

CONF 398/002: The Body and Conflict
Course Syllabus
Fall 2015
Mondays 1:30 to 4:10
Location - Research 201

Instructor:

Stephen Kotev

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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

The human body is an integrated system through which all sensations, perceptions, and memories are experienced and, therefore, it is the primary instrument through which all human conflict is experienced and understood. This course will focus on how our physiological reactions to stress directly inform our perception and understanding of conflict. Through participation in this course, students will tangibly experience how different body states directly correlate to our personal willingness to enact violence or embrace peace. Thus a key objective for this course is to build self-awareness within the students of how they physiologically react to conflict, stress, and aggression.

Cultivation of this self-awareness becomes instrumental to understanding our own conscious and unconscious reactions to conflict and developing into a reflective practitioner, which is a core competency for any S-CAR graduate. Moreover, it attunes conflict resolvers to similar traits in others and enables resolvers to more effectively de-escalate tense situations.

In essence, the skills taught in this course will help you perform under pressure and better manage the stress of high-conflict situations. It can also be considered a basic life skill. Learning how to better manage the fight-or-flight response and the other negative affect of stress are essential to mastering the challenges of our personal, academic, and professional lives.

This course will be taught in a highly interactive and experiential manner, primarily through the use of somatic exercises. Somatic exercises are physiological experiments that allow the students to experience stress in a safe yet challenging environment. The majority of somatic exercises are paired partner practices that allow for extensive introspection and group engagement, such that students will learn from each other as well as the professor.

A typical exercise will first allow students to determine their ‘baseline’ response to stress. Then students will be taught simple but effective techniques focused on breath, posture, and vision to effectively counteract the fight-or-flight response or other common negative physiological responses to stress and conflict. Students will then revisit the same stressful conditions earlier experienced while implementing these new found skills. Students will also participate in conflict resolution role-plays that are specifically designed to replicate real-world conditions.

This course will also address conflict resolution theory and research relevant to somatics, consciousness, and the body and conflict. Specific attention will be given to the fight-or-flight response, the Japanese martial art of Aikido, and the work of Lt. Col. Dave Grossman.

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 31st: Introductions and Overview

- Course Objectives and Overview
- What is Somatics and what are Somatic Skills?

Week Two – September 14th Building Somatic Awareness – Basic Somatic Exercises/Experiments (September 7th: Class cancelled due to Labor Day holiday)

- Throwing Tissues
- Belly Breathing
- Throwing Tissues II
- Autogenic Breathing Variation - Grossman
- Circular Breathing Variation – Amdur
- ❖ Required Reading: **Embodied Peacemaking: pgs. 1-25**
- **Journal Entry One Completed by September 16th**

Week Three – September 21st: Building Somatic Awareness – Basic Somatic Exercises/Experiments

- Don't Stand So Close To Me
- The Power of Words
- Pain Control

Week Four – September 28th: 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 30th**

Week Five – October 5th: Building Somatic Awareness – Basic Somatic Exercises/Experiments

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

Week Six – October 13th: Building Somatic Awareness – Basic Somatic Exercises/Experiments
(class moved due to Columbus Day Holiday)

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

Week Seven – October 19th: Origins of Somatic Skills

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

Week Eight – October 26th: The Body, Consciousness, and 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 – November 2nd: 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 – November 9th: 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 Wise from *Extreme Fear* chapters 1 & 6**
- ❖ **Guest Lecturer – Julia Morelli on Yoga (Wear comfortable clothes to this class)**
- **Journal Entry Three Completed by November 11th**

Week Eleven – November 16th: 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 23rd: The Body, Consciousness, and Conflict Resolution Theory

- Love and Hate – How specific physiological states directly affect our ability to deal with conflict situations. (Depending on the interest of the class this topic could be changed to *Risk Reduction and Safety Planning for ADR Conveners.*)
- ❖ Required Reading: **Embodied Peacemaking: pgs. 40-59 (Review again)**
- **Journal Entry Four Completed by November 24th and Skill Development Journal Due**

Week Thirteen – November 30th: 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**

Week Fourteen – December 7th:

- Course Review and Closing
- **Final Paper due by December 14th**

Grading Standards for the Course:

A - Superior: Student shows excellent critical analysis in oral contributions and writing; all assignments turned in on time.

B - Very Good: Solid work evidenced by careful synthesis of reading, timely contributions to class discussion, and clear, logical writing; all or most assignments turned in on time.

