



APPLIED CONFLICT RESOLUTION
SIS 496.017 & 619.001 Fall 2007

Instructor: Dr. Ron Fisher
Office: Room 201 Clark Hall
Telephone: 202 885 1547
Email: rfisher@american.edu

Time and Location: Monday 5:30 - 8:00 PM; Anderson Hall LL-1

Office Hours: Monday 2:00 - 5:00 PM, Wednesday 3:00 – 6:00 PM
Other times by appointment

Course Description:

The purpose of this class is to critically present a wide range of theories for analyzing conflict and a variety of methods of conflict resolution, including negotiation, mediation, third party consultation, dialogue facilitation, and training. Through a combination of short lectures, discussions, simulations, role plays and other interactive exercises, students will become familiar with the advantages and limitations of the various concepts and methods and will come to appreciate their application to various cases of conflict. The course serves as a useful preparation for and complement to the weekend Skills Institutes. The course is not specifically geared to the international level, but brings forward concepts for conflict analysis and strategies/methods for conflict resolution that are drawn from and have applicability to multiple levels of interaction.

Textbooks:

Folger, J.P., Poole, M.S. & Stutman, R.K. (2005). Working Through Conflict: Strategies for Relationships, Groups, and Organizations, Fifth Edition. Boston: Pearson Education (paperback).

Isenhart, M.W. & Spangle, M. (2000). Collaborative Approaches to Resolving Conflict. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage (paperback).

Course Design:

This course follows the human relations training approach to experiential education in which theory and practice are integrated to provide for the acquisition of concepts and the illustration of skills. Each week you will complete a set of readings that provide the conceptual basis for the practice area to be covered in the class session. The class sessions are mainly participative and interactive, in which class members engage in a variety of interactions designed to illustrate the theory, principles, strategies, tactics and ethics of conflict analysis and resolution practice. In these interactions, class members will take part

either as themselves or in designated roles. Each of you will decide how to behave in these interactions based on conceptual understanding and guidance from the Instructor, and you will receive feedback on the positive and negative effects of your behavior. Interactions will focus on the strategies, behaviors, thoughts and feelings relevant to conflict resolution methods of practice, and will engage you as a person as well as a learner and a developing professional. Thus, the course requires a degree of personal involvement not required in the typical university class, and you should be comfortable with this higher level of involvement before continuing in the class. Supervised practice of the various conflict resolution methods will enable you to understand these processes conceptually, to experience them in personally meaningful ways, and to practice the strategies and skills required to enact them effectively. However, the acquisition of strategic and behavioral skills is not a goal of the course in that the training process is intended to facilitate the understanding of the primary methods of conflict analysis and resolution. The course is not designed to train you to some acceptable skill level as conflict resolution practitioners, nor is it to be regarded as legitimizing your participation in roles such as mediation or facilitation. It will provide you with a conceptual and experiential understanding of conflict resolution methods, which should help you make decisions about pursuing a role as a professional practitioner in conflict resolution.

Course Requirements:

Please note that all assignments are to be typed, double-spaced, in 12 point font, with one inch margins, and are to be submitted on time, unless extenuating circumstances preclude this. Please discuss any difficulties in completing assignments with the Instructor before the deadline passes. Mark penalties will be assigned for inappropriate format or length and for lateness.

1. Class Participation (15%): Attendance and involvement in class activities is essential in an experiential learning course such as this, not only for your own development, but to build and maintain the learning climate in the course as a whole, where each person is a learning resource for everyone else. Thus, you should take attendance very seriously, and if work or other demands make it difficult for you to attend regularly, you should not continue in the course. Given that participation is primarily your responsibility, you will be asked to provide a self-evaluation of the frequency and quality of your participation in the class on a ten-point scale, with a supporting explanation, and this will constitute the main part of your participation mark, i.e., out of ten percent. (See the self-assessment form on Blackboard.) The remaining five percent will be based on attendance, in that one percent will be deducted from the final mark for each session missed without a medical or compassionate reason being provided. Legitimate reasons may arise that preclude your attendance, and you should feel free to contact the Instructor to explain any necessary absences, preferably before the class session in question. You will be asked early in the class to choose an interpersonal conflict that you have experienced or are experiencing, and this conflict will be used as a focus for analysis and strategizing in a number of class sessions.

