Intensive Introduction to Conflict Analysis and Resolution  
CONF 502  Section 004  Fall 2007  
Advanced Skills and Collaborative Leadership in Community Planning Tracks

Class Time: Saturday and Sunday, 10:00-4:00  
September 8 & 9, September 29 & 30, October 27 & 28

Location: TBD  
webct.gmu.edu

Instructor: Mara Schoeny, Ph.D.  
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Office hours: Tuesdays—5:00 to 7:00 and by appointment

Course Description and Objectives

Welcome to the course and to the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution. This course is an introduction to the field of conflict analysis and resolution. Our focus is the study of human social conflict, including the practices and strategies for responding to conflict and frameworks for the analysis and resolution of conflict. It is designed to introduce you to the history and current developments in conflict resolution and to help you to think systematically and analytically about conflicts and conflict interventions.

This course will be run as a learning community—discussions, written assignments and in-class activities will facilitate the exchange of thinking and experience. Please read the assigned books and articles prior to class. Active participation is expected, both in-class and online. The compressed course format means that the online component is a key element of your course learning and experience. Participants will work together in small groups and individually to analyze and suggest responses to specific cases of small group, community, inter-group or international conflict.

The three weekends will address the following objectives:

♦ Class participants will learn and be asked to critically examine the worldviews, values, and assumptions underlying the conceptual frameworks people use when analyzing and responding to conflict.

♦ Conflict resolution practices reflect the assumptions used to understand conflict and conflict behavior. Class participants will study the relationship between analyzing conflict and attempting to resolve it.

♦ Students will become more proficient in identifying conflict dynamics that are both specific to context and type of conflict and those that are more generally identified as elements of conflict.
Course Expectations

Consistent attendance. Barring exceptional circumstances, you are expected to attend all weekends for the full time scheduled.
Effective preparation. The quality of class discussions and activities depends on your preparation.
Appropriate participation. Engage actively in the course in whichever of the formats you are most comfortable with: large group discussions, small group work, class exercises, etc.
Course completion. In keeping with departmental policy, incomplete grades will be given only in cases of personal or immediate family illness.

Course Requirements

1. Participation, short in-class exercises and online discussions. 20 percent
   In addition to in-class exercises and participation, there will be several discussion topics and short exercises posted to the course online discussion board in WebCT. Your postings or responses are due on the discussion board by the due date specified. These short assignments should not take more than an hour and are opportunities for you to reflect on course concepts between classes. These are graded only as completed or not and contribute to your participation grade. I hope you will also enjoy reading the insights of your colleagues and the developing discussions.

2. Short essay assignment 20 percent
   In lieu of a midterm, you will have a short essay assignment, handed out in class and due by the date specified. Your answers to the short questions should be typed and returned via email or the instructor’s departmental mail box. Due: Monday, September 24th

   Groups of 3 to 5 students will be formed during the first weekend and will work throughout the course to examine a particular form of conflict intervention (chosen in consultation with the course instructor.) The groups will work together to apply the concepts, theories, and ideas presented in the course to analyze the underlying assumptions, appropriate applications and distinguishing features of your area of study. Your project should include an example of your intervention type applied to a conflict. There will be some time for groups to meet during class time, but outside meetings will also be necessary. Each group will present its study to the class with supporting materials made available online. Due: Sat., October 27th

4. Individual analysis/assessment of a conflict 35 percent
   In consultation with the instructor you will choose a conflict (either from your experience or one supported by researchable and credible documents) for an analytical conflict assessment and recommendations for next steps. The paper should be 15-20 pages and is a synthesis and application of the conflict concepts covered in the course. The topics will be agreed upon by the third weekend of the course. Final paper due: Monday, November 19th
Readings

Texts
The required texts are available at the GMU Arlington Bookstore or from online booksellers:


Other readings
You will be directed to additional assigned readings and resources online. Many of these readings are PDF files and can be read using an Adobe reader, available for download on the library webpage. Please let me know if you need assistance with this technology.


