

Eastern Mennonite University – Center for Justice & Peacebuilding – Harrisonburg, Virginia  
Summer Peacebuilding Institute

## **Dialogue Facilitator Training: Crimes of Severe Violence**

Session IV: June 8 – 12, 2009

### **Instructors**

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### **Course Description**

A growing number of victims of violent crime are requesting opportunities to meet with the person who harmed them/their loved one. Offenders are also increasingly interested in pursuing similar opportunities. These dialogues often play a critical role in the ongoing healing journey for both victims and offenders of crime. Participants will learn about the trauma of victimization, realities of living behind bars for offenders, and the impact of the crime for victims, offenders, their families, and the community. The course will be experiential and interactive as we walk through the steps of preparation for a dialogue as well as the issues that arise when bringing victims and offenders together for what is often an emotionally-charged face-to-face dialogue.

The course is offered either for training or for 2 hours of graduate academic credit.

### **Course Objectives**

- Learn skills in facilitating dialogues in crimes of severe violence;
- Develop an understanding of the unique needs of victims and offenders impacted by violent crime and incarceration;
- Gain awareness for the complexities involved in this particular type of dialogue;
- Become sensitized to the ethics, boundaries and self-awareness required for this type of facilitation;
- Recognize the critical role of the criminal justice system in this process.

### **Course Dates and Location**

The course will be conducted as part of the Summer Peacebuilding Institute (SPI) of the Conflict Transformation Program, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Virginia. It will start on Monday, June 8 and end on Friday, June 12. Classes will be held between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., with a two-hour break for lunch (final times to be negotiated). In addition, there will be one evening session for students taking the class for academic credit.

### **Advanced Reading (to be read by all participants before the course)**

Picoult, J. (2008). *Change of Heart*. New York: Washington Square Press.

*NOTE: Prior to reading, please review the reflection questions below to guide your reading.*

### **Required Reading**

Umbreit, M., Vos, B., Coates, R and Brown, K. (2003). *Facing violence: The path of restorative justice and dialogue*. Monsey, NY: Criminal Justice Press.

*Mediation Program for Victims of Violent Crime Training Manual, Office of the Victim Advocate, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. This manual will be available in the EMU bookstore. It is also available for advance purchase through the online store of Mennonite Central Committee, [www.mcc.org/store](http://www.mcc.org/store).*

*Additional readings (articles and book excerpts) will be available to students prior to the start of class.*

### **Course Requirements and deadlines (for graduate credit)**

The following are general outlines of requirements for those taking the course for credit. Others are encouraged to read as much as possible in order to receive the most benefit from the course.

*Required reading:* Core texts and readings (1000 total pages of reading).

*Identity Memo:* 5-7 page paper in which you think about what you bring to this work, including assumptions, expectations and experiences.

*Reflection papers:* 2-3 page written reflections on readings that link learnings from the readings to dialogue practice, specifically issues related to those raised in your Identity Memo.

*Statement of Facilitation:* 5-7 page paper that is your statement of facilitation articulating your personal values, strengths, challenges and ethics.

### **Evaluation**

Students taking the course for credit will be evaluated in a number of ways. One way is to know that you will each be challenging yourself personally in this work and that you will be able to reflect that in the writing assignments. Our hope is that the readings will energize you and encourage you to be fully engaged in classroom discussions.

Attached is a supplemental information form that describes writing standards, documentation requirements, the CJP grading system and the guidelines for course extensions. Please read this form carefully.

## Assignment Guidelines

### *Identity Memo:*

The purpose of this paper is to help you examine your goals, experiences, assumptions, feelings and values as they relate to your practice of dialogue in crimes of severe violence and to discover what resources and potential concerns your identity and experiences may create. What prior connections (social and intellectual) do you have to do this type of dialogue, the people involved and the settings and contexts in which these dialogues occur? How do you think and feel about this type of dialogue, people involved and settings and context? What assumptions are you making, consciously or unconsciously, about these? What is motivating you to do this type of dialogue? This assignment is not a general account of your motivations, background and experiences. It is a reflection on how these factors may influence your practice of dialogue in crimes of severe violence.<sup>1</sup> This paper should be 5-7 pages in length.

### *Reflection papers:*

You will write a reflection for each separate article/book. These 2-3 page written reflections should link learnings from the readings to dialogue practice, specifically issues related to ones raised in your Identity Memo. They should also include how this piece has contributed to your understanding of restorative justice and dialogue facilitation. Be sure and include the total number of pages of reading covered by each reflection.

### *Statement of Facilitation:*

This final paper summarizes your course experiences, including course discussion, readings and role plays, as statement about the assumptions, strengths and limitations you bring to facilitation of dialogue in crimes of severe violence and how these will affect your work as a facilitator. This paper is important for self-awareness as well as preparation for interviewing with your local community to facilitate dialogues. Your statement should address the following questions: What are your values and assumptions about dialogue? What's important to you about your relationship with victims and offenders and system people? What are the areas of limitations/challenges to work on? What are your strengths doing this work? What will you do to ensure safe and respectful boundaries and ethics in this work?

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<sup>1</sup> Based on the Research Identity Memo in Maxwell, J. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

## Course schedule

Monday, June 8

- Introduction to restorative justice
- Victim experience

Tuesday, June 9

- Offender experience
- Dialogue Ethics
- Cultural implications
- Preparation Process

Wednesday, June 10

- Preparation process continued
- Role plays of preparation process
- Preparing for the Dialogue

Thursday, June 11

- Role of the facilitator in the dialogue
- Working with criminal justice systems
- Role plays of the dialogue

Friday, June 12

- Follow-up with both parties
- Facilitator self-care

## ***Change of Heart* pre-reading questions**

In *Change of Heart*, Jody Picoult tells the story of a murder and its aftermath, including a victim offender dialogue, through the eyes of the victim, offender and others in their lives. Maggie and Michael, the advocates who put the dialogue process in motion, make many mistakes in their attempts to do what they believe is right. Their actions, and the book as a whole, informs and raises questions about the dialogue process and ethics, the role of a dialogue facilitator and how to work with victims and offenders.

As you read *Change of Heart*, pay attention to your reactions to the story and its characters and consider how these reactions may inform your work as a dialogue facilitator. Additional questions are below. Record specific events in the book that inform your answers.

1. How might your and others' assumptions/perceptions about offenders and victims influence your work as a facilitator?

2. In what ways can a facilitator's personal agenda and desires for an outcome impact the dialogue process?
3. What do you learn about the victim experience and how to work with victims?
4. What do you learn about the offender experience and how to work with offenders?
5. What does it mean to balance the needs of both victims and offenders and how does a facilitator do that?
6. How does the dialogue process, and work of the facilitator, change if an offender or victim initiate the meeting?
7. How does a facilitator approach/initiate contact with a victim or offender for the first time?
8. What should victim & offender preparation entail?
9. How does a facilitator know whether and when it is appropriate to bring people together?
10. How does a facilitator respond if a participant says something triggering or a participant suddenly ends a meeting?
11. What does it mean for a dialogue process to be 'successful' and who gets to make that determination?

Supplemental information for CTP course syllabi:

**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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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* (found online under "Writing Guidelines" at <http://www.emu.edu/ctp/alumni/student.html> or request from instructor)

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/academics.html> 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.

*Course extensions and outstanding grades*

The following is CTP policy on course extensions: Residential full-time CJP students must complete all SPI course work before August 15. Part-time students or students doing the MA degree program through SPI must complete work by February 1 of the following year. If a student will not be able to complete a course on time, a course extension request must be made 2 weeks before the August or March deadline. 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 deadline, 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.