

**COMMUNITY, GROUP, AND ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT ANALYSIS AND
RESOLUTION
S-CAR CONF 330
Fall 2015
George Mason University**

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Office hours: By appointment –email is the most efficient way of communication

DATES AND TIMES:

Tuesdays: 10:30am to 1:10pm

Room: Music/Theater Building (MTB) 1002, Fairfax Campus

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course examines the skills necessary to understand, prevent, manage, resolve, and where possible transform, community, group and organizational conflicts. Those skills, or the lack thereof, are rooted in intra-psychic qualities of individuals that comprise groups both large and small, and interpersonal qualities of character and behavior. Community and group conflicts emerge from an aggregation of the negative and positive qualities of conflict prevention, management and reconciliation that individuals bring to every encounter.

Groups, organizations and communities are powerful entities that shape the ways we think about ourselves, the ways we see others, and how others see us. These entities are distinguished by interdependence—embedded, enduring patterns of interaction, mutual need and expectations.

In this course we will consider the intersection and dynamics between human conflict and group, organizational and community behavior and how conflicts might be mitigated and resolved. We will examine our own and others' relationships to organizations and communities at the micro, meso, and macro levels using frameworks for individual, situational, identity, cultural and structural analysis.

We will work together to develop a theoretical and practical understanding of conflict in groups, organizations and communities, as well as strategies for conflict prevention and intervention. Through readings, class discussions, current events analysis, films, case studies, students will develop the ability to analyze social group conflicts, envision healthy social relations, and consider possible intervention designs and their own positive role in those processes.

This course will draw heavily on the capacities of the students themselves to honestly engage and learn their own internal and interpersonal qualities of conflict resolution, but face their challenges as well, using that analysis as a way to understand group conflict and group conflict resolution.

OBJECTIVES: To prepare students for an understanding and practicing of conflict analysis and resolution through an application of intra-psychic and interpersonal examination of skills and challenges that individuals, especially they themselves, bring to communities and groups.

THE COURSE FORMAT: It will be essential to read before each class in order to participate effectively in discussions. Participation will be evaluated as part of the final grade. Discussions will explore the readings and in particular brainstorm on how intra-psychic and interpersonal qualities are brought to bear on conflict analysis and conflict resolution in groups.

REQUIRED BOOKS (available for purchase at the Arlington Campus Bookstore or on Amazon)

Gopin, Marc. 2004. *Healing the Heart of Conflict: 8 Crucial Steps to Making Peace with Yourself and Others*. Rodale Books, ISBN No. 1579547931

Sampson, Cynthia. 2009. *Positive Approaches to Peacebuilding: A Resource for Innovators*. The Taos Institute Publications, ISBN No. 0981907636

Lederach, John Paul. 2010. *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*. Oxford University Press, ISBN No.01997475X.

REQUIRED VIDEOS

Peace steps: one rabbi's life journey into the heart of his enemies – Marc Gopin| TED
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LMAaWYOckjE>

The surprising decline in violence – Steven Pinker| TED
http://www.ted.com/talks/steven_pinker_on_the_myth_of_violence?language=en

The evolution of compassion – Robert Wright| TED
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEDtyYwwJcU>

The new era of positive psychology – Martin Seligman| TED
http://www.ted.com/talks/martin_seligman_on_the_state_of_psychology?language=en

Why believe in others – Viktor Frankl| TED
https://www.ted.com/talks/viktor_frankl_youth_in_search_of_meaning

CLASS REQUIREMENTS:

- Class participation: 20%
- Midterm Exam (Take home essay): 30%
- Final exam (take home essay): 50%

COURSE SCHEDULE

Tuesday 9/1

Theme: BE: *Identity and Character*

Readings:

- Gopin, *Healing*, 3-31
- Lederach, *Moral Imagination*, 3-31

Tuesday 9/8

Theme: FEEL: *Emotions as the Heart of Conflict and Peacemaking*

Readings:

- Gopin, *Healing*, 33-57
- Sampson, *Positive Approaches*, 333-355

Tuesday 9/15 NO CLASS NO CLASS

Theme: UNDERSTAND: *Knowing Your Conflict*/HEAR: *The Art of Listening*

Readings:

- Gopin, *Healing*, 59-104
- Lederach, *Moral Imagination*, 113-131

Tuesday 9/22

Theme: SEE: *The Art of Observation*

Readings:

- Gopin, *Healing*, 105-126
- Sampson, *Positive Approaches*, 205-225

Tuesday 9/29 NO CLASS NO CLASS

Theme: IMAGINE: *Visions of the Future*/ DO: *The Transformational Power of Deeds and Gestures*

Readings:

- Gopin, *Healing*, 127-176
- Lederach, *Moral Imagination*, 151-163

Tuesday 10/6

Theme: SPEAK: *The Challenge of Dialogue and Communication*

Readings:

- Gopin, *Healing*, 177-195
- Sampson, *Positive Approaches*, 119-135, 225-237

Tuesday 10/13 No Class - Columbus Day Recess*

Readings:

- Gopin, *Healing*, 199-294

Tuesday 10/20

Theme: Empower the Positive and Generate Vision: Ideas, the Mind, and Human Will

Readings:

- Sampson, *Positive Approaches*, 3-25, 169-187
- Lederach, *Moral Imagination*, 31-41

Tuesday 10/27

Theme: Teach and Model Empathy in Local and Global Relationships

Readings:

- Sampson, *Positive Approaches*, 25-83, 315-333
- Lederach, *Moral Imagination*, 75-87

Tuesday 11/3

Theme: Teach and Model Shared Reason in the Service of the Most Life and Happiness for the Greatest Number of Sentient Beings

Readings:

- Sampson, *Positive Approaches*, 257-315
- Lederach, *Moral Imagination*, 131-151

Tuesday 11/10

Theme: Empower Women Locally and Globally, Especially in Matters of Security and Safety

Readings:

- Sampson, *Positive Approaches*, 83-95, 237-257
- Lederach, *Moral Imagination*, 65-75

Tuesday 11/17

Theme: Empower Commerce that Binds Strangers Together in Equal Prosperity/ Care For Strangers Locally and Globally

Readings:

- Lederach, *Moral Imagination*, 87-113
- Sampson, *Positive Approaches*, 187-205

Tuesday 11/24

Theme: Empower Local and Global Fair Law and Governance: Enshrine the Previous Steps in Law

Readings:

- Sampson, *Positive Approaches*, 95-119, 147-169, 355-381

Monday 12/8

Theme: Why The Seven Steps are working: Human Progress Measured by Less violence

Readings:

- Lederach, *Moral Imagination*, 41-65,163-181
- Sampson, *Positive Approaches*, 135-147, 381-397

Tuesday 12/15 Exam Period

Honor Code and Plagiarism

A reminder: Plagiarism or other violations of the **honor code** are not acceptable in this or any other GMU class. In addition to the following, please see the ICAR handbook:

http://www.gmu.edu/departments/ICAR/newstudent/Appendix_L.pdf.

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.

S-CAR's Policy: Faculty requires that all written work must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared to electronic databases. Faculty may at any time compare a student's written work against electronic databases/plagiarism detection software without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require work to be submitted in print and electronic form. Faculty are encouraged to require students to submit work through Blackboards SafeAssign program. Faculty may also directly submit work using the same system.

University Resources and Assistance

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 provides tutors who can help you develop ideas and revise papers at no charge. It can sometimes accommodate walk-ins, but generally it is best to call for an appointment. The services of the Writing Center are also available online.

Location: ARL311 **Contact:** 703.993.4491 or <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>. It is a free writing resource that offers individual, group, and online tutoring.

Disability Resource Center

The Disability Resource Center assists students with learning or physical conditions affecting learning. Students with learning differences that require special conditions for exams or other writing assignments should provide documentation provided by the Disability Resource Center. Please see one of the instructors the first week of classes. **Location:** SUB I, Room 222 **Contact:** 703.993.2474 www.gmu.edu/student/drc/