

- CONFLICT MANAGEMENT -

COMM 426, Section 0101: Spring 2014

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:30-4:45 pm, KEY 0102 (DATES/ TIMES/LOCATION UNKNOWN)

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Course Overview

You have engaged in conflicts since you were a toddler, and have undoubtedly continued to encounter conflict throughout your life- with strangers, friends, family, romantic partners, coworkers, merchants, and more. This course is designed to provide you with a deeper understanding of conflict, drawing from diverse disciplines including communication, psychology, politics, and business. We will focus on understanding and analyzing the layered sources and causes of conflict, the impact of power, personal styles, and perception, and the processes through which conflict can be managed and resolved.

An important part of this course will involve turning our classroom into a conflict skills workshop. Activities, discussion groups, and simulations will provide opportunity to reflect, hone, and develop conflict management skills. Since everyone is already entering this classroom with experience in facing conflict, the goal of these workshops is to create a safe space to think differently, try out new skills and approaches, and overcome barriers that may have challenged your ability to constructively engage in conflict situations in the past.

It is important that class time become an environment for open and honest reflection. I encourage you to use your own personal experience as a part of our discussions and be sensitive to the perspectives and experiences of others. This critical self-reflection is very valuable in making each of us better at handling conflicts.

By the end of the course you should be able to:

1. Understand the dynamics of conflict and its resolution
2. Improve your skills in self reflection and self awareness in the face of conflict
3. Understand the processes of negotiation, mediation, facilitation, and consensus building

4. Develop your skills in conflict communication
5. Understand how to analyze conflict from a systems view
6. Conduct a conflict analysis

Required Reading

Required Books

Mayer, Bernard (2000). *The Dynamics of Conflict Resolution*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

The course book is available at the university bookstore or can be purchased online.

Additional required readings or course content will be available on <http://elms.umd.edu>.

Note on Sustainability in this course

This course is a part of the University of Maryland's sustainability efforts, called the Chesapeake Project. This project aims to support faculty in the effort to integrate themes of sustainability into the classroom.

There are many important synergies between sustainability and conflict management. In order to create a safe and sustainable future, we must, as a society, learn how to manage and resolve conflicts with one another. Our most pressing challenges as a globe require that we show skillfulness in engaging with each other, recognizing how we can creatively approach our interdependent goals to create new opportunities for a better future. I hope that through your participation in this conflict management course, you will find this voice within yourself.

There are both substantive and procedural ways that this course is infused with the theme of sustainability. Most reading materials and assignments will be handled entirely through electronic means, helping us to limit our use (or overuse) of paper. I have also added curriculum that focuses us on environmental conflicts. The Chesapeake Bay case study project, and a course session about systems thinking are two examples of this effort.

I look forward to embarking on this project with you.

Course Policies

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

You are expected to attend all classes for this course, be prepared, and be on time. The class is built around experiential learning, meaning that learning will take place

through “doing”. It is essential to success in this class that you be present and engaged in class activities, exercises and discussions. The course material that will appear in the midterm and final is drawn as much from the lectures, videos, and in-class group activities as it is from the reading materials, so being present in class is vital.

It is very important that if an assignment requires that you set a time to meet with teammates or your role play partners outside of class time, that you work with your classmates to find a time convenient to all (even if it requires the use of Skype or phone calls) to attend these meetings. Failing to uphold your end of the deal in attending classes and meetings for which your teammates grades depend can result in you receiving a lower grade or failing grade for that assignment (see below for information about valid excuses for missing class). It is each student’s responsibility to attend any out of class group meetings as agreed upon by the team.

The University recognizes four legitimate excuses for missing class: Illness (of self or a dependent), religious observance (where the nature of the observance prevents class attendance), participation in University activities at the request of University authorities, or compelling circumstances beyond the student’s control.

If your absence is due to any of these four types of excuses, provide me with a letter of explanation, preferably by e-mail, as soon as reasonably possible informing me of the reason for your absence. Your failure to be honest with me is a violation of the Student Honor Code. If you are absent for two or more consecutive class sessions due to one of these legitimate excuses, you are required to submit to me a letter signed by a person in a position to make an authoritative determination as to the validity of the absence, including the phone number of the individual who signed, and presented to me within 5 days of your return to school. I reserve the right to contact the person who signed your letter to check on the validity of the content and authority of the letter. These are the only situations in which you will be allowed to reschedule an assignment due date or exam. If you miss an assignment that is based on in class activities, such as a report related to an in class exercise, these cannot be made up.

Students who miss class are responsible for obtaining all material and information that they missed. This includes any changes to the schedule that are announced in class.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The University of Maryland expects all students uphold intellectual honesty in their academic work. Cheating, plagiarism, fabrication of information or citations, and facilitating academic dishonesty of another student could result in failing the relevant assignment, the potential for the failure of a course, or even more severe sanctions.

In this class, it is essential that you demonstrate honor in maintaining the confidentiality of the role specific information for course role play exercises. This

means that you may not share, steal, or snoop to find out the confidential details from another student's role. Doing so will ruin the learning value of these exercises and may result in your failure of an assignment or the course in total.

