

FACILITATION SKILLS

(CONF 657)

Spring Semester 2012

School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (S-CAR)

George Mason University (GMU)

CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

Class Location: ARLFH 308

(GMU/S-CAR's Arlington, VA Campus: Founders' Hall, Room 308)

Instructor Contact Information

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April 14-15, 10:00 am - 5:00 pm

Office hours by appointment

Class Schedule

March 24, 10:00 am - 5:00 pm

March 31, 10:00 am - 5:00 pm

April 28-April 29, 10:00 am – 5:00 pm

Course Purpose: To provide certificate students with the knowledge, skills, abilities, values and behaviors to:

Assess group dynamics, development, and goals

Plan and prepare for dialogue activities, and

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 on 6 specific weekend days during March and April (see above for specific dates). The activities in these sessions will include a mixture of brief lectures, group activities and skill-building exercises, and discussion. In between the class meetings, students will actively engage in weekly online discussions on current class themes and complete assignments as described. Related expectations of students include:

Consistent attendance. You must attend all 6 class sessions for the full time scheduled, barring unforeseen and exceptional circumstances.

Effective preparation. Class will involve discussions and activities that require advance reading and sometimes other forms of preparation. Everyone will find class more productive, enjoyable, and worthwhile if each of us comes prepared. I am committed to doing so, and ask that you commit to this as well. There is a substantial amount of reading involved, including an assignment prior to the first day of class. Please pace yourself, and feel free to read ahead.

Courtesy and civility. I seek to foster a positive classroom environment, characterized by shared enjoyment of the process of learning this important set of tools and theories. I ask that we all treat each other with respect, listening carefully to one another's views and seeking to learn from one another's experience and insights.

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. You can expect the same of me. If you have not done so, please familiarize yourself with the Honor Code at [HYPERLINK "http://www.gmu.edu/departments/unilife/honorcode.html"](http://www.gmu.edu/departments/unilife/honorcode.html)
<http://www.gmu.edu/departments/unilife/honorcode.html>.

Class Policies and Procedures:

Students are responsible for completing assignments on time. For each day an assignment is late, you will be penalized 2 points (out of a total of 100 points possible for the entire course, as explained below under "Grading").

I may send some class assignments and readings electronically 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 on-line. Location: ARL212 (in the main SPP suite). Contact: (703) 993-3762 [HYPERLINK "http://writingcenter.gmu.edu"](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu)
<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 contact the instructor to discuss your needs well in advance of the first class if possible. Location: SUB I, Room 222. Contact: 703-993-2474
www.gmu.edu/student/drc/

Grading: I hope to see all of you succeed in this class, and enjoy doing so. I will base my grades on the premise that each student can earn up to 100 points, as laid out below.

Points	Grade
94-100	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
70-79	C
69 and below	F

On-Line and In-Class Discussions (30%, or 30 points). This class is interactive and elicitive. We will engage in discussion not only in class, but on-line. Consistent attendance and active participation in both are important, and will account for thirty percent of your grade. I expect at least two thoughtful, substantive comments or questions from each of you on-line each week (as distinct from simply agreeing with a point someone else has made).

Skills Development (30%, or 30 points). 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 count for thirty percent of your grade. I will provide written feedback to you three times during the semester.

Facilitation Portfolio – (25%, or 25 points). Students must develop and hand in a facilitation portfolio, developed individually, including:

A “save the date” email message;

A meeting invitation;

A meeting agenda;

Proposed ground rules;

A facilitation plan;

A list of meeting materials;

A meeting summary; and

A 3-5 page paper that: (a) describes your rationale for the choices you made in producing Items 3-5 above, including linkages to course materials where relevant; (b) articulates your reflections and insights gained from the experience of producing the above; and (c) provides supporting references as appropriate.

The complete portfolio is due April 20. Items 1-6 should be for the same meeting; they can be based on either a real meeting / conference call that you facilitate outside class (e.g., for your work or volunteer activities) or a hypothetical meeting. I prefer that you seek out the opportunity to do this in the context of a real meeting, and will give you 5 extra points for doing so. You will get the most out of this exercise if the meeting is at least two hours’ duration.

However, Item 7 (the meeting summary) must be for a real meeting so that you experience the challenges of listening for the nuances of the discussion, writing at the same time, and summarizing the material in a way that would make sense both

to those who attended the meeting and those who did not.

If you prefer, Item 7 can be for a different meeting than the other items in the portfolio – e.g., a meeting in which you listen and take notes rather than facilitate. (It is difficult to both facilitate and produce the meeting summary if there are more than about 10-15 meeting participants.)

Observation/Interviews/Reflections – (15%, or 15 points) 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. You must include a description of the meeting context (e.g., ½ to one page in length), interview questions and interview notes, the meeting agenda, and a 2-3 page paper on your observations and reflections. You must use materials from class readings to support your interview, observation, and reflection. This assignment is intended to be done individually. Due April 27.

Other Considerations. I will provide more detailed rubrics in class for specific assignments showing you in advance how I will determine how many points to award you for your work on a given assignment. There will also be opportunities for extra credit for those who wish.

Required Texts (additional readings will be posted on Blackboard)

Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making, Sam Kaner with Lenny Lind, Catherine Toldi, Sarah Fisk, and Duane Berger. Jossey Bass, 2007.

The IAF Handbook of Group Facilitation, Sandy Schuman (Ed). Jossey Bass, 2005.

Communicating with Strangers: An Approach to Intercultural Communication, William B. Gudykunst and Young Yun Kim. Random House, 2002. (**Please note:** I do **not** expect you to buy the \$300+ version of this book! If the bookstore is unable to obtain used copies – currently available for \$2.00 – 40.00 on Amazon.com – I will provide the class with key excerpts, subject to applicable copyright laws. However, it is an excellent book, so I hope you can obtain a used copy from any year it was printed.)

March 24, 10:00 am-5:00 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

Accountability and ethics

Readings: Before coming to class, please read:

Syllabus

Parts I and II of The IAF Handbook of Group Facilitation, Jossey Bass, 2005.

Part I of Communicating with Strangers: An Approach to Intercultural Communication,

William B. Gudykunst and Young Yun Kim. Random House, 2002.

March 31, 10:00-5:00

Topics:

Assess group dynamics, development, and goals
Planning and preparing for meetings
Developing agendas

Readings: Before coming to class, please read:

Part III of The IAF Handbook of Group Facilitation, Jossey Bass, 2005.
Pages vii-37 of Sam Kaner, Facilitators Guide to Participatory Decision Making
Part I of Communicating with Strangers: An Approach to Intercultural Communication,
William B. Gudykunst and Young Yun Kim. Random House, 2002.

April 14 and 15, 10:00-5:00

Topics:

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

Readings: Before coming to class, please read:

Part IV of The IAF Handbook of Group Facilitation, Jossey Bass, 2005.

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

Parts II and III of Communicating with Strangers: An Approach to Intercultural Communication, William B. Gudykunst and Young Yun Kim. Random House, 2002.

April 28 and April 29, 10:00-5:00

Topics:

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

Guiding a flow

Problem solving

Reaching and documenting outcomes

Accountability and ethics

Readings: Before coming to class, please read:

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

Parts V and VI of The IAF Handbook of Group Facilitation, Jossey Bass, 2005.

Parts III and IV of Communicating with Strangers: An Approach to Intercultural Communication, William B. Gudykunst and Young Yun Kim. Random House, 2002.