

**Conflict Resolution Techniques & Practice**  
**CONF 300 – FALL 2012**  
**School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution**

Class Time: Friday: 10:30 am – 1:10 pm    Location: Innovation Hall 131

**INSTRUCTOR**

Vandy Kanyako, PhD

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Office Hours: After class or by appointment

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course explores a variety of theories and frameworks for analyzing conflict at the interpersonal, small group, organizational, community and international levels. It builds on what students have learned in CONF 101 by exploring techniques, process models, and third-party roles to constructively intervene in conflict at all layers of society, including protracted social environments.

The course will be experiential-based, with the core emphasis on building conflict resolution skills and abilities. Students will be introduced to different techniques and forms of practice that enhances their hands-on experience. Much of the class will involve engaging in simulated conflict scenarios and subsequent reflection. On occasion students will get the opportunity to meet with active conflict resolution practitioners.

At the end of the course, students will have learned theories and techniques for assessing conflicts, be able to make informed summaries of conflict intervention options, and have a set of skills and techniques to help parties in conflict have constructive conversations in order to move conflicts toward resolution. While students will learn and practice several conflict resolution process models and roles, the goal is not to be fully trained 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 OBJECTIVES**

During the course class participants will:

- Develop an appreciation of the dynamic relationship between conflict analysis and resolution.
- Gain an understanding of reflective practice in both personal and professional terms.
- Explore specific practices and techniques as they build upon conflict analysis and move conflict toward resolution.
- Consider aspects of culture, gender, power, and ethics as they affect both conflict as well as resolution attempts.
- Practice various conflict resolution techniques.
- Increase critical thinking abilities.

### Course Expectations

1. *Consistent attendance.* Barring exceptional circumstances, you will be expected to attend class on a regular basis. Missing more than 3 classes without a valid and documented excuse will automatically place the student in a grade 'B' category no matter how well they do in the rest of the course.

2. *Effective preparation.* Class involves discussion and activities that depend on advance preparation. All assigned readings should be completed PRIOR to class. There will be a few impromptu quizzes which will count towards your final grade.

3. *Classroom etiquette.* Please come to class on time and prepared. Turn off cell phones, pagers, beepers, etc. Remain in class unless you have an emergency. Allow others and yourself to learn by refraining from side conversations, passing notes, playing video games, instant messaging, reading e-mail, browsing websites, etc. Open discussion and dialogue are class goals but please be mindful of the sensitivities of others.

4. *Course completion.* In keeping with departmental policy, incomplete grades will be given only in cases of personal illness, or illness of an immediate family member. Class assignments that are submitted late can be penalized by one point for each day thereafter. If a student has a documented emergency, special arrangements can be made with the instructor.

5. *Paper format.* Papers should be typed, double-spaced, have 1" margins, and use Times New Roman 12-point font. The pages should be numbered and stapled together. Headers should include only the course number (CONF 300), your name, and paper title. The first page of the paper should have the title. Edit your papers carefully as spelling and grammatical errors will lower your overall score.

### **COURSE MATERIALS**

#### Required Texts

1. Mayer, Bernard, ed. 2012. The Dynamics of Conflict Resolution: A guide to Engagement and Intervention (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.

2. Docherty, Jayne S. 2005. The Little Book of Strategic Negotiation. Intercourse, PA: Good Books.

3. Kraybill, Ron and Evelyn Wright. 2006. Cool Tools for Hot Topics: Group Tools to Facilitate Meetings When Things are Hot. Intercourse, PA: Good Books.

4. Schirch, Lisa and David Camp. 2007. The Little Book of Dialogue for Difficult Subjects. Intercourse, PA: Good Books.

## **Electronic and Other Materials**

Course materials including syllabus, reflection paper questions, and other relevant documents will be made available in class and/ or Blackboard. Additional readings will be on e-reserve. The password to access e-reserve materials will be given in class.

## **Additional Readings (available on e-reserve)**

Fisher, Simon et al. 2000. Tools for Conflict Analysis. In Working with Conflict: Skills and Strategies for Action. New York: Zed Books. (E-Reserve)

Kravis, Jeffrey. 2006. A 'Hat's-On' Approach. In Improvisational Negotiation: A Mediator's Story. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. (E-Reserve)

Marsick, Victoria and Alfonso Sauquet. 2000. Learning Through Reflection. In The Handbook of Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice. Morton Deutsch et al. eds. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. (E-Reserve)

Mayer, Bernard S. 2004. The Conflict Specialist. In Beyond Neutrality: Confronting the Crisis in Conflict Resolution. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. (E-Reserve)

Watkins, Jane Magruder and Bernard J. Mohr. 2001. Appreciative Inquiry as a Process. In Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer. (E-Reserve)

Wassara, Samson, March 2007. Traditional Mechanisms of conflict resolution in Southern Sudan, Berghof Foundation for Peace Support, (e-Reserve)

## **ACADEMIC POLICIES & INFORMATION**

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

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. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. 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."*

Another aspect of academic integrity is the free flow of ideas. Vigorous discussion and

debate are encouraged in this course, with the expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt, please ask for guidance and clarification.

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 is fine for groups to divide project work among team members, the final product submitted should represent a single, conceptually linked piece of work. A 360 evaluation model will be used to determine the final grade of each student in a group project. If a group is having trouble with a member not fulfilling his/her work obligation, then the group needs to bring the problem to the instructor's attention immediately.

