

CONF 320 – Interpersonal Conflict Analysis and Resolution

Spring Semester 2013

Faculty:
Sandra I. Cheldelin
Alex Cromwell

Thursdays, 4:30-7:10 pm
Saturdays, 9:00-4:00 pm (2/9 and 3/23 location TBA)
Location on Thursdays: Thompson Hall Loo4
Cheldelin Office Hours: by appointment (202.486.7796) scheldel@gmu.edu
Cromwell Office Hours: by appointment (571.606.3710) acromwe1@gmu.edu

Course Description and Objectives

This course examines a variety of theories, models, and frameworks for analyzing and resolving interpersonal conflict. We will begin by exploring the role of conflict in your own individual development, family relations, and social experiences early in life. You will consider the various dimensions of yourself and your social interactions that lead to interpersonal conflict situations. You will have opportunities to analyze a range of interpersonal conflicts, their possible associated causes, and methods of inquiry that lead to resolution. You will learn and practice skills for responding constructively to conflict and engaging in difficult conversations. Through interviews, class discussions, analyses, exercises, and simulations, you will reflect on such questions as:

- Who am I and what do I bring to this particular conflict?
- What is my range of options to begin a resolution process?
- What skills do I have to prevent, deescalate and resolve interpersonal conflicts?
- What skills do I need to develop?

Reflection is encouraged at both the individual and group levels to further develop skills and deepen your understanding of interpersonal conflict and its management or resolution.

Course Requirements

There are four components of the course: class participation, skill building, learning via research and readings and self-reflection. These are of equal importance and will be assessed as follows:

1. Participation (25 points)

Because much of this course involves in-class, experiential learning, participation constitutes a significant portion of the course grade. While attendance is expected, you are to participate fully in all exercises and complete all weekly, required assignments and readings in preparation for class discussion. We will begin and end each class on time. Sometimes absence from class is unavoidable. If

you know you are going to be absent, contact Sandra Cheldelin in advance (scheldel@gmu.edu). Please come prepared for full participation.

2. Skill Building (25 points)

While each week we will have cases to discuss and analyze, two Saturdays are set aside specifically for interpersonal conflict resolution skill building. You will work in small groups on ways to intervene in interpersonal conflict. Following practice, you will submit a video recorded conflict scenario. [Note: The details and expectations will be discussed in class.]

3. Midterm Paper (25 points)

You will be given an assignment on February 28 for a midterm paper due March 7. The primary purpose of the 5-6 page paper is to demonstrate your integration of the readings and class lectures. [Note: the specifics of the paper will be discussed in class--approximately

4. Final Reflection Paper (25%)

Early in the semester you will identify a specific interpersonal conflict you are experiencing that deeply affects you. As you move along in the semester you will be able to apply what you are learning from the readings and class exercises to this conflict. By the end of the class you submit a self-reflection paper that demonstrates your ability to analyze the conflict, identify changes in your own thinking and behavior regarding the conflict, including how you view the other person(s). The final reflection paper (8-10 pages) will demonstrate your capacity to integrate readings, exercises, skill building and self-reflection. [Note: you will receive specific guidelines in class.] The paper is due one week after the last class, April 4 (week 11).

Required Text (Available in Bookstore)

Wilmot, William W. and Joyce L. Hocker. *Interpersonal Conflict*, 8th Ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011.

Required Articles/Book Chapters, Available on Dropbox

Arbinger Institute, *The Anatomy of Peace: Resolving the Heart of Conflict*, San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2006. (Ch. 5, 10, 22)

Tripp, Thomas M. and Bies, Robert J., *Getting Even: the Truth about Workplace Revenge—and How to Stop It*, San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2009 (Ch. 2)

Gopin, Marc, *Healing the Heart of Conflict: 8 Crucial Steps for Making Peace with Yourself and Others*. New York: Rodale Inc. 2004. (Ch. 1, 2, 4, 8)

Nhat Hanh, Thich. "We Have the Compassion and Understanding Necessary to Heal the World," in *Mindful Politics*, ed. Melvin McLeod. Somerville: Wisdom Publications. pp. 128-138. 2006.

Rosenberg, Marshal, *Nonviolent Communication: The Language of Compassion*.

Stone, Douglas, Bruce Patton and Sheila Heen. *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*. New York: Viking, 1999. (Introduction & Ch. 1)

Wiesenthal, Simon. *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness*. New York: Schocken Books Inc. 1997. (summary, Responses by the Dalai Lama, Herbert Marcuse, Robert Coles, Desmond Tutu)

Class Policies and Procedures

Regarding cell phones and computers: Please turn OFF all cell phones during class. Use of computers is only permitted during lectures for note-taking. Computers should be shut off during class discussions, presentations, exercises, and exams.

Please familiarize yourself with the Honor System and Code, as stated in the George Mason University's *Undergraduate Catalog*. When you are given an assignment as an individual, the work must be your own. Some of your work may be collaborative; source material for group projects and work of individual group members must be carefully documented for individual contributions. For an overview of the Honor Code, see: <http://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/plagiarism.htm>. I will randomly use *Turn it In* to make sure the work is original or properly cited.

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:** Robinson Hall A, room 114. **Contact:** (703) 993-1200 or <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu> **Hours:** Tuesday through Thursday from 9:30 to 7:30. Friday hours are 9:30 to 2:30.

