

CONF 399: The Body and Conflict
Course Syllabus
Fall 2013
Wednesdays 1:30 to 4:10
Location - Thompson Hall, Room 2021

Instructor:

Stephen Kotev

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Cell: 703-282-6905

Office Hours: Scheduled Upon Request

Title: The Body and Conflict: Advanced Somatic Skills and an Exploration of How Physiology and Consciousness Influence Conflict

Course Description

This course will offer students the opportunity to study how physiology and consciousness influence conflict. The human body is an integrated system through which all sensations, perceptions, and memories are experienced. Therefore, our body is the primary instrument through which all conflict is experienced and understood.

The primary goal of this course is to build self-awareness within the students of how they physiologically react to conflict and how these reactions affect their professional and personal life. Cultivation of this awareness is central to the development of an effective self-reflective practitioner. This course provides participants with a unique opportunity to actively develop this invaluable skill.

The experience of conflict evokes a range of responses from aggression to fear, sadness, or withdrawal. Building on this newly developed self-awareness, students will next learn somatic techniques focused on breath, posture and vision that have been specifically created to mitigate these emotional and physiological reactions. Particular attention will be paid to how these emotional states trigger the fight-or-flight response and how this response affects their ability to perform under pressure.

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.

This course will be taught in a highly interactive and experiential manner. The majority of somatic exercises are paired partner practices that allow for extensive introspection and group engagement. Students will also participate in conflict resolution role-plays that are specifically designed to replicate real-world conditions. At the conclusion of this course, students will have directly experienced the strengths and limits of their current abilities. They will leave with an intimate personal understanding of how they respond to conflict situations and how they present themselves during conflict interventions.

Learning Objectives:

- ❖ To build self-awareness of how you respond to conflict
- ❖ To build skill in recognizing these responses in others
- ❖ To learn how to effectively manage the fight-or-flight response
- ❖ To understand how conflict is experienced in the body
- ❖ To understand how different physiological states affect consciousness
- ❖ To evaluate how those different states of consciousness affect conflict and your behavior
- ❖ To cultivate an effective self-reflection practice

Course Outline:

Week One – August 28th: Introductions and Overview

- Course Objectives
- What are Somatic Skills?
- What are their origins?

Week Two – September 4th: Building Somatic Awareness – Basic Somatic Exercises/Experiments

- Throwing Tissues
- Belly Breathing
- Throwing Tissues II
- Autogenic breathing variation - Grossman
- Circular Breathing – Amdur
- ❖ Required Reading: **Embodied Peacemaking: pgs. 1-25**
- **Journal Entry One Completed by September 6th**

Week Three – September 11th: Building Somatic Awareness – Basic Somatic Exercises/Experiments

- Don't Stand So Close To Me

- The Power of Words
- Pain Control

Week Four – September 18th: Building Somatic Awareness – Basic Somatic Exercises/Experiments

- Hatred
- Smiling Heart
- Towel Chopping
- ❖ Required Reading: **Embodied Peacemaking: pgs. 40-59**
- **Journal Entry Two Completed by September 20th**

Week Five – September 25th: Building Somatic Awareness – Basic Somatic Exercises/Experiments

- Inguinal Sitting
 - Pelvic Rotation
 - Towel Sitting
 - Chest Push
- Six Directions Reaching/Breathing
- Conflict Resolution Role Play
- ❖ Required Reading: **Embodied Peacemaking pgs. 26-39 & 68-76**

Week Six – October 2nd: Building Somatic Awareness – Basic Somatic Exercises/Experiments

- Walking The Gamut
- Fishing
- Conflict Resolution Role Play
- ❖ Required Reading: **Embodied Peacemaking pgs. 77-83**

Week Seven – October 9th: Origins of Somatic Skills

- The Japanese Martial Art of Aikido and Its Connection to Conflict Resolution
- ❖ Required Reading: **Embodied Peacemaking pgs. 94-102**
- **Short Reflective Practice Paper Due**

