

**Communication and Conflict  
CMST 3600**

**Instructor:** Jennifer Peeples

**Office:** Old Main 213

**Office hours:** Wednesday 10-12 and  
by appointment

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**Course Description:** This course introduces skills and materials that are useful for conflict management and consensus building. The class will discuss contemporary theories on conflict and communication and present skills and concepts to improve conflict outcomes. It also will analyze the role of culture, gender, and power in conflict. Finally, the class will engage in discussion and application of negotiation and mediation skills.

The skills and concepts learned in this class will then be applied in a service learning project with the Bear River Charter School.

**By the end of this course you will:**

Gain factual knowledge

- Explain common topics and use the language of conflict management.
- Articulate the relationship between communication and conflict.
- Explain the different parts of a conflict and how they influence conflict outcomes.

Learn fundamental principles, generalizations, or theories

- Explain how power, gender and culture influence conflict.
- Explore your own conflict style and how that style influences conflict outcomes.

Learn how to find and use resources for answering questions or solving problems.

- Use library resources to find credible and useful information for conflict management “clients.”

Learn to apply course materials:

- Inside and outside class, apply conflict concepts and ideas to a variety of situations and examples.

Develop specific skills, competencies and points of view needed by professionals in conflict management

- Experience the process of communication consulting.
- Adapt and explain conflict skills and ideas to various audiences.
- Comprehend and practice negotiation and mediation skills for consensus building.

**My Expectations:**

I am at my best as a teacher in situations where students are consistently present, engaged with the class content, and actively participating in the learning process (this includes work done outside the classroom). Our satisfaction with the course depends largely on the extent to which you honor these expectations to the best of your ability.

**Your Expectations:**

I believe my responsibilities as a teacher include starting and ending class on time, being prepared to teach, attending office hours, returning your work promptly, grading fairly and fostering a respectful open learning environment. If at any time you feel I have not met these expectations or if you have additional concerns, please relate them to me so that your needs as a student can best be met.

**Required Materials:**

Wilmot, William, and Joyce Hocker. Interpersonal Conflict. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: McGraw Hill, 2011 (assigned by chapter in the schedule).

Fisher, Roger, William Ury and Bruce Patton. Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In. 2<sup>nd</sup>. ed. New York: Penguin Books, 1991. (Yes in schedule).

**Readings on Hold at the Library:**

Isenhart, M. W. & Spangle, M. (2000) *Collaborative Approaches to Resolving Conflict*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.

**Evaluations:**

Exam 1	25%
Exam 2	25%
Service learning project:	35% (total)
Literature review (individual)	15%
Interview report (group)	08%
Interview Presentation (group)	07%
-OR-	
Report (group)	08%
Report presentation (group)	07%
Reflection paper (individual)	05%
Quizzes	<u>10%</u>
Total	100%

**Grade distribution:**

100-93% = A	76-73% = C
92-90% = A-	72-70% = C-
89-87% = B+	69-67% = D+
86-83% = B	66-63% = D
82-80% = B-	62-60% = D-
79-77% = C+	59-0% = F

**Assignments:**

**Quizzes:** Unscheduled quizzes will take place during the first 10 minutes of class. Quiz material will come from the reading assigned for that day. No makeup quizzes or extra credit will be given for absences or late attendance. Please come to class on time. Quizzes may be on in-class activities on days without reading assignments. On presentation days, your attendance will count for one quiz grade. Expect at least one quiz a week.

**Exams:** There are two exams in the class. Both class discussion and course readings will be on the exam. The exams will be multiple choice, definitions and essays. Review sheets will be given out in class one week before the text.

**Service learning project:** Bear River Charter School (our client) is a K-8 elementary and middle school in Cache Valley. It changed from a private to a charter school in 2010. The classes are capped at 20 students and there is only one class per grade. The school sees itself as a tight knit family. And as with all families there is conflict. Bear River is considering implementing a peer mediation program.

