

# **Conflict Resolution Techniques & Practice Conf 300, Fall 2006**

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:00-4:15 pm, Robinson Hall A105

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## **INSTRUCTOR**

Stacy Stryjewski

sstryje1@gmu.edu

(703) 993-4165

(202)413-0308 (cell)

Office hours: Tuesdays, 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. and by appointment

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Building on what students will learn 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 experiential-based. Much of the class will involve engaging in simulated conflict scenarios and subsequent reflection. The class will also introduce students to a variety of conflict resolution practitioners, giving students the opportunity to meet, question, and learn from professionals who are active in the work being studied.

Interpersonal, small group, organizational, community, and international conflict will all 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.

At the end of the course students will have learned theories and techniques for assessing conflicts, they will be able to make informed summaries of conflict intervention options, and they 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 fully train them 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):

Schrock-Shenk, C. (Ed.). (2000). *Mediation and facilitation training manual: Foundations and skills for constructive conflict transformation* (4th ed.): Mennonite Conciliation Service.

Stone, D., Patton, B., & Heen, S. (1999). *Difficult conversations : How to discuss what matters most*. New York: Viking.

Wilmot, W., & Hocker, J. (2005). *Interpersonal conflict* (7th ed.). Boston: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

\*\* Additional required readings will be passed out in class or distributed via the course web page.

## **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/apolicies](http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies)). 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 will 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 stapled together. Papers should have a title, include your name and the instructor’s name, and consistently follow a single standard academic citation format (MLA, APA, etc.).

## **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 (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 ICAR liaison at Fenwick Library is Marissa Cachero Stone ([mcachero@gmu.edu](mailto:mcachero@gmu.edu)). Marissa can help you locate journal articles and other helpful outside reading for the course. She also maintains a list of CR-related library resources and a conflict resolution blog, both accessible through her website (<http://mason.gmu.edu/~mcachero/>).

## **Assignments and Evaluation**

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### **Participation**

**10 %**

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**

**30 %**

Approximately every other week, there will be prompts given for a short (3-5 page) reflection paper. These reflection papers should draw heavily on course discussions, in-class exercises, and course readings. You will often be sharing these papers with your peers. Assignments will usually be given out on Thursdays and due at the beginning of class on Tuesdays.

### **Group Presentation**

**20 %**

Students will work in groups of three to five and choose to:

A. Present on a topic of choice. The group will give a brief (20 minute) presentation on a topic that relates to core ideas or skills covered in the class. Additional research and insights should guide your presentation. OR

B. Interview a practitioner in the field and present the information you gather. Interview questions are a key component to this exercise and should be part of the presentation. The purpose of this is to give students the opportunity to explore potential career options. The group will give a brief (20 minute) presentation including personal reflections about what was learned.

Presentations will be due on October 24<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>.

### **Group Work: Videotaped Role-Play & Reflection**

**20 %**

Students will partner with three to five of their peers and work on two projects together. The group will construct a conflict role-play, videotape themselves running through the role-play, and then write up an evaluation of the conflict resolution skills displayed (or not) by team members. Your group's reflection paper, usually 6-8 pages, is due by December 5th.

### **Final Exam**

**20 %**

The written exam for this course will be an open-book, take home essay exam. The exam will be distributed December 7th and will be due December 14th.

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## Class Topics & Readings

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Date	Topics & Readings
8/29	<b>Class Introduction</b> Course overview
8/31	<b>Approaches to Conflict &amp; Role Play</b> Approaches & personal orientation toward conflict Dual concern model <i>Readings:</i> Chapter 1, Hocker & Wilmot Personal Style Conflict Inventory, Kraybill in MFTM, pp. 64-67
9/5	<b>Conceptions of Conflict</b> Conflict management, resolution, and transformation Practice as both science & art – starting to think about “reflective practice” <i>Readings</i> Lederach's "Conflict Transformation: A Working Definition" in MFTM, p. 52 "Conceptions of Peace" in MFTM, pp. 84-85 Intro & Chapter 1, “The Problem” in Stone, Patton, & Heen Chapter 2 (pp.29-38) “Perspectives on Conflict,” Hocker & Wilmot Schon, “From Technical Rationality to Reflection in Action”
9/7	<b>Frameworks for Analyzing Conflict</b> Levels of analysis; SPITCEROW; positions, interests, values, worldviews, & needs; Moore’s conflict typology & satisfaction triangle <i>Readings</i> Chapter 6, “Conflict Assessment” in Hocker & Wilmot Chapters 4 & 5, “Structure” and “Process” in Lederach’s <i>Building Peace</i> .
9/12	<b>Active Listening &amp; Mindful Speaking</b> Listening as assessment; Listening as a form of intervention <i>Readings</i> “The ‘What Happened’ Conversation”, pp. 23-53, in Stone, Patton, & Heen Listening material in MFTM, pp. 74-75
9/14	<i>Readings</i> “The ‘What Happened’ Conversation”, cont.pp. 53-82, in Stone, Patton, & Heen LeBaron's "The Open Question" in MFTM, pp. 137-138 Speaking material in MFTM, pp. 76-77. (Short presentation by GMU Career Services)
9/19	<b>Getting to the Emotional Side of Conflict</b> Intervening to help others hear and be heard Working between parties to build empathy and trust <i>Readings:</i> “The Feelings Conversation”, pp. 83-108, in Stone, Patton, & Heen