2. Learning Journal Summaries (25%): Each of you is asked to write an ongoing learning journal based on your critical analysis of class readings and your continuous reflection on class experiences. You are advised to make regular weekly entries in your journal and to add reflections and other comments at any time they occur to you. Entries on readings should identify the ideas you are commenting on, indicating the validity, utility and significance of those ideas in relation to your experience, including related information you have gained from other classes or elsewhere. You should

raise questions about the material, identify aspects you do not understand, and comment on the relation of the information to your ongoing professional development. Look for connections between theory and practice, that is, how knowledge underlies effective conflict resolution work. Entries on class experiences should consist of your observation and interpretation of interactions with a focus on the relevance and utility of the experience for your personal and professional development. The journal is an opportunity for you to reflect upon your experience in ways that further your understanding of how you react to and approach conflicts, and of how you strategize and behave in implementing the various methods of conflict resolution. In this way, you can identify your strengths and weaknesses (i.e., areas of improvement) so as to provide direction for further learning and development. You can also comment on difficulties or issues that you experience in relation to other class members and in your team work, and use these as an opportunity to learn more about conflict and its management, including your own style preferences and blind spots. In short, the journal can help increase your self-awareness, your capacity to relate effectively to others, and your ability to implement methods of conflict resolution. Example journal summaries from previous courses are available on Blackboard. For additional guidance in completing your journal, you may wish to consult “Learning Through Reflection” by Victoria J. Marsick, Alfonso Sauquet and Lyle Yorks, Chapter 22, in The Handbook of Conflict Resolution (Second Edition) edited by Morton Deutsch, Peter T. Coleman and Eric Marcus, Jossey-Bass, 2006, pp. 486-506.

In terms of journal assignments, your entries are confidential and for your eyes only. You are asked to provide an interim and a final journal summary, which should capture the main themes of your analyses and reflections, and identify the main issues and learnings that you have experienced. Thus, the summaries should transcend the individual entries in an integrative manner, pulling together what is important for you in terms of your understanding and development. The interim summary should be between 4 and 5 pages, and will be worth 10% of the mark. The final summary should be between 8 and 10 pages, and is worth 15%. The summaries will be evaluated in terms of clarity, coverage of and relevance to course material and experiences, and degree of appropriate self-reflection on issues, learnings, personal growth, and professional development.

3. Program Engagement (30%): Choose either option 3a, a team project to produce a report on a conflict resolution organization, or 3b, individual participation in a series of small group dialogue sessions on campus facilitated by members of the Dialogue Development Group.

3a. Report on a Conflict Resolution Organization: Working in teams of three or four, class members will complete a description of an organization working in the field of applied conflict resolution. The organization may be a non-governmental one or a government agency or unit at the local, national or international level. Organizations based in the DC area are preferred due to better access to information. The choice of organization needs to be discussed with and approved by the Instructor, and the approach to conflict resolution that the organization represents needs to be identified. A list of organizations reviewed by previous classes is available on Blackboard. Information gathering should comprise a variety of methods, including use of the internet, review of organizational documents, observations of activities, and interviews with members of the organization as appropriate and feasible. The report should include sections on the identity and history of the organization, its purpose or mission, its primary activities, sources of support, personnel positions including possible internships, and comments on perceived relevance, utility and effectiveness. Teams are required to make a brief 15 minute presentation (worth 10%) of their findings to the class, and to submit a report

(worth 20%) of 8 to 10 pages. Guidelines for the presentation are available on Blackboard. The presentation will be evaluated in terms of organization, clarity and creativity, while the report will be assessed in terms of organization, clarity and comprehensiveness of both methodology and substance. You should also supply a copy of your report to the organization if they request one.

