

Eastern Mennonite University
Center for Justice and Peacebuilding
“A (Family) Systems Approach to Organizational Conflict”
PAX 614
Fall 2008

Instructor:

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Course Description:

This course will encourage participants to see conflict in organizations as a function of the relationship systems within the organization. Participants will first examine their own family of origin through the lens of family systems theory, and then adapt that theoretical framework to assess an organization and its conflict dynamics. This will be a highly interactive course; utilizing case study and role-play methodology and concluding with the opportunity to study an actual organization through the lens of family systems theory.

Course Objectives:

1. To *understand family systems theory*, and to apply the theory through mapping one's own family of origin.
2. To *critically examine one's own functioning and self-differentiation*, both within the family system and within an organization.
3. To *explore relationship systems theory as applied to organizations*, and to describe an organization as an emotional system.
4. To understand conflict dynamics in organizations, and to *propose formal and informal methods for managing conflict in an organization*.

Course Dates and Location:

The class will meet every Thursday afternoon from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. in Room 209A of the University Commons. The first class will be Thursday, September 4, and the final class will meet on Thursday, December 11. Class will not be held on Thursday, September 25, due to the ACR Conference in Austin, Texas.

Required Texts:

The following texts are required for those taking the course for academic credit. Participants taking the course for graduate credit will be expected to have purchased both required texts prior to the start of class, and will also be required to choose a third book from a recommended list for the purpose of writing a critique.

Gilbert, Roberta M. Extraordinary Relationships: A New Way of Thinking About Human Interactions. (John Wiley and Sons, 1992)

Friedman, Edwin H. Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue. (Guilford, 1985)

Course Reader that will be distributed on the first day of class.

Recommended Texts:

An annotated bibliography of books relevant to the topic is attached to this syllabus.

Grading Policy:

Your grade for this course will be calculated based on the following components:

1. *Overall Participation (10%)*

Since the success of this course depends to a large degree on the quality of the interaction within the classroom, regular participation will be expected. In addition to simply showing up, I will expect you to have read the required readings prior to coming to class and to contribute to class and small group discussion. You will also need to respond to weekly questions posted on the Discussion Board section of Blackboard.

2. *Genogram of Your Family of Origin (25%)*

By the end of the course each student will be required to prepare a family genogram (a guide will be provided) with an additional 6 to 8 pages describing your family of origin using a family systems model. The purpose of the genogram is to encourage understanding of and personal engagement with course content.

3. *Book Critique (25%)*

In addition to the two required texts (above), students taking the course for credit will be asked to choose a third book from a bibliography of recommended texts. The written critique will be a minimum of 6 to 8 pages, including no more than three pages of summary followed by a minimum of three pages of critique. A guide will be provided in class for those planning to critique a recommended book.

4. *Final Paper (40%)*

From a list of possible sectors (e.g., corporate, small-business, not-for-profit, government, educational, etc.) you will identify one organization where you might have access and study its relationship system, leadership functioning, and conflict experiences. You will then prepare a final paper to be submitted by the date shown below. A detailed description of the requirements of the final paper will also be provided. In addition to your final paper, an in-class presentation summarizing your final paper will be scheduled for the last day of class. Students are encouraged to work in pairs on the final paper.

Course Schedule:

<u>Date</u>	<u>In-Class Activities</u>	<u>Prior to Class</u>
Sept. 4	Introductions, Syllabus Review Introduction to Family Systems Theory (FST)	Purchase Required Texts Gilbert Chaps. 1 & 2
Sept. 11	Overview of the 8 Concepts of FST	
Sept. 18	Self-Management and Self-Differentiation	Gilbert, Chaps. 3-4
Sept. 25	No Class (ACR)	
Oct. 2	Relationship Patterns and Emotions Conflict, Distance and Cutoff <i>Genogram/Family of Origin Paper Due</i>	Gilbert, Chaps. 5-9
Oct. 9	Over/Under functioning, Triangles, Repetitions	Gilbert, Chaps. 10-12
Oct. 16	Sibling Position (Birth Order)	Gilbert, Chaps. 13-14
Oct. 23	Separate, Equal and Open Relationships Mapping the Family System (Genogram)	Gilbert, Part II
Oct. 30	Self-Management and System Change	Gilbert, Part III
Nov. 6	Guest Lecture by Roberta Gilbert <i>Book Critiques Due</i>	
Nov. 13	The Organization as a Family System	Friedman, Section III
Nov. 20	Organizational Culture and Structure Leadership and Change	Reading Packet
Nov. 27	No Class (Thanksgiving)	
Dec. 4	A Systems Approach to Organizational Conflict Dispute System Design in Organizations	Reading Packet
Dec. 11	Final Presentations <i>Final Papers Due</i>	

Evaluation, writing guidelines, miscellaneous

Writing will be a factor in evaluation: EMU has recently adopted a set of writing guidelines for graduate programs that include four sets of criteria: content, structure, conventions and style (see next page). It is expected that graduates will be able to write at least a “good” level with 60% writing at an “excellent” level.

For the course papers, please follow the APA style described in CJP’s *GUIDELINES for GRADUATE PAPERS* (see student handbook or request a copy from the academic program coordinator)

In your papers, be sure to avoid any form of *plagiarism*. If you have doubts about what is appropriate, a useful website is <http://www.indiana.edu/~istd/>. See also the EMU Graduate Catalog <http://www.emu.edu/catalog/graduate/general/academics> under “Honesty” for the university policy.

Grades will be based on an accumulation of numerical points that will be converted to a letter grade at the end of the course. Each assignment will receive a score expressed as a fraction, with the points received over the total points possible (e.g. 18/20). The following is the basic scale used for evaluation. *Points may be subtracted for missed deadlines.*

95-100 = A outstanding	90-94 = A- excellent	85-89 = B+ very good
80-84 = B good	75-79 = B- satisfactory	70-74 = C passing
Below 70 = F failing		

Graduate students are expected to earn A’s and B’s. A GPA of 3 is the minimum requirement for graduation.