University of Maryland Honor Pledge: The University of Maryland has a nationally recognized Honor Code, administered by the Student Honor Council. The UMD Honor Pledge states: *I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment/ examination.* This statement must be handwritten on all exams.

More information about the Code of Academic Conduct or the Student Honor Council is available at <http://shc.umd.edu/SHC/Default.aspx>.

ACCOMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The University of Maryland is committed to making appropriate accommodations to individuals with disabilities that have been documented by the Disability Support Service (4-7682 or dissup@umd.edu). If you wish to discuss academic accommodations for this class, please contact the instructor as soon as possible.

INCELEMENT WEATHER

In the case of inclement weather, official closures and delays are announced on the campus website <http://www.umd.edu> and snow phone line (301-405-SNOW). For other emergencies, see: <http://www.umd.edu/emergencypreparedness/index.cfm> .

Assignments

- **30 % Participation Assignments (In -class)**

Preparation, self-awareness, and an ability to be reflective about one's manner of engaging around conflict is essential to success in managing conflict. Completing in-class exercises and role-play evaluations can assist you in becoming more reflective and self aware in conflict situations. Completion of the reading assignments and participation in the course discussion will add much to your learning and facilitate more robust learning.

To maximize in class participation, you will be expected to complete 15 short in-class responses or reflections. There will be a total of 18 in-class assignments, so you may miss 3 of them without penalty. There will be no more than one participation assignment per class session.

The majority of these assignments will be submitted electronically during class, meaning that you are expected to bring a laptop computer with you to the classroom in order to complete the assignment. While having a laptop on hand is generally considered essential, should you not have your laptop on a particular day, some

hard copies of the assignments will be made available. *No more than 4 participation assignments can be handed in in a hard copy format.*

- **30% Applied Conflict Assignment**

In order to develop skills in conflict assessment, groups of students (3-5 students per group) will be responsible for conducting an assessment of a conflict of their choice (in consultation with the instructor). Ideally, students will select an interpersonal, local, or community conflict in which they conduct direct field research through gathering background data and interviewing key parties and/or interveners.

2 points: Submit one paragraph summary describing the conflict your group would like to address. Instructor will review and okay each topic. If a topic is deemed unsuitable for the assignment, students may be asked to modify their chosen topic.

Due TBD

15 points: The group will be responsible for producing a report that is 10-15 pages long. The paper should provide a brief summary of the conflict, a conflict analysis mapping key parties and their underlying needs and interests, a description of the conflict dynamics to date, and a proposed conflict intervention strategy. In the paper students should reference (and interrogate) relevant concepts, theory, and models from class and other outside sources. Students must utilize at least 2 conflict analysis tools in the paper. **Due April 28th.**

4 points: Each member of the group will submit a self report outlining their contributions to the group paper. Based on the self assessed grade, each individual's evaluation of their own contributions, and feedback from other group members, the instructor will assess an individual grade for the paper to each student. This grade can range from 1-15 points. This will be the method for ensuring that each individual's contributions is fairly considered for this group project submission.

9 points: Each group will present to the class on their topic. The presentation should include details about the background of the conflict, the key dynamics in the conflict, and the resolution or current state of the conflict. This presentation should be informative, but presented in an interesting way. This may include multimedia, a skit, or other innovative presentation method. Each group will have 15-18 minutes of time to present their work. **Presentations April 28, April 30, May 5, May 7th, 2014.**

- **15% Midterm**

The midterm will be composed of multiple choice and true/ false questions and will draw from material in lectures, reading assignments, and class discussions. **The midterm will be on March 12, 2014.**

- **25% Final Exam**

The final exam at the end of the semester will draw on materials discussed in lectures, reading assignments and discussions throughout the whole course. The exam will ask you to apply the course concepts. This means you need to know, not only the definitions of various concepts, but the pros and cons of using concepts strategically. The exam may include, multiple choice, fill in the blank, short answer, and longer essay response. The final exam is scheduled for **TBD** (subject to change by the University).

A note about all assignments: Please use Times New Roman or similar serif font, size 12, one inch margins, double spaced.

Grading Structure

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|------------------|----------------------------------|
| 30 Points | Participation Assignments |
| 30 Points | Applied Conflict Analysis |
| 15 Points | Midterm |
| 25 Points | Final Exam |
| 4 Points | Extra Credit |

Your final grade will be the sum of all points you received for all assignments. At the end of the semester, the numbers will be tabulated and converted to a letter grade using the following scale:

A+: 100 and >	C: 73-76
A: 95-99 points	C-: 70-73
A-: 90-94	D+: 67- 69
B+: 87-89	D: 63-66
B: 83-86	D-: 60-62
B-: 80 -82	F: Less than 60
C+: 77-79	

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Participation assignments cannot be made up. Late submission of the Applied Conflict Analysis paper will be penalized as follows, unless you have communicated a valid excuse to me PRIOR to the due date. If the Applied Conflict Analysis paper is late by 1 day, each member of the group will receive a 2 point deduction. If it is 2-4 days late you will receive a 5 point deduction. If it is submitted 5-7 days late you will receive a 7.5 point deduction. I will not accept the paper after 7 days, regardless of your excuse.

