

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

CONF 320-001: Interpersonal Conflict Analysis and Resolution – Fall 2006

Instructor: Nina Spruill

Class Time: Wed., 1:30 - 4:10 p.m.

Office: Robinson B 365

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Location: ENT 173

Hours: Wed., 4:30 - 6pm or by appt.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Hocker, J. L., Wilmot, W. W. 1995. *Interpersonal conflict*. Dubuque: Wm. C. Brown Communications, Inc.

Seashore, Seashore, and Weinberg. 1992. *What did you say? The art of giving and receiving feedback*. Columbia, MD: Bingham House Books

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Covers conflict at the micro level. Students are introduced to various theories of conflict drawing from various disciplines including psychology, anthropology, and conflict resolution. From readings, case studies and role plays, students will develop the ability to analyze and intervene in interpersonal conflicts. Also prepares students for further coursework if they choose the Interpersonal Conflict Concentration of the CAR major.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Introduce key theories, models, and other conceptual frameworks.
- Help students to think systematically and analytically about interpersonal conflict. At times, this may represent a change in your accepted thinking patterns. As such, it means acquiring new information *and* learning new thinking skills; reading about and discussing analytical tools *and* applying those tools. Particular analytical approaches both limit and expand our view of conflict and options for dealing with it. Students will learn about a variety of tools and learn to notice the assumptions upon which these tools rest.
- Connect theory to practice through self-reflection, discussion, in-class activities, and case study review.
- Assess and expand repertoire of interpersonal skills and ability to make contextually appropriate behavioral choices
- Develop methods of receiving and giving feedback appropriate to context and personal style
- Increase awareness of the role that ones assumptions, values, and perception play in conflict analysis and intervention
- Demonstrate the ability to be a reflective practitioner
- Consider what areas of CAR might be satisfying for your personal practice

Course Schedule and Assignments

Date	Topic	Reading Due	Assignments Due
30-Aug	Introductions and Overview Intra/Interpersonal Communication Perception. Perspectives on Conflict	H&W, Ch. 1	In class begin to form small groups
Part One: Conflict Components			
6-Sep	Perspectives on Conflict	H&W, Ch. 1	Show and Tell
13-Sep	The Nature of Conflict	H&W, Ch. 2 E-reserve: Dugan, Maire A. "A Nested Theory of Conflict"	Journal 1
20-Sep	Interests and Goals	H&W, Ch. 3 Seashore, Parts 1 and 2 pg. 1-51	
27-Sep	Power: The Structure of Conflict	H&W, Ch. 4 E-Reserve: Coleman, Peter. "Power and Conflict" E-Reserve: John Burton. "Needs theory"	Journal 2
4-Oct	Styles and Tactics	H&W, Ch. 5 Seashore, Part 3 pg. 53-90	
Part Two: Conflict Intervention			
11-Oct	Assessing Conflicts	H&W, Ch. 6 E-reserve: Fisher et al "Tools for Conflict Analysis"	Exam 1
18-Oct	Moderating Your Conflicts	H&W, Ch. 7 Seashore, Part 4 pg. 91-136	Film Analysis Part I
25-Oct	Negotiating	H&W, Ch. 8 Seashore, Parts 5 and 6 pg. 137-192	
1-Nov	Third-Party Intervention	H&W, Ch. 9 E-Reserve: Kevin Avruch, "Type I and type II errors in culturally sensitive CR practice"	Presentations: Intervention Practice Research Project
8-Nov	Preventing Destructive Conflict	H&W, Ch. 11	
15-Nov	Forgiveness and Reconciliation	H&W, Ch. 10 E-Reserve: Kriesberg, Louis. "Truth and Morality"	Exam 2
22-Nov	No class - Thanksgiving Holiday		
29-Nov	Integration		Individual Research Paper
6-Dec	In-class exercise Wrap it up		Extra Credit: Film Analysis Part II

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Details and guidelines for individual and group projects will be made available on the class WebCT site. Some projects require participation in a peer review process with your classmates prior to finalizing.

Attendance and Participation: (10%) Attendance in class is not only mandatory but crucial if you would like to succeed in this course. Participation in discussions and completion of class exercises is critical to learning. If you are not here, you cannot participate. Read and *reflect* on the readings ahead of time. Attendance is taken at the beginning of each class. Participation is assessed throughout the semester as we complete in-class discussion and activities.

Exams: A mid-term exam (10%) and a final exam (15%) will be given to gauge your understanding of vocabulary and concepts presented in the text and in class. To review, self quizzes can be accessed from the On-line Learning Center companion to your text.

Individual Projects:

Reflective Journals: (20%) Two reflective journal assignments (3-4 pages) will be given during the semester at 10% each.

Film Analysis: (15%) For this project, you will need to watch a pre-selected film. In a 5 page paper, you will investigate and analyze interpersonal conflict(s) in the film using concepts from the text and class discussion.

