

**Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution  
George Mason University  
CERTIFICATE PROGRAM**

Facilitation Skills

CONF 657

Spring Semester 2008

February 9 and 10, 10:00am -4:00 pm

March 29 and 30, 10:00am -4:00 pm

April 26 and 27, 10:00am -4:00 pm

Juliana E. Birkhoff, Ph.D.

Telephone: 857 928 5193

E-mail: jabirkhoff@cbuilding.org

**Course Purpose:**

To provide certificate students with the knowledge, skills, abilities, values and behaviours to 1) assess group dynamics, development, and goals 2) plan and prepare for dialogue activities, and 3) manage interactions and groups to accomplish goals.

**Course Objectives:**

Participants will learn the principles and ethics of participatory decision-making. Participants will learn how to assess group dynamics, development, and goals. Participants will learn how to and will practice drafting agendas, ground rules, role definitions, and logistics. Participants will learn about a range of techniques to manage interaction and will practice applying tools, tactics, and strategies in exercises. Participants will also practice tools, tactics, and strategies in work or community settings and reflect upon their experiences.

**Prerequisites or co-requisites:**

CONF 501 or CONF 502, and acceptance in the graduate certificate program in Conflict Analysis and Resolution, or permission of instructor.

**Course Expectations:**

The class will meet during three intensive weekend sessions throughout the semester. The activities in these sessions will vary between small lectures, group activities, and skills-building exercises. In between weekend sessions, students will actively engage in weekly online discussions on current class themes and complete assignments as described.

It is imperative for successful participation to read the weekly assigned chapters before class, participate in on-line reflective activities, and actively participate in class discussions and exercises. I expect all written assignments to reflect graduate level research and analysis.

It is also imperative that students develop their facilitation skills through practice in a real work, community, organization, religious institution, school, or other place. **Before signing up for this course, think about a situation that you will be able to facilitate. If you cannot think of one, you probably should not sign up for the class.**

Consistent attendance. You must attend all weekends for the full time scheduled, barring unforeseen and exceptional circumstances.

Effective preparation. Class will involve discussions and activities that depend on your preparation.

Course completion. In keeping with departmental policy, I will only give incomplete grades in cases of personal or immediate family illness.

Integrity I expect integrity of every student in all academic work.

If you have not done so, please familiarize yourself with the Honor Code at <http://www.gmu.edu/departments/unilife/honorcode.html>

### **Class Policies and Procedures:**

Students are responsible for completing individual and group assignments on time. You will be penalized the equivalent of a full letter grade for each day the assignment is late.

I will send some class assignments and readings by e-mail and students are responsible for keeping up-to-date with these.

### **University Resources and Assistance:**

**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:** ARL212 (in the main SPP suite)

**Fall 2006 Hours:** Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, 2:00-7:00

**Contact:** (703) 993-3762 <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

**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/](http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc/)

### **Grading:**

#### **On Line and In-Class Discussions (30%)**

This class is interactive and elicitive. Attendance and participation in class activities is important. It will account for thirty percent of your grade. I expect all students to participate actively in discussions in this class. Your participation in on-line discussions will be due by 5:00 pm on the Friday before each class weekend.

Due: Each Weekend Session**Skills Development (30%)**

Participants will practice facilitation skills at each class. We will practice tactics, strategies, and skills through exercises, scenarios, and case studies. I will evaluate your efforts each weekend based on the level of effort, use of appropriate tool, tactic or strategy and how you integrate class materials into the exercises. These practice assignments counts for thirty percent of your grade.

