

COURSE SYLLABUS  
Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution  
George Mason University

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

Spring 2011

Location: Point of View, Mason Neck, VA

February 19, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm and February 20, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm

**Instructor** Mark Thurston, PhD

Contact information: [mthursto@gmu.edu](mailto:mthursto@gmu.edu)

703.993.1352

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 February, plus a single paper of 1500 to 2000 words to be submitted by April 12. That paper will address both theoretical considerations and personal application/practice of the principles presented at the February sessions plus those found in the reading assignments.

## 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 with 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 February 19, 2011**:

<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.

<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. 1-18.

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 February 19**:

Powell, Elin. (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**:

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

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.

## Assignment

The 1500 to 2000 word essay, due by April 12, should address your understanding of how 1) the practice of mindfulness and 2) careful attention to your own intentionality can impact the practice of peacebuilding, mediation, or any form of conflict resolution.

Write about how these two inner practices can affect the way that we see and respond to conflict. Include in your paper not only theoretical considerations drawn from the reading assignments but also reports on how you experienced the exercises during the course days, as well as anything you may have experienced by applying them in the days or weeks thereafter.

The essay should be at least 50% in the objective voice reporting on theoretical considerations from the readings and class presentations, with the remainder of the essay in the subjective voice in regard to your own practice. Use formal citations for the objective voice aspects of the essay and include a References listing.

## 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 as Point of View is required in order to successfully complete this course.
- 35% 1500 to 2000 word paper

## Instructor Bio

Mark Thurston, Ph.D. is Senior Fellow at George Mason University's Center for Consciousness and Transformation. He is the coordinator for Mason's undergraduate minor in consciousness and transformation. Mark is also an adjunct faculty member for ICAR and a member of the Point of View Academic Committee. With an academic background in psychology, Mark has worked for 35 years in adult education related to consciousness, holistic health, and personal transformation. He is author of numerous books related to personal spirituality, dream psychology, meditation, and the transformation of consciousness.