

George Mason University
Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution

CONF 795: Conflict Transformation: Leading from Your Spiritual Center

Spring 2009

March 27, 6 – 8:30 pm,, Original Building Room 269, Arlington Campus

March 28, 9:30 am – 5 pm, same location at Arlington

March 29, 9:30 am – 5 pm, same location at Arlington

Instructors

Mark Thurston, PhD; Jamil Mahuad, JD
Contact information: mthursto@gmu.edu

Content Summary

Among the many skills required of someone who aspires to facilitate conflict transformation, **leadership** is clearly one of the most significant. However, there is a special type of leadership that is especially effective in this arena:

- The leader as someone who is **connected to a spiritual center** – grounded in integrity and guided by a moral compass and a set of ethical ideals.
- The leader as someone who is **“awake” and self-reflective** – creating the capacity to see things with objectivity and clarity.
- The leader as **emotionally mature** – infused with passion and compassion, but with clear internal boundaries between one’s own emotional needs and the needs of the conflict at hand.

This course will focus upon **methods of practice which can enhance one’s own capacity to exhibit this kind of leadership in conflict transformation settings**. We will examine “leading from your spiritual center” in practical terms on three scales:

1. **The personal.** Here we meet our own internal conflicts, and we will examine what it would mean to take “self-leadership” in the transformation of battles, disputes, and tensions that reside within ourselves.
2. **Community or organizational conflict.** Here we will explore both real-life and hypothetical situations in which we can practice leadership and conflict transformation at the local level – e.g., our place of work or study, our community or family, or organizations into which we may be invited in the role of mediator, peacebuilder, or conflict resolution facilitator.
3. **National and international conflict.** Although we may feel that our opportunities are limited to actually practice the work of conflict transformation on such a larger stage, we will explore what “leadership from one’s spiritual center” would look like. We will

also hear directly from former President of Ecuador, Jamil Mahuad, and his efforts to embody exactly this ideal of leadership in his work in the late 1990s to resolve a long-standing border dispute between his country and Peru. Mr. Mahuad was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in successfully completing the treaty with Peru.

Reading Assignment

There is a single text for this course:

Fisher, Roger and Daniel Shapiro, *Beyond Reason: Using Emotions As You Negotiate*. New York: Viking Penguin, 2005. The final chapter of this book was written by Jamil Mahuad and includes some of the details of his leadership in negotiating a peace treaty with Peru during his presidency of Ecuador.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, the student will be able to

- Describe the role and potential of both empathy and intuition in the peacebuilding process.
- Practice methods for making a personal connection with one's own "center" – that is, a place of moral and ethical grounding.
- Define ways that one can "lead from a spiritual center" when it comes to conflict transformation opportunities at a personal, workplace, family, or community level.

Assignment

A reflection paper of 1000 to 1500 words, due by April 20, should address the student's understanding of:

- How emotions, empathy, and intuition can play a role in conflict transformation;
- How the student himself or herself might engage in practices to clarify and connect with a "spiritual center"; and,
- How the topics addressed in the course might impact the approach and style of conflict analysis and conflict resolution the student is developing for his or her own practice.

Grading

This course will be graded on a standard grading scale with the following weighting:

75% Attendance and participation with an open mind. Attendance at both the days as Point of View is required in order to successfully complete this course. Any enrolled student who misses the introductory session Friday night will have make-up assignments (AU CD listening assignment, plus an additional reading assignment).

25% 1000 to 1500 word reflection paper

Instructor Bios

Mark Thurston, Ph.D. is Senior Fellow at George Mason University's Center for Consciousness and Transformation. With an academic background in psychology, Mark has worked for 35 years in adult education related to consciousness, holistic health, and personal transformation. He is author of numerous books related to personal spirituality, dream psychology, meditation, and the transformation of consciousness.

Jamil Mahuad, J.D., is the cofounder and senior advisor of the International Negotiation Initiative at the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School. An attorney in his home country of Ecuador, Mr. Mahuad has served as Mayor of Quito and President of Ecuador. He was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1999, after signing a Peace Treaty with Peru that ended the longest-standing armed dispute in the Western Hemisphere. He currently lectures on Negotiation, Mediation, and Leadership.