## **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 CAR library liaison is Melissa Johnson (703.993.2212). Do not hesitate to contact her with specific questions about holdings and research in these areas or whom to contact for materials still in the Fenwick Library on the Fairfax Campus.

## Campus Maps

From time to time, class will be held in rooms other than Innovation Hall 206. Please refer to the links below to determine where on campus classes will occur.

Links to find SUB I & II Rooms Campus Map Explorer:

<http://eagle.gmu.edu/map/fairfax.php> Student Union I & II Maps (Third Floors):

<http://www.gmu.edu/operations/facilities.htm> - FloorMaps,

## ASSIGNMENTS & EVALUATION

### Participation and learning group role plays 20%

Because much of this course involves in-class, experiential learning, active participation counts significantly towards your overall grade total. 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. Furthermore, and most importantly, throughout the session, students will partner with 3 of their peers in learning groups. Each learning group will work together on conflict scenarios and other assigned projects. Missing 3 classes without a valid excuse will adversely affect the student's final grades.

### Reflection Paper 20%

Students will be responsible for the submission of 1 reflection paper of no more than 5 pages. The paper will be due on **October 5**. The paper will correspond to the course themes throughout the semester and should draw heavily from course discussions, in-class exercises, and course readings. A formal citation style is expected.

### Group project: Conflict analysis organization presentations 20%

Each group will give a (30 minute) presentation based on an analysis of the work of a conflict resolution organization. It could be a local, national or international organization that works at any layer of society. The purpose of this assignment is to give students the opportunity to discover and experience conflict resolution in practice. The presentation should include reflections about what was learned. Each group member must actively participate in both the preparation of and the delivery of the final product. The 360 degrees evaluation method will be used. Presentation could be in the form of a PowerPoint, interviews, enactment, etc. The presentations will be on **November 30** (Groups 1, 2, 3, 4) and **December 7** Groups 5, 6, 7, 8). **Please come looking the part!**

### Final Written Exam 40%

The written exam for this course will be an open-book, take home essay exam, distributed in class on **December 7**. Answers to the 2 essay questions should be a maximum of 8 pages in length. Completed exams must be returned to **Robinson B, Room 365** by

**Friday December 14, 1:00 pm** in an envelope marked with instructor's name and course number. If the office is closed, drop the envelope through the mail slot in the door. Only hard copies will be accepted. **LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED ONLY IN CASES OF DOCUMENTED PERSONAL ILLNESS OR FAMILY EMERGENCY.**

<b>Points Accumulated</b>	<b>Grade</b>
98-100	A+
93-97	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
74-82	B-
63-73	C
52-62	C-
41-51	D
0-40	F

Grading Scale, Points Accumulated, Letter Grade

### **COURSE AGENDA**

(AUGUST 31): Introduction to the Field of Conflict Resolution/ nature of resolution  
 Introductions and Syllabus Review

Readings:

- Bernard Mayer: Chapters 1-4

(SEPTEMBER 7): Resolution and engagement tools/ Frameworks

Readings:

- Bernard Mayer, 5-7
- Simon Fisher, *Tools for Conflict Analysis* (e-reserve)

**A soldier's gift (Simulation)**

(SEPTEMBER 14): Bargaining

- [http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/interest-based\\_bargaining/](http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/interest-based_bargaining/),
- [http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/positional\\_bargaining/?nid=1285](http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/positional_bargaining/?nid=1285),

(SEPTEMBER 21): Arbitration

Readings:

- <http://www.mediate.com/articles/grant.cfm>,

(SEPTEMBER 28): Facilitation

Readings:

- Ron Kraybill & Evelyn Wright: *The Little Book for Hot Topics (Chapters 1-4 & 6)*

In-Class: Facilitation exercise (Land Grab in Africa, BBC Africa radio)

**\*Reflection paper questions handed out**

(OCTOBER 5):

**Video: (Store Wars: When Walmart comes to Town)**

**Reflection paper due**

(OCTOBER 12): Dialogue

Readings:

Lisa Schirch & David Camppt: *The Little Book of Dialogue for Difficult*

(OCTOBER 19): Negotiation

Readings:

- Bernard Mayer (page 211): *Negotiation*
- Jayne Docherty, *The Little Book of Strategic Negotiation*

(OCTOBER 26): Mediation

Readings:

- Bernard Mayer, (page 269): *Mediation*
- Samson Wassara, Traditional Mechanisms of conflict resolution in Southern Sudan (e-reserve)

(NOVEMBER 2): Litigation

The golf course (class simulation)

(NOVEMBER 9): Other approaches: Appreciative Inquiry/ Reflective practice

Readings:

- Jane Magruder Watkins & Bernard Mohr, *appreciative inquiry*, (e- reserve)
- Bernard Mayer, Page 301: *Other Approaches to the resolution of conflict*

(NOVEMBER 16) Managing Conflicts in other cultures

Readings:

Bernard Mayer: Why We Intervene: Page 333

**The Beauty salon of Kabul (Video)**

NOVEMBER 23: THANKSGIVING RECESS (NO CLASSES)

NOVEMBER 30: Organizational analysis Presentations (30 minutes per group)

Group 1, 2 and 3

(DECEMBER 7): Organizational analysis Presentations (continued)

Groups 4, 5, 6

**\*Final Essay Questions Handed Out/ Emailed to students)**

**\*Final Essay due latest Friday December 14, 1:00 pm, at Robinson B Room 365**