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/

Weekly Themes, Readings and Assignments

Week 1: Thursday, January 24, 2013 Introduction and Course Overview

Class Exploration:

- Introductions and expectations
- Overview of course and syllabus
- Interpersonal conflict—the context of studying conflict

Assignment:

- Identify a personal goal for the class. What interpersonal conflict are you currently struggling with? What skills do you want to develop or improve to address this conflict? What do you want to do differently when you find yourself steeped in this interpersonal conflict as well as others? Be specific. Email your goal to scheldel@gmu.edu Due Sunday, January 27, 2013
- In groups of 2, submit an electronic image—taken by your dyad—that reflects your notion of “interpersonal conflict.” Be prepared to explain your photo. Submit it to Dropbox no later than Sunday, January 27, 2013

Week 2: Thursday, January 31, 2013 An Introduction to Interpersonal Conflict

Class Exploration:

- Review of individual goals; discussion
- Review of photos from groups
- What is interpersonal conflict?
- Why is it important to study interpersonal conflict?
- What are the causes of interpersonal conflict?
- Small group discussion – left-hand column exercise

Readings and assignments (complete before class):

- Submit the image of “interpersonal conflict” by Sunday, January 27 to Dropbox

- Submit the individual goals by Sunday, January 27 to scheldel@gmu.edu
- Wilmot & Hocker, Chapters 1 and 2: *The Nature of Conflict* and *Perspectives on Conflict* (pages 19-53 only)

WEEK 3: Thursday, February 7, 2013
What are the causes of interpersonal conflict?

Class Exploration:

- Interests and goals—why these are important
- Conflict Goal Diagrams using TRIP model
- Preparation for Saturday seminar

Readings (complete before class):

- Wilmot & Hocker, Chapter 3: *Interests and Goals* (pages 71-102)

Week 3
Anatomy of Peace Seminar, Saturday, February 9, 2013
9:00-4:00 TBA location

Class Exploration:

- The Pattern of Conflict—Collusion
- Choosing War—the Choice Diagram
- Spreading Peace—the Peacemaking Pyramid
- Difficult Conversations Seminar—the 3 Conversations

Reading (complete before class)

- Arbinger Institute: *The Anatomy of Peace: Resolving the Heart of Conflict*: Chapter 5, 10, 22 (pp. 38-49, pp. 81-91, pp. 201-213)
- Stone, Patton & Heen: Introduction and Chapter 1: *The Problem*

Week 4: Thursday, February 14, 2013
How do we behave in interpersonal conflict?

Class Exploration:

- Styles and tactics and your preferences
- Activity: personal response to conflict
- Dual Concerns Model
- Emotions and Revenge

Readings and assignments (complete before class):

- Wilmot and Hocker, Chapter 5, *Styles and Tactics* (pages 144-191)
- Complete the Thomas Killman Instrument and bring to class (dropbox)
- Rosenberg, Chapter 1
- Gopin, Chapter 2, *Feel*
- View the video of Daniel Goleman's presentation at Google:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hoo_dIOP8k
- Tripp and Bies: *Peering into the Soul of Discontent: The Phenomenon of Revenge* (Chapter 2)

WEEK 5: Thursday, February 21, 2013
How does our identity and background impact interpersonal conflict?

Class Exploration:

- Gender, culture, life experiences
- The lens model of conflict
- An exercise in small group interpersonal conflict
- Basic Human Needs/ Hierarchy of Needs

Readings and Assignments (complete before class):

- Wilmot & Hocker, Chapter 2 (pp. 56-61 only), *The lens model of conflict*

WEEK 6: Thursday, February 28, 2013
Power and Communication

Class Exploration:

- Power and Influence
- Listening
- How interpersonal conflicts begin and escalate
- Midterm assignment will be distributed

Readings (complete prior to class):

- Wilmot and Hocker: Chapter 4, *Power: the Structure of Conflict* (pages 103-143)
- Gopin, Chapter 4, *Hear*

WEEK 7: Thursday, March 7, 2013
Mapping Interpersonal Conflicts

Class Exploration:

- Midterm paper due
- Frameworks for analyzing conflict
- Mapping practice

Readings and Assignment (complete prior to class):

- Wilmot and Hocker: Chapter 7, *Mapping Your Conflicts*[^] (pages 218-244)
- Write a role-play reflecting an interpersonal conflict you have been a party to or have witnessed that involves a minimum of two people. Identify the specifics for each person. Bring to class for the mapping exercise.

WEEK 8: Thursday, March 21, 2013
Intervening in Interpersonal Conflicts

Class Exploration:

- Interpersonal negotiation
- Apology, forgiveness and reconciliation
- Third Party Intervention

Readings (complete prior to class):

- Wilmot and Hocker: Chapters 8, 9 & 10, *Interpersonal Negotiation, Third-Party Intervention and Forgiveness and Reconciliation* (pages 244-333)

WEEK 8
Practicing Interpersonal Conflict Resolution, Saturday, March 23, 2013
9:00-4:00 TBA location
Moderating Conflict

Class Exploration:

- Practicing interpersonal conflict resolution
- Focus on integration and reflection
 - Mindfulness
 - Identity/Gender, Culture, etc.
 - Emotions
 - Listening
 - Speaking
 - Forgiveness

Readings (please complete prior to class):

- Bayda, Ezra, *The Path to Forgiveness in Mindful Politics*, ed. Melvin McLeod. Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2006, pp 171-180
- Gopin: Ch. 1, Ch. 8 *Be, Speak*
- Nhat Hanh, Thich. "We Have the Compassion and Understanding Necessary to Heal the World," In *Mindful Politics*, pp. 128-138.
- Wiesel, Summary, Responses by the Dalai Lama, Herbert Marcuse, Robert Coles, Desmond Tutu
- Wilmot and Hocker: Chapter 10, *Forgiveness and Reconciliation* (pages 296-333)

WEEK 10: Thursday, March 28, 2013
Wrap up and Class Debrief

Class Exploration:

- Final Paper Due one week from today (April 4; you are welcome to hand it in today)
- What do we know about interpersonal conflict?
- How would you resolve...
- Feedback and course evaluation