Week Eight – October 16th: The Body, Consciousness and Conflict Resolution Theory

- Conflict Resolution Theory – Can the body be the sole criterion for how we define love and violence?
 - Skype Discussion with Dr. Paul Linden
- ❖ Required Reading: **Embodied Peacemaking pgs. 101-142**

Week Nine – October 23rd: The Body, Consciousness and Conflict Resolution Theory

- Review of Conflict and Consciousness Research and Theory
- ❖ Required Reading: **Allen Nan** *Consciousness in Culture-Based Conflict and Conflict Resolution*

Week Ten – October 30th: The Body, Consciousness and Conflict Resolution Theory

- Non-verbal Communication
- In-depth Study of the Fight-or-Flight Response
- ❖ Required Reading: **Grossman pgs. 1-16 and Taylor** *Biobehavioral Responses to Stress in Females: Tend-and-Befriend, not Fight-or-flight*
- **Journal Entry Three Completed by November 2nd**

Week Eleven – November 6th: The Body, Consciousness and Conflict Resolution Theory

- Review of Grossman’s text “On Killing”
 - Are we inherently drawn to violence?
 - Or are there inherent safeguards in place that discourage killing?
- ❖ Required Reading: **Grossman pgs. 17-36, 97-106 and 149-170**

Week Twelve – November 13th: The Body, Consciousness and Conflict Resolution Theory

- Love and Hate – How specific physiological states directly affect our ability to deal with conflict situations
- ❖ Required Reading: **Embodied Peacemaking: pgs. 40-59 (Review again)**

Week Thirteen – November 20th: Real World Application

- Conflict Resolution Role-Plays – How do you really perform under pressure?
 - Introduction of Somatic Conflict Resolution Protocol
- ❖ Required Reading: **Linden’s Somatic Conflict Resolution Protocol**
- **Journal Entry Four Completed by November 22nd and Skill Development Journal Due**

Week Fourteen – December 4th:

- Course Review and Closing
- **Final Paper due by December 9th**

Grading and Student Assessment:

Grading Scale:

- A+: 95-100 points
- A: 90-94 points
- B+: 85-89 points
- B: 80-84 points
- C+: 75-79 points
- C: 70-74 points
- D: 65-69 points
- D: 60-64 points
- F: 68-below points

Final assessment will be based on the following factors:

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Participation | 35 |
| 2. Short Reflective Practice Paper | 15 |
| 3. Skill Development Journal | 15 |
| 4. Final Paper | <u>35</u> |
| | 100 |

Readings: You are expected to read the assigned material prior to the class and to apply the readings to your papers and in class discussions. Class time will be used to reinforce and apply an understanding of the material by engaging in class discussions.

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. (35 points)

2. Short Reflective Practice Paper: By October 9, 2013, you will submit a short paper that presents an example(s) of how you have applied the somatic skills learned in this course to your professional or personal life. Papers should detail specific awareness of how your physiology initially responds to stressful situations and how you applied the techniques learned in this course to either improve your performance or avoid/manage the Fight-or-Flight response. Please provide specific examples of what your physiology was like before and after the application of these techniques and how this change in physiology correlated to a change in performance. Your paper should also demonstrate a basic understanding of what triggered your Fight-or-Flight response in these situations and why the somatic techniques you implemented were effective in avoiding/managing this response.

Papers should be at least 1,200 words and should not exceed 1,600 words and sent to skotev@gmu.edu in Microsoft Word document or a compatible format. (15 points)

3. Skill Development Journal: This self-reflection exercise asks students to compose four journal entries that highlight how they have applied the skills learned in this course to their personal lives. Each entry will be no less than 250 words and no more than 500 words. (15 points)

Journal entry one will document your current understanding of:

- Somatics
- How your physiology affects your ability/capability to resolve conflict
- Your current ability to manage your physiology in conflict situations

This entry will be your 'baseline' assessment against which you will measure your future progress and should be completed by September 6th.