C - Satisfactory: Work demonstrates some understanding of materials and an average performance in written assignments and class discussion; some assignments turned in on time.

D - Inconsistent: Meager performance in all assignments and class discussion; late in turning in written work.

F - Failing: Student makes minimal effort, shows little understanding of assignments, and turns in incomplete or unacceptable work.

Grading Scale:

A+: 98-100 points	B+: 89-88 points	C+: 79-78 points	D: 69-60 points
A: 94-97 points	B: 87-84 points	C: 77-74 points	F: 59-below points
A-: 93-90 points	B-: 83-80 points	C-: 73-70 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>
Total points:	100

Written assignments: I expect well-written and thoughtful papers that adhere to the prescribed length outlined in the assignment description. Please edit your papers carefully as spelling and grammatical errors will lower your score. Papers must be typed and double-spaced, using Times New Roman 12-point font and one-inch paper margins. Properly cite material and ideas that are not your own. If in doubt, please ask me.

Endnotes, bibliography, and title pages do not count towards the assigned paper length.

Number your pages. Title pages are not required, but you are welcome to design and format them as you please. The file names of electronic documents must include CONF 398-002, your name and the assignment completed (e.g. CONF 398-002 - Stephen Kotev - Final Paper).

Papers (hard copy and digital) are due no later than the beginning of class on the due date. All other papers are due by midnight of the date assigned. Extensions will be arranged only for documented personal illness or family emergencies. Otherwise, late papers will have 5 points deducted from the final score for each day past the due date.

Readings: You are expected to read the assigned material prior to the class and 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.

Attendance and participation: You are expected to attend each class and fully participate in class discussion, exercises, and presentations. Due to the somatic/physiological 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)

Course Assignments:

Short Reflective Practice Paper: By October 19, 2015, 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. Provide an example of a stressful situation you recently experienced and detail your initial response to that stress or conflict. Utilizing the somatic checklist, provide specific examples of your physiological reaction(s) to this situation. Then discuss how you applied the techniques learned in this course to counteract or better manage any negative physiological effects that resulted from this stressful situation. 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 the situation 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)

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 or

professional 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 16th.

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 30th.

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 11th.

Journal entry four:

For your final entry, think of a current and ongoing personal or professional interpersonal dispute. First, focus on how your body reacts/responds when you think of this situation. Then spend 15 minutes practicing either the basic belly breathing or 6-Directions breathing. Then revisit this scenario from a centered state brought about by these somatic techniques. Discuss how this practice influenced your consciousness or perception of your dispute.

This entry should be completed by November 24th.

Final Paper: A central theme throughout this course has been the idea that “Who you are is who you bring into the room.” Discuss what this phrase means to you and how the information you learned in this course has informed your perception of yourself. How have you changed? What are you able to do now that you were unable to do before? What have you learned about yourself that you did not know before? How does this new knowledge affect your personal approaches to conflict and your work as a conflict resolver?

In the second part of your paper, synthesize the theory and concepts presented in class into cogent themes. Demonstrate your comprehension of these concepts and illustrate what each theme contributes to the field of conflict resolution. Highlight the general principles associated with each concept and how they apply to real-world conflict resolution applications. Why do these theories and concepts matter? What is their relevance?

Papers are due by December 14th 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/resources/books/reach-out-body-awareness-training-peacemaking%E2%80%945-easy-lessons>)

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/resources/books/embodied-peacemaking-body-awareness-self-regulation-and-conflict-resolution>)

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.

Mayer, Bernard (2015) *The Conflict Paradox, Seven Dilemmas at the Core of Disputes*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

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

Sheridan, Sam (2012) *The Disaster Diaries*, The Penguin 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.

Wise, Jeff (2009) *Extreme Fear*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York

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. Use of the Writing Center is STRONGLY encouraged for all participants of this course. It is a great resource for all aspects of writing, such as organizing ideas, improving your writing style/grammar, and revising a paper. The services of the Writing Center are in high demand, so be sure to schedule your appointments early in the semester.

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.

Students with educational needs: GMU is committed to providing educational opportunities to a broad range of students, including those with different educational needs. Once students have registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474, you must then provide a faculty contact sheet from that office explaining your learning difference. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office, and I will do my best to ensure proper arrangements for lecture notes, test taking, and/or assignment deadlines. However, students must be registered with DRS to receive this support, and **I must be notified no later than the second week of the semester**. More information can be found at <http://ods.gmu.edu/students/>.

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 number 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.