We have been “hired” to help them make decisions about 1) whether or not to implement a program, 2) what kind of program might best suit their school (e.g. what works best), 3) who might benefit from such a program, 4) costs associated with it, 5) how it could be implemented, and 6) what timeline they might be looking at.

**Goals:**

- Learn the process of communication consulting.
- Practice information acquisition as a consultant (as opposed to a student).
- Learn to adapt materials/information to different audiences.
- Introduce concepts and skills to others in order to help them reduce unwanted conflict as well as have more productive conflict outcomes.

To do this we will:

1. Research credible and factual information on peer mediation programs
2. Write literature reviews
3. Conduct interviews:
  - 1) Other schools in the valley with peer mediation programs
    - Principles
    - Coordinators
    - Teachers
  - 2) Bear River Charter School
    - Administrators
    - Teachers
    - Students?
4. Create an interview report, problem statement, and goal
5. Based on the information we have obtained, make suggestions for a peer mediation program for Bear River.
6. Create a report for the client explaining what was found during the literature reviews, the interviews and our peer mediation proposal.
7. Present the report to our class.
8. Present the report to the client.
9. Write a reflection paper

Service learning assignments:

- 1) Literature Review: Each of you will individually write a 4-5 page research paper on peer mediation.

A good places to look are the ERIC database and the Academic Search Premiere databases on the USU library website. *Unlike other research papers in which questionable sources or faulty understanding of the material does not affect anything other than your grade, this research will influence what we decide to present to your “client” and how valuable your presentations is to them. Please choose your sources with this in mind!*

- 2) Interview Report and Presentation. This is a written report that summaries what your group found in your interviews. The conclusion to the paper should explain the information’s applicability to Bear River. This information will then be presented to the class. Please note: the information in the report should be entirely *anonymous*.

- 3) Final Report. The report will 1) Summarize the primary findings from the interviews (still anonymous) and literature reviews, 2) explain what peer mediation approach the class feels is best for Bear River, 3) the costs and benefits of such an approach, 4) a timeline for implementation.

The report must be professional looking, user friendly, pleasing to the eye (lots of images, graphs, color, etc.), and client specific in look and content. In other words, this report should not be something that could be passed on to another school. It should be specific to Bear River.

- 4) Final Report Presentation. The report will be presented to the principal of Bear River and potentially the school board. The presentation will be evaluated on its clarity of information, correctness of information, professionalism (both your spoken content and in visual aids), and presenter charisma.
- 5) Reflection paper: Each of you individually will write a 4-5 page paper that reflects what you learned through engaging in service learning project. The paper should be well written and deliberative.

### **SCHEDULE**

1. *This schedule is subject to change if the demands of the course require it.*
2. The reading assignment will be **discussed** the day it is listed.
3. Graded assignments are written in **bold type**.

<b>DATE</b>	<b>TOPIC/ACTIVITY</b>	<b>READING/ASSIGNMENT</b>	<b>CONSULTING PROJECT</b>
<b><u>Week 1</u></b> Jan 7, 9	Tues: Introduction to course  Thurs: Nature of conflict	Thurs: Chapter 1	
<b><u>Week 2</u></b> Jan. 14, 16	Tues: Perspectives on conflict  Thurs: Perspectives on conflict	Tues: Chapter 2  Thurs: Chapter 2	Research literature review
<b><u>Week 3</u></b> Jan. 21, 23	Tues: Interests and goals  Thurs: Interests and goals	Tues: Chapter 3  Thurs: Chapter 3	Research for literature review
<b><u>Week 4</u></b> Jan. 28, 30	Tues: Power  Thurs: Power	Thurs: Chapter 4  Thurs: Chapter 4	Research for literature review