3b. Dialogue Participation: Class members are encouraged to take part in a series of seven weekly sessions beginning the week of September 24th in one of several dialogue groups focusing on various social/political issues and intergroup interfaces. These sessions are organized by the Dialogue Development Group (DDG) with the goal of overcoming social alienation and fragmentation on campus by connecting diverse individuals and groups through meaningful and respectful dialogue. The graduate student members of the DDG have participated in dialogue, have completed the IPCR course in Dialogue Approaches and Application, and have taken a Skills Institute in Facilitation Skills and Processes. They will work during the Fall semester under the supervision of an IPCR faculty member, and may receive further consultation from other IPCR faculty as required on the specific focus of the dialogue they are conducting. Further information is provided by the DDG handout available in class. In addition to consistent participation in the dialogue sessions, class members are expected to comment on the dialogue process and reflect upon their experience in their weekly journal entries and in their journal summaries.

4. Practitioner Engagement (30%): Choose either option 4a to be a member of a training design team, or 4b if you are a facilitator with the Dialogue Development Group.

4a. Training Design: Working in teams of four or five, class members will design and manage an in-class training session of 30 to 45 minutes to illustrate a concept, skill, method or issue in conflict analysis and resolution. The session should consist of a conceptual presentation with handouts, an interaction to illustrate the topic, and a debriefing session to elicit feedback from the class. The session is worth 20% and will be evaluated on clarity, creativity, organization, involvement, and impact. A 1 to 2 page proposal on the design is required one week before the session, and should include a description of the overall purpose, the learning objectives, the activities, the resources required, the roles of the team members, the demands to be made on participants, any ethical concerns, and the method of evaluation.

A report (worth 10%) of 5 to 8 pages should describe the training design and rationale, comment on the implementation of the design, including the role of the trainers, and evaluate the overall effectiveness and utility of the session. The report will be assessed in terms of organization, clarity and coverage of the training design and session. A list of topics for training designs from previous courses is available on Blackboard. Two books on library reserve provide additional guidance on workshop design and implementation: Workshops: Designing and Facilitating Experiential Learning, by J.E. Brooks-Harris & S.R. Stock-Ward, Sage, 1999, and Preparing, Designing & Leading Workshops, by S. Cooper & C. Heenan, CBI Publishing, 1980.

4b. Dialogue Facilitation: Class members who are facilitators with the Dialogue Development Group have the option of fulfilling this course requirement through their facilitation of the seven weekly dialogue sessions and their participation in a weekly supervision session with an IPCR faculty member. In addition to co-facilitating the dialogue sessions, class members are expected to comment on the dialogue process and reflect upon their experience in their weekly journal entries and in their journal summaries. The focus of these reflections should be on the facilitation challenges and issues experienced in the dialogue sessions with a view to advancing the professional development of the practitioner. In addition, to meet the requirements of 3a, the facilitators should work as a team to make a presentation to the class and provide a written report on the work of the DDG during the Fall semester.

Statement on Academic Integrity:

All students are governed by American University's Academic Integrity Code, which details specific violations of ethical conduct that relate to academic integrity. By registering, you have acknowledged your awareness of the Academic Integrity Code, and you are obliged to become familiar with your rights and responsibilities as defined by the Code. All of your work (whether oral or written) in this class is governed by the provisions of the Code. Academic violations, particularly plagiarism, have been increasing in recent years, partly due to web sites and other sources that offer information or papers that students can submit as their own work. Defined by the Code, plagiarism is using the work, ideas, or words of someone else without attribution. Other violations include inappropriate collaboration (working on a project with another person but not acknowledging her or his contribution), dishonesty in examinations, whether in class or take-home, dishonesty in papers (not submitting original work), work done for one course and submitted to another, deliberate falsification of data, interference with other students' work, and copyright violations. The adjudication process and possible penalties are listed in American University's Academic Integrity Code booklet, which is also available on the American University web site. The Instructor has the responsibility to monitor course assignments for violations of academic integrity, and the right to submit any suspicious assignments for electronic analysis to detect such violations. Being a member of this academic community entitles each of us to a wide degree of freedom in the pursuit of scholarly interests; with that freedom, however, comes a responsibility to uphold the ethical standards of scholarly conduct.

