

**CONF 795-001 SYLLABUS**  
**S-CAR One-Credit Module: Somatic Skills for Conflict Resolvers**  
**September 10 – 11, 2016**  
**9:00 am to 5:00 pm**  
**Presented by Stephen Kotev**  
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## **INTRODUCTION**

This module will focus on developing physical skills that will enable conflict resolvers to manage more effectively the physiological stresses of conflict experienced during conflict interventions.

The aggressive and hostile behavior or profound sadness that disputants often display during conflict interventions can evoke strong emotional and physiological responses not only within the participants, but also in the conflict resolver. Increased heart rate, excessive or shallow breathing, constriction of blood vessels and major muscle groups, and an inability to focus are common physiological responses to stress.

These responses drastically impede the performance of the conflict resolver. If conflict resolvers are unable to manage their own emotions and stress, they will be unable to effectively perform their duties. Furthermore, conflict resolvers must be able to project and model the proper non-verbal body language necessary to instill confidence in their abilities.

Conflict resolution training is focused primarily on the development of verbal skills while neglecting the effects of stress upon the conflict resolver. Conflict resolvers are told that they must be the ‘calm in the midst of the storm’ during these stressful encounters and are taught verbal de-escalation skills designed to manage the emotional responses of the disputants, but are not taught how to effectively manage their own stress and emotions experienced during these interventions. I believe this is a fundamental gap in conflict resolution training.

This module fills this fundamental gap in conflict resolution training by teaching conflict resolvers somatic/physical skills that will drastically improve their performance when faced with the stressful situations common during conflict interventions.

Taken from the Greek word *soma* for ‘the living body in its wholeness,’ the term *somatic* seeks to widen our definition of the body. It encourages us to look beyond our concepts of the body athletic or aesthetic into the totality of our experiences including our emotions, language, spirit, and mind. Following this line of thinking, students will experience how love and hate are observable physiological states within the body with dramatically different outlooks on violence and resolution. A key goal for this course is to allow students to tangibly experience how different body states directly correlate to our personal willingness to enact violence or embrace peace.

The majority of the module is based upon somatic exercises that originate in the Japanese martial art of Aikido and were created by Dr. Paul Linden. Dr. Linden received his Ph.D. from Ohio State University in Physical Education and currently holds a 6<sup>th</sup> degree black belt in Aikido. After completing his formal education, Dr. Linden studied basic human physiological reactions to stress and the fight-or-flight response using scientific methods. Applying his experience in the martial arts to his scientific observations, he developed a series of safe, effective, and easily understood physical exercises/experiments that help ordinary people cope with mental and physical stress. He has written multiple texts detailing these physical exercises including, *Embodied Peacemaking: Body Awareness, Self-Regulation, and Conflict Resolution* and *Reach Out: Body Awareness Training for Peacemaking* which will be required reading for this module.

The module will begin with a basic overview of somatic skills and how those skills can be applied to the field of conflict resolution and to improve personal performance. During the remainder of the module, students will first focus on building awareness of how their physiology responds to stress. Secondly, students will learn basic somatic techniques focused on breath, posture and vision that will be used to counteract the fight-or-flight response and maintain performance under pressure. The physical exercises/experiments created by myself and Dr. Linden will be used as a laboratory to safely experience physical and mental stress and learn how to build mastery of these basic somatic techniques.

This module will conclude with opportunities to practice these newly acquired skills in highly volatile conflict resolution simulations. These simulations allow students to gauge their capacity to perform under pressure and integrate somatic skills into their practice.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS OVERVIEW**

1. Attendance and participation	30%
2. Personal Reflections Journal	20%
3. Short Final Paper	<u>50%</u>
	100%

1. Attendance and participation: You are expected to attend each class and fully participate in class discussion, exercises and presentations. Due to the somatic nature of the material, lack of participation greatly diminishes the effectiveness and retention of the exercises. Please notify me before the start of class if you have any recent injuries or safety concerns or if you are unable to attend class. If you are required to miss portions of the course, your grade will be adjusted for those absences. Please arrive promptly for each day of the course. 30%

2. Personal Reflections Journal: This self-reflection exercise asks students to compose three journal entries that highlight how they have applied the skills learned in this course to their personal or professional lives. Your first entry should focus on how you applied one of the somatic techniques learned in this course during an argument or stressful situation. Use this journal entry to cultivate your self-awareness by providing specific

details of how your physiology responded. This journal entry is due on 9/16 by 8 pm.

Your second entry should discuss how you used a somatic technique prior to an argument or stressful situation to either improve your performance or deal with the situation more effectively. Contrast how you performed in this situation compared to your implementing the technique during the incident in your prior journal submission. This journal entry is due on 9/26 by 8 pm.