If you must reschedule the midterm or final due to one of the University's acceptable excuses, please notify me ASAP. I will make a determination about handling these situations on a case by case basis.

INCOMPLETE GRADES

The grade "I" or Incomplete is given only to students whose work has been qualitatively satisfactory, but when inability to attend class and complete a small portion of assignments due to a university approved excuse (see Attendance and Participation section above). It is the student's responsibility to request arrangements for completion of course work. In no case will the mark "I" be recorded for a student who has not completed the major portion of the work of the course.

Course Schedule

Unless otherwise indicated, readings should be completed before the start of the class session for which they are listed.

Class #	Date	Topics	Readings and Activities
1	January 27	Course Introduction	
2	January 29	Perception, Storytelling and Conflict	Read Wilmot and Hocker, <i>Interpersonal Conflict</i> , Chapter 2 (On ELMS) Clove and Goldsmith, <i>Resolving Personal and Organizational Conflict</i> . Chapter 1 (On ELMS) Video: Danger of a Single Story

Class #	Date	Topics	Readings and Activities
3	February 3	Nature and Styles of Conflict	Read Mayer, B. <i>The Dynamics of Conflict</i> , Chapter 1 and 2 Read Krauss & Morsella, "Communication and Conflict" (On ELMS)
4	February 5	<i>Case Study Workshop 1</i>	
5	February 10	Positions and Interests	Read Wilmot and Hocker, <i>Interpersonal Conflict</i> . Chapter 3. (On ELMS). <i>Role play: Ugli Orange</i>
6	February 12	Power Dynamics	Read Mayer, B. <i>The Dynamics of Conflict</i> , Chapter 3
7	February 14	Cultural Differences, Communication, and Saving Face	Read Le Baron, M. , <i>Bridging Cultural Conflict</i> , Chapter 3 (ON ELMS) Read Folger, Poole, and Stutman. <i>Working Through Conflict</i> . Chapter 6 (On ELMS)
8	February 17	Culture, Morality, and Religion	Read Mayer, B. <i>The Dynamics of Conflict Resolution</i> . Chapter 4. "Moral Conflict and Engaging Alternative Perspectives" in <i>Conflict Resolution Handbook</i> (On ELMS) Read "Matters of Faith" in <i>Conflict Resolution Handbook</i> (On ELMS)
9	February 19	Case Study Workshop 2: Chesapeake Bay Case Study Project Day 1	In class simulation group prep and planning session

Class #	Date	Topics	Readings and Activities
10	February 24	Case Study Workshop 2: Chesapeake Bay Case Study Project Day 2	In class simulation
11	February 26	Systems Thinking	Debrief The Chesapeake Bay Case Study Project Read "Easter's End" by J. Diamond (On ELMS)
12	March 3	Conflict Analysis	Read CSS "Conflict Analysis Tools" (On ELMS) Read Tillett and French "Analysing Conflict", Chapter 5 (On ELMS)
13	March 5	Conflict Analysis Case Study Workshop 3	Read Carpenter and Kennedy "Analyzing the Conflict", Chapter 4 (ON ELMS)
14	March 10	Organizational Conflict Resolution	Read Lipsky, Seeber, and Fincher. "Introduction: The Emergence of Conflict Management." (ON ELMS) Skim Gadlin and Sturm, "Conflict Resolution and Systemic Change." (On ELMS)
15	March 12	Midterm	Midterm Exam
	March 17	SPRING BREAK	
	March 19	SPRING BREAK	
16	March 24	Conflict Handling and Resolution Approaches	Read Mayer, B. <i>The Dynamics of Conflict Resolution</i> . Chapter 5 and 10

Class #	Date	Topics	Readings and Activities
17	March 26	Negotiation	Read Mayer, B. <i>The Dynamics of Conflict Resolution</i> . Chapters 6 Topic for Applied Conflict Analysis Project Due
18	March 31	Negotiation	<i>Role play: I've Got You Babe</i>
19	April 2	Facing difficult conflicts, Managing Impasses Introduction to mediation skills	Read Mayer, B. <i>The Dynamics of Conflict Resolution</i> . Chapter 7 and 8.
20	April 7	Mediation	Read Mayer, B. <i>The Dynamics of Conflict Resolution</i> . Chapter 9. Role play: TBD Distribute roles for April 7 th role play
21	April 9	Mediation	Role play: TBD Read excerpts from Kraybill, R. S., Evans, R.A., & Evans, A.F. <i>Peace Skills: Manual For Community Mediators</i> . (On ELMS)
	April 14	No Class (Passover)	
22	April 16	Group Processes (cont.)	Read MFTM "Healthy Group Process" (On ELMS) Group processes in class activity

Class #	Date	Topics	Readings and Activities
23	April 21	Group Processes	<i>Chocolate Battle: Consensus Building Simulation</i>
24	April 23	Careers and Conflict Management	Chocolate Battle Debrief
25	April 28	Group Presentations	Applied Conflict Analysis Project Due
26	April 30	Group Presentations	
27	May 5	Group Presentations	
28	May 7	Group Presentations	
29	May 12	Final Class	Review for Final Exam

Final Exam: