

PAX 503
PRACTICE: SKILLS FOR CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION
Fall 2007

Faculty

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Course Description

This course focuses on essential skills and knowledge for a reflective practitioner facilitating conflict transformation in interpersonal and group settings. No matter what the level of peacebuilding work, effective practice relies on self-awareness and respecting others. The course examines practical skills for facilitating conflict transformation such as listening, getting beyond posturing, issue identification, identifying and working with commonalities, problem-solving, group facilitation, methods for structuring conversation in group settings, awareness of the impact of self on others.

This course is designed to assist students in the application of ideas and theories presented in other CTP courses, exploring strategies that work best for the students' contexts. The class builds both a vocabulary and confidence as students imagine, reflect and act to transform interpersonal conflicts. Using a variety of tools for learning, students will examine the range of available intervention options, the strengths and limits of each skill or technique, and the process of making choices that are contextually appropriate. Learning methods are interactive and participatory. Discussion of readings, case studies, training exercises, role-plays, feedback from others, comparison of experiences, and examination of techniques in cultural context will help each student practice the mastery of skills appropriate to the cultural setting.

Course Objectives

- Develop a menu of personal and interpersonal skills useful in conflict transformation
- Provide opportunity for learning and practicing selected skills
- Develop an ability to make skill choices that are contextually appropriate
- Develop habits and methods of gaining and giving feedback to/from others that can be sustained across a lifetime of practice
- Understand the dynamics of prejudice, bias, cultural assumptions, and values both for the people in conflict as well as practitioners in conflict interventions
- Demonstrate the ability to be a reflective practitioner
- Identify areas of practice for future work which are particularly satisfying

Meeting Time and Place

The course meets in the University Commons 209A, Tuesdays (8:30-11:30am).

Required Texts

Mennonite Conciliation Service, *Mediation and Facilitation Training Manual*, 4th Edition, 2000
 Fisher and Ury, *Getting to Yes*, 1991
 Gilmore and Fraleigh, *Communication at Work* (some available in EMU bookstore and others available in class \$10.)
 Reader (several articles/chapters compiled in Reader available when course begins)

Other Reading (Recommended but not required)

Augsburger, *Conflict Mediation Across Cultures*, 1992
 Fisher, Simon et al. (2000). *Working with Conflict: Skills and Strategies for Action*, 2000
 Kolb, Deborah M. and Associates, *When Talk Works*, 1994
 Kraybill, Evans and Evans. *Peace Skills: A Manual for Community Mediators*, 2001
 Wheatley Margaret J. *Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future*, 2002
 Wilmot / Hocker, *Interpersonal Conflict*, sixth edition, 2001

Course Requirements

As this is a practice course, it is recognized that developing reflective practice is a lifelong personal journey. Students are encouraged to use this practice class as a laboratory to experiment, observe, receive feedback and learn. With this in mind, students are required to attend all classes and participate actively in discussions and class activities. Absences will be taken into consideration in the final grade.

- 1. Core Group Participation and Class Presentation** **20 pts**
 Each student will join a core group which will meet several times during the semester with one of the tasks to plan a creative skill presentation to the class. Presentation time: 1 hour.

Feedback Circle Session with Core Group: Seeing Yourself as Leader **10 pts**
- 2. Reflective Practitioner Book** (3 chapters x 12 pts each) **36 pts**
 Each chapter (3+ pages single spaced) is to integrate readings, class discussions and personal applications. The purpose of the assignment is to develop reflective practice, increase self and other awareness and clarify your role and purpose as a peace and justice practitioner. Use appropriate citations when referring to or quoting from readings.

 Chapter 1 The Shapers
 Chapter 2 Personal Conflict Style, Culture and Power
 Chapter 3 Sustaining the Practitioner (which include practitioner interview)
- 3. Research Paper** (15-20 pages) **34 pts**
 Write a research paper on a practice topic in conflict transformation that interests you.

Assignments (More Detail)

1. Core Group Participation and Class Presentation **20 pts**

Each student will join a core group which will meet several times during the semester. One of the tasks will be to choose a specific skill and plan a creative presentation to the class on a selected class period after Fall Break. Class presentation time: 1 hour.

Feedback Circle Session with Core Group: Seeing Yourself as Leader **10 pts**

After your class presentation, participate in a core group circle process led by Nancy, giving and receiving verbal feedback from your core group members. Reflect on your leadership skills that you bring to work in conflict transformation. Discuss your observation of your interaction and leadership during your core group preparation and presentation, actively eliciting feedback from your core group on what specific leader attributes they see in you.