For your final entry, think of a current on-going either personal or professional interpersonal dispute. First, focus on how your body reacts/responds when you think of this situation. Then spend 15 minutes practicing either the basic belly breathing or 6-Directions breathing. Then revisit this scenario from a centered state brought about by these somatic techniques. Discuss how this practice influences your consciousness or perception of your dispute. This journal entry is due on 9/30 by 8 pm.

Each journal entry will be no less than 175 words and no more than 250 words and will be submitted via email. The file names of electronic documents must include CONF 795-001, your name and the assignment completed (e.g. CONF 795-001 - Stephen Kotev - Final Paper). Please see the 'written assignments' section of this course syllabus for additional guidance.

3. Short Final Paper: A central theme throughout this course has been the idea that "Who you are is who you bring into the room." This paper will be written in two parts and will focus on this theme.

In part one of your paper discuss:

- Who do you bring into the room? (What type of conflict resolver/person are you?)
- What attributes do you seek to embody? (How do you conduct yourself? What do you want the participants to know about you and your values?)
- What are the physical manifestations of these attributes? (How will the participants know you embody these values/attributes? What are you doing to demonstrate these values/attributes?)

Please be as specific as possible in your description. **Part one of this paper is due at the start of the first day of class and should be at least 250 words and no more than 500 words.**

In part two of your paper, discuss what "who you are is who you bring into the room" means to you now and how the information you learned in this course has informed your perception of yourself. How have you changed? What are you able to do now that you were unable to do before? What have you learned about yourself that you did not know before? How does this new knowledge affect your personal approaches to conflict and your work as a conflict resolver?

Part two of your paper should be at least 750 words and should not exceed 1,000 words and are due by 8 pm on October 7, 2016. All submissions should be sent to [skotev@gmu.edu](mailto:skotev@gmu.edu) in Microsoft Word document or a compatible format. 50%

### **REQUIRED READING:**

Linden, Paul (2003) *Reach Out: Body Awareness Training for Peacemaking*, CCMS Publications, Columbus. (Available for free download at <http://www.being-in-movement.com/resources/books/reach-out-body-awareness-training-peacemaking%E2%80%94five-easy-lessons>). Please print off a copy and bring it with you to class.)

Linden, Paul (2007) *Embodied Peacemaking: Body Awareness, Self-Regulation, and Conflict Resolution*, CCMS Publications, Columbus. (Available for download at <http://www.being-in-movement.com/resources/books/embodied-peacemaking-body-awareness-self-regulation-and-conflict-resolution>) You are not required to print a copy of this text, but I recommend that you have a digital copy nearby.

This course is experiential in nature. Please come to class in comfortable clothing since you will be moving around and participating in multiple exercises. In addition to the course reading, please bring a towel to class.

### **Grading Standards for the Course:**

**A - Superior:** Student shows excellent critical analysis in oral contributions and writing; all assignments turned in on time.

**B - Very Good:** Solid work evidenced by careful synthesis of reading, timely contributions to class discussion, and clear, logical writing; all or most assignments turned in on time.

**C - Satisfactory:** Work demonstrates some understanding of materials and an average performance in written assignments and class discussion; some assignments turned in on time.

**D - Inconsistent:** Meager performance in all assignments and class discussion; late in turning in written work.

**F - Failing:** Student makes minimal effort, shows little understanding of assignments, and turns in incomplete or unacceptable work.

**Grading Scale:**

A+: 98-100 points	B+: 89-88 points	C+: 79-78 points	D: 69-60 points
A: 94-97 points	B: 87-84 points	C: 77-74 points	F: 59-below points
A-: 93-90 points	B-: 83-80 points	C-: 73-70 points	

**Written assignments:** I expect well-written and thoughtful papers that adhere to the prescribed length outlined in the assignment description. Please edit your papers carefully as spelling and grammatical errors will lower your score. Papers must be typed and double-spaced, using Times New Roman 12-point font and one-inch paper margins. Properly cite material and ideas that are not your own. If in doubt, please ask me.

Endnotes, bibliography, and title pages do not count towards the assigned paper length.

Number your pages. Title pages are not required, but you are welcome to design and format them as you please. The file names of electronic documents must include CONF 795-001, your name and the assignment completed (e.g. CONF 795-001 - Stephen Kotev - Final Paper).

Papers are due by 8:00 pm of the date assigned. Extensions will be arranged only for documented personal illness or family emergencies. Otherwise, late papers will have 5 points deducted from the final score for each day past the due date.

**GEORGE MASON HONOR CODE AND WRITING CENTER INFORMATION**  
**Honor Code and Plagiarism:**

The **Honor Code** is as follows:

"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.

S-CAR 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. S-CAR's policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace or substitute for it."