Journal entry two will discuss:

- Your current assessment of your personal self-awareness, specifically your physiological self-awareness
- What do you notice?
- What changes have you begun to notice in your self-awareness?

This entry should be completed by September 20th.

Journal entry three will discuss:

- Your current self-assessment of your ability to manage the Fight-or-Flight response
- How have you applied what you have learned in this class to your personal or professional life?

This entry should be completed by November 2nd.

Journal entry four will discuss:

- The progress you have made from the start of this course
- What are you able to do now that were not able to do before?
 - Be specific as possible in your examples

This entry should be completed by November 22nd. Once you have completed this final entry, please email all of your journal entries to the instructor by November 22nd.

4. Final Paper: Building off of journal entry four, your final paper should further detail your progress in developing somatic self-awareness and your understanding of how mastering the skills learned in this course will help you better manage/resolve conflict situations.

You should provide specific examples of how you have used the skills learned in this course to prevent or resolve conflict situations in your professional or personal life. Also detail what you would have done before learning the skills taught in this course had you been in the same situation.

In the second half of this paper, outline your current understanding of how the body/your physiological state affects your ability to manage/resolve conflict. Demonstrate your knowledge of how the Fight-or-Flight response and different states of consciousness (e.g. love and hate) affects your ability execute tasks and resolve/manage conflict.

Finally, discuss what merit you find in learning the skills taught in this course. Are they of benefit to you? How do you plan to use them in the future? What do you know now that you did not know before?

Papers are due by December 9th and should be at least 1,750 words and should not exceed 2,250 words. (35 points)

Required Texts:

Linden, Paul (2003) *Reach Out: Body Awareness Training for Peacemaking*, CCMS Publications, Columbus. (Available for free download at <http://www.being-in-movement.com/reach-out>)

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/embodiedpeace>)

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

Recommend Reading:

Allen Nan, Susan (2011) *Consciousness in Culture-Based Conflict and Conflict Resolution*, *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, vol. 28, no. 3, Spring 2011, Josey Bass, New York

Amdur, Ellis (2011) *Safety at Work: Skills to Calm and De-escalate Aggressive and Mentally Ill Individuals*, Edgework Books, Seattle.

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.
- Givens, David (2008) *Crime Signals: How to Spot a Criminal Before You Become a Victim*, St. Martin's Press, New York.
- Grossman, Dave and Christensen, Loren W. (2004) *On Combat: The Psychology and Physiology of Deadly Conflict in War and Peace*, PPCT Research Publications.
- McGuigan, Richard and Popp, Nancy (2012) Consciousness and Conflict (Explained Better?) *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 3, Spring 2012, Josey Bass, New York
- Pentland, Alexander (2008) *Honest Signals: How They Shape Our World*, MIT Press Books, Cambridge.
- Remland, Martin (2004) *Nonverbal Communication in Everyday Life*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston.
- Saotome, Mitsugi (1993) *Aikido and the Harmony of Nature*, Shambhala Publications, Boston.
- Sheridan, Sam (2010) *The Fighter's Mind*, Grove Press, New York
- Taylor, Shelly E et al (2000) *Biobehavioral Responses to Stress in Females: Tend-and-Befriend, not Fight-or-flight*, *Psychological Review*, Vol 107, No 3. 411-429, American Psychological Association, Inc., Washington D.C.

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.

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 for more information.

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.

Office Hours:

I maintain a commitment to be available to you and to assist you in your learning and respond to any concerns you may have during the semester. I will make myself available to meet with you before or after class or schedule a time that works for both of us. Please submit any requests to the email or telephone listed above.

Absences:

An absence is excused when due to serious illness, religious observance, participation in University activities at the request of University authorities, or compelling circumstances beyond your control. To claim an excused absence, you must provide a signed letter by a person in a

position to make an authoritative determination as to the validity of the cause of the absence upon your return from that absence. In cases where you know you will be missing class, please advise the professor(s) as soon as possible. You are responsible for all announcements, assignments, and date changes made in class and for all material covered in class while you were absent.