Individual Research Paper: (20%) Each student will select a single conflict case, with instructor's approval. Using a range of analytical and intervention tools, each student will carry out an interpersonal conflict analysis and propose an intervention strategy. The purpose of the paper is to emphasize and utilize conflict analysis and resolution concepts to both describe and analyze the conflict and the possible intervention and resolution strategies.

Group Project:

At the beginning of the term, the class will form research groups of 3-4 members. Groups will gather throughout the semester for in-class exercises as appropriate and to complete one external projects/presentation as a team. All group members will be assigned the same grade unless special circumstances suggest otherwise. You will have an opportunity to assess the participation of your group members at the end of the team process.

Intervention Practice Research Project: (10%) This assignment is designed to give you the opportunity to get to know first-hand about at least one alternative dispute resolution (ADR) resource in the local area, and to introduce you to the variety of services available. As a group, you will research, organize a 4-5 page report, and present information regarding a specific ADR organization of your choice. Alternatively, you may choose to research a specific interpersonal conflict technique or type of practice, for example, appreciative inquiry, mediation (victim offender, divorce, family), human resource counseling, ombuds practice, etc.

Extra Credit:

Film Analysis II: (5 points possible) This project requires you to design and present an *intervention strategy* drawing on the individual analysis you completed for the Film Analysis project above. This may be carried out individually or in a small group of students who have viewed the same film.

CLASS POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Classroom Environment: This course will help you to understand and analyze interpersonal conflict and make connections to potential resolution in new ways. This is a skill. Like all skills, it must be practiced, and it can always be improved. Learning a new skill requires an environment that is safe enough to make "mistakes" and challenging enough to encourage risk taking. A goal of the course is to create an environment in which we can all act as coaches and support for one another as we develop our skills. The classroom will be a place where people feel welcome and able to learn. While in this class, please show respect for yourself as well as all others in the classroom. Use appropriate evaluation in what you choose to share with the class. Consider different points of view and reserve judgment about others, their opinions, or their questions. This doesn't mean that you have to choose another point of view over your own. Make an effort to understand the foundation for a different point of view, rather than focusing only on the ways that a new or different point of view does not fit into your value system.

Assignments are due at the beginning of class the day they are listed as due. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to turn in any assignments due and get the information you missed from a classmate before class meets again. If you are absent on the day an assignment is due, and do not turn in the assignment, you will not be able to make the assignment up except in the case of a doctor's excuse, a document of death in the immediate family, or a document of a court appearance. In the case of an excused absence, assignments will be accepted up to one week from the date it was originally due. Extreme emergencies will be considered on a case by case basis. Assignments must be submitted directly to the instructor unless other arrangements have been made. Assignments that are overdue by more than one week will not be accepted.

Written Assignment Format: All written assignments must be typed, edited for spelling and grammar problems, and include proper citations for references. Use spell check! It is expected that you will cite your class texts, supplemental readings, and other sources. Papers should be single-spaced, spell-checked, and legible. Please choose Chicago or APA citation styles. You will find style guides in the reference section of the library.

Additionally, all typed assignments must follow the final format listed below:

- All submissions must be typed on standard white, 8 ½" x 11" paper with 1" margins. Use 12-point font. Times New Roman is preferred.
 - All work containing more than one page must be numbered and stapled or clipped in the upper left hand corner of the page.
 - Include the following information: Student Name, Title of Assignment, Course Number, Professor Name, Date Submitted.
- Activate and keep up with your GMU email account. Students are responsible for keeping up to date with announcements and assignments placed on the class website or sent via email.
 - Incomplete grades will only be granted in case of personal or immediate family illness or emergency.
 - Students are expected to understand their responsibilities regarding academic integrity and the university's policies regarding academic standards of acceptable behavior (Honor Code). Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated or treated lightly. If you have any questions about Honor Code issues (e.g., whether you are permitted to discuss an assignment with a fellow student, citing sources) or if you have observed Honor Code violations, please contact the instructor.

ELECTRONIC RESERVES

This course will use the library's electronic reserves, where additional readings (required and suggested) will be posted. Other readings may be passed out in class. All students are responsible for downloading and reading assignments *before* they are discussed in class.

The Library's Electronic Reserves are located at: <http://ers2000.gmu.edu/>. Click on Search Electronic Reserves, then choose CONF 320, section 001, Instructor - Nina Spruill. A link to electronic reserves can be accessed on the class WebCT site.

The password for the Electronic Reserves is: feedback

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.

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. Accommodations cannot be made without this documentation.

Location: SUB I, Room 222 **Contact:** 703-993-2474 www.gmu.edu/student/drc/

If you have any questions or concerns during the course, please feel free to contact me.

Assignments at a glance:

Assignment	Points %
Attendance and Participation:	10%
Exams: 2	25%
Reflective Journals: 2	20%
Film Analysis	15%
Individual Research Paper:	20%
Intervention Practice Research Project:	10%
Total	100%