If you have received services in the past related to a *learning disability* or attention deficit disorder and/or you feel you may have such a problem in this course, please make an appointment to speak with the faculty member or with the Coordinator of Student Disability Support Services in the Academic Support Center, Roselawn Ground Floor (432-4233).

Course extensions and outstanding grades

The following is CJP policy on course extensions: For Fall and Spring semesters, all coursework is due by the end of the semester. If a student will not be able to complete a course on time, the student must submit a request one week before the end of the semester for an extension (up to 6 months) using a course extension form provided by the academic program coordinator. If the request is granted the student will receive an “I (incomplete) for the course which will later be replaced by a final grade when the work has been turned in on the agreed upon date. If a student does not fill out a course extension form in the agreed upon time a ½ grade will be docked for all coursework that was not completed by the end of the semester (regardless of whether or not an extension is subsequently approved). If the request for an extension is denied, the student will receive a grade for the work that has been completed up until the time the course was

expected to have been completed. If no work has been submitted, the final grade will be an F (or W under certain circumstances).

Extensions will be given only for legitimate and unusual situations. Extensions are contracted by the student with the program for up to a maximum of 6 months after the deadline for the course work. PLEASE NOTE: If the outstanding course work is received within the first 6 weeks of the extension, no grade reduction will be imposed; after 6 weeks any outstanding coursework will be reduced by ½ letter grade. If the extension deadline is not met, the student will receive a final grade for the work completed.

Under exceptional circumstances, an additional 6-month extension may be granted by special petition to the CJP academic committee. To receive this additional extension, a letter of petition is expected with full rationale for the reason unable to finish to this point and a practical plan on how the student will actually finish if this extension is permitted. This must be submitted at least 1 week before the end of the first extension. A student is encouraged to use this only when absolutely necessary.

Writing Standards – Graduate Level (Grid Version)

<u>Criteria</u>	A <i>excellent</i>	B <i>competent</i>	C <i>below expectations</i>	<u>Comments</u>
Content <i>(quality of the information/ideas and sources/details used to support them)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has clarity of purpose - has depth of content - displays insight or originality of thought -demonstrates quality and breadth of resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has clarity of purpose - has substantial information and sufficient support - contains some originality of thought -uses quality resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has clarity of purpose -lacks depth of content and may depend on generalities or the commonplace - has little originality of thought -uses mostly quality resources 	
Structure <i>(logical order or sequence of the writing)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is coherent and logically developed -uses very effective transitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is coherent and logically developed -uses smooth transitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>is coherent and logically (but not fully) developed</i> -has some awkward transitions 	
Conventions <i>(appearance of the writing: sentence structure, usage, mechanics, documentation)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has virtually no errors of conventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has minimal errors of conventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is understandable <u>but</u> has noticeable problems of sentence structure, usage, mechanics or documentation 	
Style <i>(personality of the writing: word choice, sentence variety, voice, attention to audience)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is concise, eloquent and rhetorically effective -has nicely varied sentence structure -is engaging throughout and enjoyable to read 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - displays concern for careful expression -has some variation in sentence structure -is generally enjoyable to read 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has some personality <u>but</u> lacks imagination and may be stilted and may rely on clichés -has little variation in sentence structure -is not very interesting to read 	
<p>The weighting of each of the four areas is dependent on the specific written assignment and the teacher’s preference.</p>				<u>Grade</u>

Bibliography:

Family Systems/Emotional Process

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Bradshaw, John. Bradshaw On: The Family. (Health Communications, 1988)

Heimannsberg, Barbara and Schmidt, Christoph J. The Collective Silence: German Identity and the Legacy of Shame. (Jossey-Bass, 1993)

Leman, Kevin. The New Birth Order Book: Why You Are the Way You Are. (Revell, 1998)

Oates, Wayne. Behind the Masks: Personality Disorders in Religious Behavior. (Westminster, 1987)

Schaef, Anne Wilson and Fassel, Diane. The Addictive Organization. (Harper & Row, 1988)

Steinke, Peter L. Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach. (Alban, 1996)

Steinke, Peter L. How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems. (Alban, 1993)

Change Management

Anderson, Dean and Anderson, Linda Ackerman. Beyond Change Management: Advanced Strategies for Today's Transformational Leaders. (Jossey-Bass, 2001)

Beckhard, Richard and Pritchard, Wendy. Changing the Essence: The Art of Creating and Leading Fundamental Change in Organizations. (Jossey-Bass, 1992)

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Sherman, H. and Schultz, R. Open Boundaries: Creating Business Innovation Through Complexity. (Perseus Books, 1998)

Organizational Culture

Collins, James C. and Porras, Jerry I. Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies. (HarperBusiness, 1994)

Collins, Jim. Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don't. (Harper Collins, 2001)

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Miller, Lawrence M. Barbarians to Bureaucrats: Corporate Life Cycle Strategies. (Ballantine Books, 1989)

Schein, Edgar H. Organizational Culture and Leadership (2nd Edition). (Jossey-Bass, 1992)

Organizational Conflict

Cloke, Kenneth and Goldsmith, Joan. Resolving Personal and Organizational Conflict: Stories of Transformation and Forgiveness. (Jossey-Bass, 2000)

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Dukes, E. Franklin; Pisolish, Marina A. and Stephens, John B. Reaching Higher Ground: Tools for Powerful Groups and Communities. (Jossey-Bass, 2000)

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Leadership/Other

Aldrich, Howard. Organizations Evolving. (Sage Publications, 1999)

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