

**Communication and Conflict  
CMST 3600**

**Instructor:** Jennifer Peeples

**Office:** Old Main 213

**Office hours:** Wednesday 12-2 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 as a service learning project to an organization of your choice.

**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

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

**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, W. & Hocker, J. (2014). *Interpersonal Conflict*. 9<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: McGraw Hill, 2014 (assigned by chapter in the schedule).

**Optional Materials:**

Fisher, R., Ury, W., and Patton, B. (1991). *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*. 2<sup>nd</sup>. ed. New York: Penguin Books.

**Readings on Hold at the Library:**

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

Moore, C. W. (2014). *The Mediation Process: Practical Strategies for Resolving Conflict*. Hoboken: Wiley. Retrieved from <http://www.ebilib.com>

**Evaluations:**

Exam 1	20%
Exam 2	25%
Service learning project:	
Literature review (individual)	15%
Interview Presentation (group)	05%
Report (group)	15%
Report presentation (group)	05%
Quizzes	<u>15%</u>
Total	100%

**Grade distribution:**

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

**Assignments:**

**Quizzes:** Unscheduled quizzes will take place during the first 5 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:**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.

Steps in the project:

1. Choose an organization and form a group
2. Research credible and factual information on the type of organization and conflict
3. Write a literature review (individual)
4. Conduct interviews with the organization
5. Brainstorm opportunities for improvement (potentially engage in more research)
6. Create an interview report, problem statement, and goal
7. Create a report for the client explaining what you found during the interviews and suggestions for improvement
8. Present the report to the class

Service learning assignments:

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

*Unlike other research papers in which questionable sources or faulty understanding of the material does not affect anything other than your grade, this research would influence what you 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. This is a short report that summaries what your group found in your interviews, what problems you found in the organization and what goals you have for organizational improvements. 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 is a problem or goal the consulting group is addressing (point of intervention) 3) information and concepts you believe are useful in addressing the problem or goal revealed during research/interviews.

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 an organization.

- 4) Final Report Presentation. The report will be presented during the last two weeks of class. 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.

Service learning extension: One internship credit (CMST 4250)

- 1) Make changes to report and presentation based on feedback from me and the class.
- 2) Present to the organization
- 3) Write a reflection paper.  
The 4-5 page paper will provide the opportunity for you to reflect on 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**.

DATE	TOPIC/ACTIVITY	READING/ASSIGNMENT	CONSULTING PROJECT
<b>Week 1</b> Jan 8	Thurs: Introduction to course		
<b>Week 2</b> Jan. 13, 15	Tues: Nature of conflict Thurs: Nature of conflict	Tues: Chapter 1 Thurs: Chapter 1	Choose an organization
<b>Week 3</b> Jan. 20, 22	Tues: Perspectives on conflict Thurs: Perspectives on conflict	Tues: Chapter 2 Thurs: Chapter 2	Research for literature review
<b>Week 4</b> Jan. 27, 29	Tues: Interests and goals Thurs: Interests and goals	Tues: Chapter 3 Thurs: Chapter 3	Research for literature review
<b>Week 5</b> Feb. 3, 5	Tues: Power Thurs: Power	Tues: Chapter 4 Thurs: Chapter 4	Research literature review
<b>Week 6</b> Feb. 10, 12	Tues: Styles and Tactics <b>Literature review due</b> Thurs: Styles and Tactics	Tues: Chapter 5 Thurs: Chapter 5	Turn in literature review
<b>Week 7</b> Feb. 17, 19	<b>Tues: Attend Monday classes</b> Thurs: <b>Exam 1</b>		
<b>Week 8</b> Feb. 24, 26	Tues: Interviews Thurs: Analyzing your conflicts (other's too!)	Thurs: Chapter 7	Interview preparation
<b>Week 9</b> Mar. 3, 5	Tues: Analyzing your conflicts (other's too!) Thurs: Negotiation	Tues: Chapter 7 Thurs: Chapter 8	Conduct interviews
<b>Week 10</b> Mar. 10, 12	Tues: Negotiation Thurs: Negotiation practice	Tues: Chapter 8 Thurs: no reading	Conduct interviews
<b>Week 11</b>	<b>Spring Break!</b>		

Mar. 17, 19			
<b>Week 12</b> Mar. 24, 26	Tues: 3 <sup>rd</sup> party intervention <b>Interview reports due</b>  Thurs: 3 <sup>rd</sup> party intervention	Tues: Chapter 9  Thurs: Chapter 9	Interview report due.  Prepare final report
<b>Week 13</b> Mar. 31, Apr. 2	Tues: Mediation  Thurs: Mediation	Tues: Moore, Chapter 2  Thurs: Moore, Chapter 2	Prepare final report
<b>Week 14</b> Apr. 7, 9	Tues: Mediation practice  Thurs: Mediation practice	Tues:  Thurs:	Prepare final report
<b>Week 15</b> Apr. 14, 16	Tues: <b>Exam 2</b>  Thurs: <i>Report work day</i>	Tues:  Thurs:	Prepare final report presentation
<b>Week 16</b> Apr. 21, 23	Tues: <b>All reports due at the start of class. Present reports in class</b>  Thurs: <b>Present reports</b>	Tues:  Thurs:	<b>Present final reports</b>
<b>Final Exam</b>	Thursday April 30 from 1:30-3:20	<b>Present reports</b>	

**Please keep in mind the following**

**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 ear buds when you enter class), or doing anything else that keeps you from concentrating on what we are talking about in class.