Observer, Action-Result, Page 115-128*

Activity: Module 6-7, Participant's Kit

Assignment: Journal 8 due in class

**November 8, 2010**

Lecture: State my Path

Readings: Chapter 7, *Crucial Conversations*

Activity: Model 8, Participant's Kit

Assignment: Journal 9 due in class

**November 15, 2010**

Lecture: Explore Other's Path

Readings: Chapter 8, *Crucial Conversations*

Activity: Module 9, Participant's kit

Assignment: Journal 10 due in class

**November 22, 2010**

Lecture: Move to Action  
Putting it all together

Readings: Chapter 9, *Crucial Conversations*  
Chapter 10, 11, 12, *Crucial Conversations*

Activity: Module 10, Participant's Kit

Assignment: Journal 11 due in class – Final Journal

**November 29, 2010** Individual Presentations

**December 6, 2010** Individual Presentations

Final Journals due in a single binder – include all journals with my comments.

**Exam Week** December 14, 2010

**Final Exam/Paper Due:** **December 17, 2010, (5:00 pm) via email to dwest1@gmu.edu**



### **Teaching Methodologies:**

This class will be taught primarily in a dynamic workshop/seminar format. The teaching/learning methods will include lecture, dialogue/discussion, experiential exercises, course readings, student presentations, and written assignments.

### **Grading and Student Assessment:**

The grading model is based on a Learning Journal (20%), Mid-term exam (20%), Final Exam (30%), Student Presentation (5%), and Class Participation (25%).

Grading Scale:

A = 100-90  
B = 80-89  
C = 70-79  
D = 60-69  
F = 68 below

### **Assignments & Requirements:**

**Readings:** You are expected to read the assigned material prior to the class. Class time will be used to reinforce and apply an understanding of the material by engaging in class discussions. Pop quizzes based on the reading(s) will be included in the class participation grade.

**Learning Journal (20%):** You will keep a weekly journal for the duration of the course. The intent is to be “reflective” in nature focusing on the application of the topics that are covered in class. It is not intended to restrict your journal but to ensure you are considering the application of the topics to your personal life and personal experiences. Journals might relate to a reaction to class discussions, to the readings, or to an experience which relates to the subject matter of the course. In addition, you can elect to respond to my comments to previous journals. This work does not need to be shared with the class. Entries need to be approximately -300-350 words per week. (Not less than 2 pages)

Journals are to be typed, double spaced, and are due at the end of each class. Email submissions are appropriate only if you are unable to attend, but must be submitted the day of the class and should be attached as a “word document.” The “Final Journal” consolidates the learning and reflections from the journals throughout the semester. This journal is expected to be 3-4 pages in length. Each weekly journal is awarded 100 points when turned in at the end of each class. A total of 1100 points may be earned. 100 points are deducted if the weekly journal or Final Journal is not turned in. Other deductions are made for journals that are turned in late.

**Exams:** There are two exams during the semester, a short answer, short essay, midterm exam due October 12, 2010 and a 3000 word final essay due on December 17, 2010 via

email to the instructor at [dwest1@gmu.edu](mailto:dwest1@gmu.edu). You may expect short answer quizzes during the semester as well. These exams fulfill GMU's Writing-Intensive Requirements.

Mid Term Exam – This exam will be on the material on self-awareness and an understanding of the principals of Relationship Awareness Theory, your “motivational value system”, your personal strengths and your approach to conflict to an ongoing interpersonal dialogue. This exam will be short answer, and short essay format.

Final Exam --The second exam is the Final Examination approximately 3000 words in length where you will demonstrate your learning by applying the principles and skills applied to a “crucial conversation.” For example: You will start with identifying a “crucial conversations” where three elements exist (high stakes, opposing opinions and strong emotions) and then apply all the skills to this conversation. Such skills will include; how to identify and hold the right conversations, focusing on what you want to achieve and avoid, how to develop mutual purpose and mutual respect. The intent of this paper is to demonstrate your understanding and application of the various skills we will cover throughout the semester.

Presentation –You will make a 10-15 minute presentation of a topic assigned by the instructor. You will be given a topic where you will demonstrate three keys points that you learned during the semester on the assigned topic.

### **Turning in Late Assignments:**

Ten (10) points are deducted for an assignment that is turned in late, including journal entries: Weekly assignments are due on the date identified in the syllabus and turned in as listed on the syllabus. Because of the nature and format of the class, extra credit assignments are rarely provided.

### **Significant dates to remember**

Last Day to drop with no tuition penalty – **September 14, 2010**

Last Day to Add – **September 14, 2010**

Last day to drop with a 33% tuition penalty – **September 2, 2010**

Last day to drop – **October 1, 2010**

Once the add and drop deadlines have passed, instructors do not have the authority to approve requests from students to add or drop/withdraw late. Late adds (up until the last day of classes are reviewed and approved by the department chair of the course being offered. These should generally be approved only in the case of a documented university error (such as a problem with financial aid being processed). Requests for non-elective withdrawals and retroactive adds (adds after the last day of classes) must be approved by the student's academic dean. In the case of students whose major is in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, this is the office of Undergraduate Academic Affairs (Enterprise 316; 703.993.8725; [lahsdean@gmu.edu](mailto:lahsdean@gmu.edu)).

### **Student Support & Resources**

**Disability Support Services:** Your instructors comply with the American Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you believe that you have a disability, you should make an appointment to discuss your needs. This also includes learning differences. If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703.993.2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

The need for accommodations should be identified at the beginning of the semester and that the specific accommodation has to be arranged through the Disability Resource Center. Faculty can not provide accommodations to students on their own (e.g. allowing a student extra time to complete an exam because the student reports having a disability).

**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](http://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.

**Commitment to Diversity:** New Century College is an *intentionally* inclusive community that celebrates diversity and strives to have faculty staff and students who reflect the diversity of our plural society. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, class, linguistic background, religion, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age or physical ability.

**New Century College's Home page** [www.ncc.gmu.edu](http://www.ncc.gmu.edu)

**Writing Center:** [writingcenter.gmu.edu](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu)

On-line Writing Guide for students is located at: [classweb.gmu.edu/nccwg](http://classweb.gmu.edu/nccwg) or [www.ncc.gmu.edu](http://www.ncc.gmu.edu) and click on Student Resources, then Writing Guide.

**Counseling Center**: The Counseling Center provides a wide range of services to faculty, staff and students. Services are provided by a staff of professional counseling and clinical psychologists and professional counselors. The Center provides individual counseling, group counseling, workshops and outreach programs -- experiences to enhance a student's academic performance. For more information contact: Counseling Center, MSN 2A2 4400 University Drive, Fairfax, Virginia, 22030-4444. Call (703) 993-2380, fax (703) 993-2378, or come by the office in Student Union I, Room 364