Faculty members are responsible for maintaining the integrity of the learning and testing process. They should explain at the beginning of the each semester what would be considered an integrity violation in their course. Special attention should be given to the subject of plagiarism. Faculty may require work to be submitted in print and electronic form. Faculty may, at any time, compare a student's written work against electronic databases/plagiarism detection software without prior permission from the student.

Suspected violations of the Mason Honor Code should be reported to the Honor Committee in a timely manner using forms provided by the Committee.

<http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/>. The Honor Committee will promptly notify the involved student(s) in writing. The involved student(s) will meet with a representative of the Honor Committee to review the information and arrange for a resolution of the matter.”

**Writing Center:** Please visit: [writingcenter.gmu.edu](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu) for more information. Use of the Writing Center is STRONGLY encouraged for all participants of this course. It is a great resource for all aspects of writing, such as organizing ideas, improving your writing style/grammar, and revising a paper. The services of the Writing Center are in high demand, so be sure to schedule your appointments early in the semester.

**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

**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.

**Students with educational needs:** GMU is committed to providing educational opportunities to a broad range of students, including those with different educational needs. Once students have registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474, you must then provide a faculty contact sheet from that office explaining your learning difference. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office, and I will do my best to ensure proper arrangements for lecture notes and/or assignment deadlines. However, students must be registered with the DRC to receive this support, and **I must be notified prior to the start of class**. This is a weekend course and prior notification is essential to coordinate any accommodations. More information can be found at <http://ods.gmu.edu/students/>.

## **RECOMMENDED READING**

Crum, Thomas (1987) *The Magic of Conflict: Turning a Life of Work into a Work of Art*, Touchstone, New York.

Dobson, Terry (1978) *Aikido in Everyday Life: Giving In to Get Your Way*, North Atlantic Books, Berkeley.

Grossman, Dave and Christensen, Loren W. (2004) *On Combat: The Psychology and Physiology of Deadly Conflict in War and Peace*, PPCT Research Publications.

Grossman, Dave (1996) *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*, Back Bay Books.

Remland, Martin (2004) *Nonverbal Communication in Everyday Life*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston.

Rhodes, Richard (1999) *Why They Kill: Discoveries of a Maverick Criminologist*, Random House, New York

Saotome, Mitsugi (1993) *Aikido and the Harmony of Nature*, Shambhala Publications, Boston.

Sheridan, Sam (2010) *The Fighter's Mind: Inside the Mental Game*, Grove Press, New York.

Waitzkin, Josh (2007) *The Art of Learning*, Free Press, New York

Wise, Jeff (2009) *Extreme Fear*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York

## **Somatic Skills for Conflict Resolvers Agenda**

### **Day One**

#### **9:00 Introductions and Orientation**

What are Somatic skills?

Why do we need these skills?

How does the incorporation of these skills affect our performance in high-conflict situations?

#### **Break/Questions and Answers**

### **Continuation of Orientation**

- Central premise of the course: “Who you are is who you bring into the room.”
  - So who are you?
  - What values or attributes do you bring with you into the room?
  - What are the physical manifestations of these attributes/values?

### **Introduction to Somatic Exercises and Techniques**

- Throwing Tissues – Page 6 - Reaching Out
- Soft Tongue/Relaxing Your Belly – Page 8 - Reaching Out
- Belly Breathing – Page 10 - Reaching Out
- Throwing Tissues II – Page 12 - Reaching Out
- Autogenic breathing – Variation from Lt. Col. Dave Grossman
- Circular breathing – Variation from Ellis Amdur
- Six Directions Reaching/Breathing – Page 37 - Reaching Out

### **Break/Questions and Answers**

#### **Continuation of Somatic Exercises:**

- Don't Stand So Close To Me
- The Power of Words
- Pain Control – Page 39 - Reaching Out

### **Break/Questions and Answers**

- Hatred/Love Postural Structure Test
- Hatred/Smiling Heart – Page 16 & 17 - Reaching Out
- Paraphrasing Practice from Hatred/Love

### **Break/Questions and Answers**

### **4:45 Adjourn and Review of Homework**

### **Day Two**

### **9:00 Review of Previous Material**

#### **Somatic Exercises Continued:**

- Pattern Ball Icebreaker
- Inguinal Sitting – Page 23 - Reaching Out
  - Pelvic Rotation - Page 20 - Reaching Out
  - Chest Push – Page 24 - Reaching Out
  - Towel Sitting – Page 33 - Reaching Out

### **Break/Questions and Answers**



- Role Play

### **Break/Questions and Answers**

- Role Play 2
- Fishing
- Walking The Gamut (everyone will complete this exercise twice) – Page 29 - Reaching Out

### **4:45 Wrap Up/Final Questions and Answers/Evaluations**