"Feelings in Conflict" in MFTM, p. 53  
"Emotional Dynamics" in MFTM, pp. 54-55  
"Recognizing & Identifying Feelings" in MFTM, pp. 140-141  
"Anger and Conflict" in MFTM, p. 142

9/21 **Negotiation, Power, Building Trust**

Fisher, Ury, & Patton's "The Negotiation Paradigm" in MFTM, p. 160  
Chapter 8 (pp. 243-249), "Negotiating for Mutual Gain", in Hocker & Wilmot  
"Negotiation" in MFTM, pp. 146-146  
"Albie M. Davis—Community Mediation as Community Organizing"

9/26 Room Mates Exercise

9/28 Types of power; Power & context

*Readings:*

Chapter 4, "Power" in Hocker & Wilmot  
"Power and Conflict" in MFTM, p. 78-79  
"Perspectives for Assessing and Working with Power" in MFTM, pp. 80-81  
"Three Domains of Power" in MFTM, pp. 82-83.

10/3 **Identity**

Erickson, Gergen, and Roth on identity

*Readings*

"The Identity Conversation" in Stone, Patton, & Heen, pp. 109-128  
Gergen's "Discourse & Emancipation"

10/5 **Culture, Gender & Difference**

Culture and the social constructions of meaning & difference

*Readings:*

Mary Jo Hatch's "Organizational Culture", from *Organization Theory: Modern, Symbolic, & Postmodern Perspectives*.  
"The Cultural Dimension" (part 2 of Chapter 2) in MFTM, pp. 99-130.  
Avery's "Cultural Differences that Affect Conflict Expression" in MFTM, p. 144

10/10 **NO CLASS**

10/12 Metaphors, Gender and Narrative

Winslade & Monk, "The Theoretical Story of Narrative Therapy"  
Chapter 2 (pp.39-60) "Perspectives on Conflict," Hocker & Wilmot

10/17 **Intervening: Process designs & third-party roles**

Process & roles: definitions and choices

*Readings:*

Chapter 9, "Third-Party Intervention" in Hocker & Wilmot

- 10/19 Third party roles: inside/outsider; formal/informal  
The neutrality quandary  
*Readings:*  
Laue, “Third Party Roles”  
Rifkin, Millen, and Cobb, “Toward a New Discourse for Mediation: A Critique of Neutrality”
- 10/24 **Class Presentations**
- 10/26 **Class Presentations**
- 10/31 **Dialogue**  
*Readings:*  
Schoem, et. al., “Intergroup Dialogue: Democracy at Work in Theory and Practice”  
In-class viewing of “The Color of Fear”
- 11/2 Reflections on film  
Windmueller, “Dialogue Literature Review”
- 11/7 **Practice**  
Bush & Folger, “The Mediation Movement: Four Divergent Views” from *The Promise of Mediation*
- 11/9 **Mediation**  
Mediation approaches & models  
*Reading*  
Chapter 4, “Interpersonal Mediation: One Model” in MFTM, pp. 157-204
- 11/14 **Facilitation**  
Group dynamics and introduction to group facilitation  
*Readings:*  
Chapter 5, “Groups: Process, Conflict, Systemic Change” in MFTM, pp. 205-270.
- 11/16 Group facilitation practice (Exercise)  
Schwarz: “Group Facilitation and the Role of the Facilitator” and “Contracting: Deciding Whether and How to Work Together”
- 11/21 **Other Process Models**  
Appreciative Inquiry, Future Search, and Open Space Technology  
*Readings:*  
Watkins & Mohr, “Appreciative Inquiry: History, Theory, and Research”  
Selective excerpts from Weisbord and Owen
- 11/23 **BREAK—No Class**

11/28 **Reflective Practice Re-visited**

11/30 **Ethics**

*Readings:*

Chapter 6, "Standards & Ethics for Practice" in MFTM, pp. 277-300.

Ethical Standards, from SPIDR's "Making the Tough Calls"

"The Dark Side of ADR"

12/5 **\*\*Videotaped Role Plays Due**

Reflections on the Assignment

12/7 **Final Exams Distributed**

12/12 **Reading Day**

12/14 **Exams Due**