2. Reflective Practitioner Book (Three chapters x 12 pts each) **36 pts**

Each chapter (3+ pages single spaced) is to integrate readings, class discussions and personal applications. Be sure to use appropriate citations when as you refer to or quote from readings. The purpose of the assignment is to develop reflective practice, increase self and other awareness, and clarify your role and purpose as a practitioner.

Chapter One: The Shapers

Chapter Two: Personal Conflict Style, Culture and Power

Chapter Three: Sustaining the Practitioner (Include Practitioner Interview)

Chapter One: The Shapers

Who are the people and what are the experiences that have molded and influenced you to enter peacebuilding work? The aim here is to identify stories of positive significance as well as those that might contain struggle and pain.....stories that prompted you to step into the peace and justice field of work.

Chapter Two: My Personal Conflict Style, Culture and Power

Who am I? How has my culture shaped my conflict style (Reader #2)? To assist others in conflict, we need to first understand and manage our own conflict style. Incorporate the results of the Personal Conflict Style inventory and the Gilmore/Fraleigh *Communication at Work* inventory to help you discuss this topic. What is your understanding of power and conflict? Identify the particular personal power sources that you carry (Reader # 3). Looking at Paul Kivel's charts on p. 115 of *MCS Manual*, where do you locate yourself or your people on the "powerful or less powerful?"

You may also want to incorporate discussion of the following questions.

- Identify the types of conflict situations you are likely to avoid or delay dealing with?
- How has an important but unresolved conflict situation affected you?
- Describe one experience in your work or in your life where you observed an effective third party intervention of conflict?

Chapter Three: Sustaining the Practitioner

More than just staying alive, what nurtures and renews your work in conflict transformation. Reviewing Parker Palmer's article in the Reader #12, how do you keep your balance between "action and contemplation?" Using the principles of Appreciative Inquiry from Reader #8 and #9, describe some core factors that give "life" and resilience to your work. What three wishes might heighten your vitality and effectiveness in your work? How do you take care of yourself in ongoing stressful conflict work?

Practitioner Interview: Interview a practitioner you respect and write a reflective summary. It might be one of the "shaper" persons you identified in Chapter One of your Practitioner Book or another practitioner you choose to interview. After developing an appreciative interview format (see sample interview questions at the end of Good Sider's chapter in Reader # 9), find out why they choose this type of work and what gives them life and hope in the midst of destructive conflict. Reflect on the interview and the responses, noticing what impact the interview or the responses had on you or on the person being interviewed? Sometimes the interviewee will make comments on what was meaningful or clarified by simply being interviewed on this topic area.

- 3. Research Paper** (15-20 double spaced pages) **Due December 11, 2007** **34 points**
Submit a **tentative proposal** for your research paper topic due October 30, 2007.

Research Paper Assignment: Choose a topic in the Practice arena that intrigues you which you have not researched before such as:

- Victim Offender Conferencing or Circle Processes
- Conflict Transformation Practice and Cultural Differences (race, gender, communication styles, etc)
- Various arenas of mediation practice, including Divorce Mediation, Workplace Mediation, and Community Mediation
- Issues of power and power balancing in mediation or other third party roles
- Any of the third party roles discussed by Laue, including that of researcher, advocate and activist

Your research paper should including the following components:

- A. **Introduction** that includes a discussion of why you chose this particular topic and the hypothesis or research question that motivated your research. (1-2 pages)
- B. **Literature Review** that summarizes the more significant writing about your topic, including at least five citations. (5+ pages)
- C. Brief discussion of the **Method** you used to research your topic. Options would include surveying the literature, interviewing practitioners, and documenting your own experience. (1-2 pages)
- D. Discussion of the **Results** of your research. Identify the most significant findings about the topic. (6+ pages)

- E. **Conclusion** that summarizes all of the previous points, but also indicates where more research or alterations to practice might be needed. (1-2 pages)

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 2nd 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 CTP’s *GUIDELINES for GRADUATE PAPERS* (see student handbook or request a copy from CTP registrar)

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 (p. 79) 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

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 CTP 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 CTP Registrar. 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"> - is coherent and logical (but not fully) developed -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 	
The weighting of each of the four areas is dependent on the specific written assignment and the teacher's preference.				<u>Grade</u>