<b><u>Week 5</u></b> Feb. 4, 6	Tues:  Thurs:	Tues: Discuss literature review  Thurs: interview preparation	<b>Literature review Due</b>  Write interview questions
<b><u>Week 6</u></b> Feb. 11, 13	Tues: Styles and Tactics  Thurs: Styles and Tactics	Tues: Chapter 5  Thurs: Chapter 5	Conduct interviews
<b><u>Week 7</u></b> Feb. 18, 20	Tues: <i>Attend your Monday classes</i>  Thurs:	Tues:  Thurs: <b>Exam 1</b>	Conduct Interviews
<b><u>Week 8</u></b> Feb. 25, 27	Tues: Emotions  Thurs:	Tues: Chapter 6  Thurs: <b>Interview reports due and presented in class</b>	Conduct Interviews  Present interview report
<b><u>Week 9</u></b> Mar. 4, 6	Tues:  Thurs: Peeples out of town	Tues: Final report discussion  Thurs: Final report discussion	Choose material for the final report
<b><u>Week 10</u></b> Mar. 11, 13	<b>Spring Break!</b>		
<b><u>Week 11</u></b> Mar. 18, 20	Tues: Negotiation  Thurs: Negotiation	Tues: <u>Yes</u> pp. 1-39  Thurs: <u>Yes</u> pp. 40-80	Prepare report
<b><u>Week 12</u></b> Mar. 25, 27	Tues: Negotiation  Thurs: Practice Negotiation	Tues: <u>Yes</u> pp. 80-106  Thurs: No reading assignment.	Prepare report  <b>Report draft due</b>
<b><u>Week 13</u></b> Apr. 1, 3	Tues: 3 <sup>rd</sup> party intervention.  Thurs: Mediation	Tues: Chapter 9  Thurs:	Prepare presentation
<b><u>Week 14</u></b> Apr. 8, 10	Tues: Peeples out of town  Thurs:	Tues: <b>Work on Report Presentation</b>  Thurs: <b>Present report to class</b>	Prepare presentation
<b><u>Week 15</u></b> Apr. 15, 17	Tues: Mediation  Thurs: Mediation	Tues: Isenhart & Spangle, Chapter 4  Thurs: Isenhart & Spangle Chapter 4	<b>Present to Bear River</b>
<b><u>Week, 16</u></b>	Tues: Mediation practice	Tues: No reading assignment	

Apr. 22, 24	Thurs: <i>What have we learned?</i> Debrief and course conclusion.	Thurs: <b>Reflection paper due</b>	
<b><u>Final Exam</u></b>	<b>May 1: 1:30-3:20</b>		

**Please keep in mind the following**

I will try to respond to all emails within 24 hours of receiving them, with the exception being the weekend. I will not be answering emails after 6 p.m. on weekdays or on Saturday and Sunday. Expect replies first thing on Monday morning.

**For your assignments:**

- Unless directed otherwise, all work is to be typed, double spaced and free of grammatical and spelling errors.
- All activities must be performed and assignments turned in on the due date in order to receive full credit. Exceptions will be made for extreme documented circumstances. All written assignments must be turned in at the beginning of the class period that they are due or else they will receive 5% off the final grade each day the assignment is late. An assignment will not be accepted after three days past the due date.
- Plagiarized work will receive an F for assignment and may, depending on the severity of the infringement, receive a failing grade for the course and/or expulsion from the university.
- Students may not use a paper written in another class for credit in this one, or vice versa, without instructor consent.
- Please refer to the university honesty/honor code for further policies pertinent to this class.

**In the classroom:**

- If you have a disability, I strongly encourage you to contact the Disability Resource Center or myself so that the classroom environment can be made conducive to your learning style.
- I also encourage all students to take advantage of my offices hours or e-mail if you have any concerns or questions over any aspect of the course. I am here to help you learn!
- Finally, I try to create a comfortable classroom environment that contributes to learning. For that reason, refrain from using cell phones, texting, playing music (please remove earphones when you enter class) or doing anything else that keeps you from concentrating on what we are talking about in class.