John W. Burton, “Conflict Resolution as a Political Philosophy,”” in Dennis J.D. Sandole and Hugo van der Merwe, eds., Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice: Integration and Application (Manchester, 1993).


Class Agenda

Weekend One

Day 1
Introduction
• Class members: introductions, interests
• Course overview and organization
• Introduction to the field: Conflict, Conflict Analysis, and Conflict Resolution
• Current issues in the field

Frameworks for Analysis
• Analytical concepts and frameworks
• Analytical frameworks’ assumptions of human nature and social structures

Day 2
Analyzing Community Conflict
• MOVE in Philadelphia

Conflict Behavior and Responses to Conflict
• Frameworks for understanding responses to conflict
• Threats, coercion, and violence/nonviolence, persuasion, and conversion
• Dual concern model

Reading for Weekend One:

Kriesberg, Chapters 1-2
Pruitt & Kim, Chapters 1-3
Assefa & Wahrhaftig, all

Burton, Conflict Resolution as a Political Philosophy
Dukes, Why Conflict Transformation Matters: Three Cases
Dugan, A Nested Theory of Conflict

Assignments:
1. Form groups for forms of intervention study (in-class)
2. Online assignment, due by September 16th. Post to class discussion board.
3. Short essay due: by Monday, September 24th. Hard copy or email to instructor directly.
Weekend Two:

Day 1
Library Research Orientation

Conflict Dynamics
- Conflict structure
- Conflict escalation and de-escalation

Conflict Context
- Identity
- Structure
- Culture

Reading for Class:
- Kriesberg, Chapters 3, 5, 6
- Pruitt & Kim, Chapters 4-8
- Brown, “Ethnic and Internal Conflicts” (recommended)
- Erickson, “Ethnic Identity, National Identity…Significance of Personal Experiences”
- Gross Stein, “Image, Identity, and Conflict Resolution”
- Avruch & Black, “Conflict Resolution in Intercultural Settings: Problems and Prospects”

Day 2
Conflict Context continued

Conflict De-escalation and Peace Building
- Dynamics of de-escalation
- Third party roles and interventions

Reading for Class:
- Pruitt & Kim, Chapters 9, 11
- Lederach, Chapters 3-6 (Building Peace)
- Laue & Cormick, Ethics of Community Intervention

Assignments:
1. Online assignment, due by October 7th. Post to class discussion board
2. Group focus statement due in class.
Weekend Three
Day 1

**Group Presentations on Interventions**
- Forms of intervention
- Applications

**Connecting analysis to intervention**

**Variety of roles, platforms, possible practices**
- Complementarity in multiple approaches
- Leadership roles

*Reading for Class:*

Appropriate reading for group projects

Lederach, Chapters 7-9 (Building Peace)

Fisher & Keashly, “The Potential Complementarity of Mediation and Consultation….”
Saunders, “Prenegotiation and Circumnegotiation: Arenas of the Peace Process”
Schoeny & Warfield, “Reconnecting systems maintenance to social justice”

Day 2
**Issues in Conflict Resolution Practice**
- Defining success
- Social justice

**Summary and Integration**
- Problem Solving, Settlement, Management and Conflict Transformation
- Mapping the field—concept maps and metaphors

**Course Evaluations**

*Reading for Class:*

Kriesberg, Chapters 10-12
Galtung, “Violence, peace and peace research” (recommended)

*Assignments:*
1. Group project presentation—forms of conflict resolution intervention *(in-class)*. Supporting materials posted to course webpage.
2. Individual analysis/assessment of a conflict due: November 19th
University Resources and Assistance

- If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703.993.2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

- The Writing Center is available to all Mason students and offers online and individual consultations as well as workshops and mini-courses. Writers at all levels can benefit. Each Mason campus has a location. You can find them on the Arlington Campus in the Original Building, Room 334C, by phone at 703 993-4491 or online at: http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/

- Academic integrity: You are responsible for knowing, understanding, and following Mason’s Honor Code, found at: http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#Anchor12. Be sure that all work submitted is your own and that you use sources appropriately. I strongly recommend that you review requirements regarding use and citation of sources prior to submitting your final work.