Course Schedule and Readings:

<u>Session</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Assignments Due</u>
1. Aug. 27	Introduction, Inclusion, Course Design, Learning Goals	
(Sept 3: Labor Day: University Holiday: Offices Closed: No Classes)		
2. Sept. 10	Conflict: Definition and Theory	
	Folger, Introduction and Chapters 1: Communication and Conflict, and 2: The Inner Experience of Conflict.	
	Isenhardt, Chapter 1: Theoretical Perspectives	
	Fisher, R.J. Sources of Conflict and Methods of Conflict Resolution (Handout available on Blackboard).	
3. Sept. 17	Conflict: Interaction and Escalation	
	Folger, Chapter 3: Theories of Conflict Interaction	
	Isenhardt, Chapter 2: Conflict in Action	
4. Sept. 24	Conflict: Analysis of Dynamics and Climate	
	Folger, Chapters 4: Power, 5: Face Saving, and 6: Climate and Conflict Interaction	

5. Oct. 1 Conflict Styles, Strategies and Tactics
- Folger, Chapter 7: Doing Conflict
6. Oct. 8 Conflict Management and Negotiation
- Folger, Chapter 8: Changing Conflict Dynamics
Fisher, R.J. Resolving Interpersonal Conflict (Handout available on Blackboard).
Isenhardt, Chapter 3: Negotiation
7. Oct. 15 Third Party Intervention **Interim Journal Summary Due**
- Folger, Chapter 9: Third Party Intervention
Fisher, R.J. Methods of Third Party Intervention, in N.Ropers, M. Fischer & E. Manton (eds.), The Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation, 2001. (On e-reserve link or available at www.berghof-handbook.net, under Third Party Tools and Capacity Building)
8. Oct. 22 Mediation
- Isenhardt, Chapter 4: Mediation
Kressel, K. Mediation Revisited, in M. Deutsch, P.T. Coleman & E.C. Marcus (eds.), The Handbook of Conflict Resolution (2nd ed.) (pp. 726-756). Jossey-Bass, 2006. (On e-reserve).
9. Oct. 29 Third Party Consultation
- Fisher, R.J. Third Party Consultation, in Interactive Conflict Resolution (pp. 142-162). Syracuse University Press, 1997. (On e-reserve).
Fisher, R.J. Third Party Consultation and Model (Handouts available on Blackboard).
10. Nov. 5 Dialogue Facilitation
- Fisher, R.J. Intercommunal Dialogue, in Interactive Conflict Resolution (pp. 121-141). Syracuse University Press, 1997. (On e-reserve).
Public Conversations Project, Fostering Dialogue Across Divides, pp. 1-94 (On e-reserve link or available at www.publicconversations.org).
11. Nov. 12 Group Facilitation **Report on CR Organization Due**
- Isenhardt, Chapter 5: Facilitation
12. Nov. 19 Conflict Resolution Training **Final Journal Summary Due**
- Isenhardt, Chapter 9: Training and Education
Babbitt, E.F. Contributions of Training to International Conflict Resolution, in I.W.

Zartman & J.L. Rasmussen (eds.), Peacemaking in International Conflict: Methods and Techniques (pp. 365-387). United States Institute of Peace, 1997. (On e-reserve).

Fisher, R.J. Training as Interactive Conflict Resolution, in International Negotiation, 1997 (On e-reserve).

Abu-Nimer, M. Conflict Resolution Training in the Middle East, in International Negotiation, 1998 (On e-reserve).

13. Nov. 26 Competencies and Ethics

Isenhardt, Chapter 10: Summary of Practitioner Insights

Honeyman, C. A Consensus on Mediators= Qualifications, in Negotiation Journal, 1993, 9, 295-308. (On e-reserve).

Herrman, M.S. et al., Defining Mediator Knowledge and Skills, in Negotiation Journal, 2001, 17, 139-153. (on e-reserve).

Laue, J. & Cormick, J., The Ethics of Intervention in Community Disputes in G. Bermant, H. Kelman & D. Warwick (eds.), The Ethics of Social Intervention (pp. 205-232). Hemisphere Publishing, 1978. (On e-reserve).

Society of Professionals in Dispute Resolution, Ensuring Competence and Quality in Dispute Resolution Practice. Report No. 2 of the SPIDR Commission on Qualifications, 1995 (On e-reserve).

Ethical Codes from the Association for Conflict Resolution (See links on e-reserves)

14. Dec. 3 Closure, Assessment of Learning Goals
Class Evaluation

Design Reports Due

Have a Great Holiday!