Due: Each weekend session

**Facilitation Portfolio (40%)**

Students must develop and hand in a facilitation portfolio. . The portfolio must focus on one of the following:

1. Class Participant Facilitated Meeting – plan, prepare for, and facilitate an activity or meeting. The meeting must last at least two hours. The portfolio must include invitations and logistics information, ground rules, agendas, meeting materials, and your reflection on why you chose those particular tools, tactics or strategies, and the outcome of the meeting. Use materials from your readings to support your design, facilitation, and reflections.
2. Observation/Interviews/Reflections – Find a facilitator and interview them for 1 hour about why they use particular tools, tactics, or strategies. Then observe them facilitate. Using class experiences and readings reflect on the choice of tools, tactics, and strategies. Reflect on what other tools, tactics or strategies would have accomplished similar objectives. The portfolio must include interview questions and interview notes, meeting agendas and materials, observation notes and reflections. Use materials from class readings to support your interview, observation, and reflection.

**I prefer that students choose the first portfolio option.**

Due May 5.

**Readings:**

Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making, Sam Kaner with Lenny Lind, Catherine Toldi, Sarah Fisk, and Duane Berger. New Society Publishers, 1986.

The Skilled Facilitator: Comprehensive Resource or

The Skilled Facilitator: Practical Wisdom for Developing Effective Groups. Roger Schwarz, Jossey-Bass, 1994.

Great Meetings! Great Results: A Practical Guide for Facilitating Successful, Productive Meetings. Hanson Park Press, 2004 Dee Kelsey and Pam Plumb.

“The Big Picture: Creating an Ongoing Client Relationship” Chapter One, Nadine Bell and Susan Nurre in The IAF Handbook of Group Facilitation, Jossey Bass, 2005.

“Facilitation: Beyond Methods” David Wayne in The IAF Handbook of Group Facilitation, Jossey Bass, 2005.

**February 3 and 4, 10:00am -4:00 pm****Topics:**

- Collaborative process goals, designs, and frameworks
- Principles of participatory decision-making
- Self Assessments and individual development plan
- Clarifying your role, commitments, authority and contracting
- Assess group dynamics, development, and goals
- Planning and preparing for meetings
- Developing Agendas

Before Saturday, please read:

- pages vii-37 of Sam Kaner Facilitators Guide to Participatory Decision Making
- pages 1-62 of Roger Schwarz The Skilled Facilitator: Comprehensive Resource (or pages 1-66 of Practical Wisdom for Developing Effective Groups)

Before Sunday, please read:

- Pages 1-28 of Dee Kelsey and Pam Plumb Great Meetings! Great Results
- Pages 271-295 of Roger Schwarz The Skilled Facilitator: Comprehensive Resource (or pages 45-66 of Practical Wisdom for Developing Effective Groups)

**March 3 and 4, 10:00am -4:00 pm**

- How much structure?
  - Ground rules
  - Participation formats
  - Managing information-group memory and information sharing
  - Managing presentations and reports
- Choosing Tools
- Facilitative listening skills

Reading Assignments:

Pages 7-20 “The Big Picture: Creating an Ongoing Client Relationship” Chapter One, Nadine Bell and Susan Nurre in The IAF Handbook of Group Facilitation, Jossey Bass, 2005.

Pages 35-53 “Facilitation: Beyond Methods” Chapter Three, David Wayne in The IAF Handbook of Group Facilitation, Jossey Bass, 2005.

Pages 96-135 of Roger Schwarz The Skilled Facilitator: Comprehensive Resource (or pages 172-190 of Practical Wisdom for Developing Effective Groups)

Pages 77-130 of Dee Kelsey and Pam Plumb Great Meetings! Great Results

Before Sunday, please read:

Pages 41-55, Sam Kaner Facilitators Guide to Participatory Decision Making

**April 21 and 22, 10:00am -4:00 pm**

- Facilitating Open discussions (who goes when, stacking, managing divergent perspectives, focusing the discussion, tracking different lines of thought, silence)

- Problem solving
- Ending
- Accountability and ethics

Reading Assignments:

Pages 67-99, 122-145 in Roger Schwarz, The Skilled Facilitator: Practical Wisdom: for Developing Effective Groups

Pages 55-84, 139-245 in Sam Kaner Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision Making