

**PJCS 426: Community and Organizational Conflict**  
**Goshen College**  
**Spring, 2006**

**Course Info**

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| Instructor:          | Carolyn Schrock-Shenk                  |
| Office:              | Wyse 303                               |
| Phone:               | 7016                                   |
| Email:               | Carolynss                              |
| Office hours:        | Variable and by appointment            |
| Teaching Assistant:  | Rachel Eisenstat (Rachelle@goshen.edu) |
| Class Time/Location: | TR: 2:00-3:15 in WY 318                |
| Prerequisites:       | PJCS 325                               |

**Course Description**

Using a systems approach, students will move from interpersonal conflict to addressing conflict in groups. Students will explore the uniqueness of conflict in various kinds of groups and will examine models for assessment, analysis, process design, intervention, and evaluation in such situations of conflict. Using case studies and real life situations of group conflict and systemic injustice from families, congregations, organizations and communities, students will learn practical strategies for group facilitation, dialogue, problem-solving, decision-making, and system change.

**College Outcomes:**

The Goshen College faculty has committed itself to a process of learning outcomes. The following outcomes are relevant for this class:

- Development of the ability to communicate effectively in a variety of sign systems
- Development of the ability to think actively and strategically
- Development of personal integrity that fosters ability to resolve conflict and to promote justice
- Development of leadership ability that empowers self and others.\
- Development of an understanding of responsible stewardship for human systems and the environment
- Development of a healthy understanding of self and of others that is reflected in social relationships of interdependence and mutual accountability

**Course Objectives:**

- To examine ourselves and our gifts, challenges, integrity, spirituality, etc. as practitioners of conflict transformation processes—and as interveners in the conflicts of others
- To increase our comfort level with conflict by increasing our capacity to understand it

- and utilize it for learning, growth, and change
- To increase interviewing and empathetic listening as critical tools in conflict transformation while learning about the experience and views of others
- To provide skills and underlying theory and principles for facilitating dialogue, problem-solving and decision-making in settings of group conflict
- To provide beginning skills for the assessment of and intervention in organizational and community conflict
- To begin to understand the relationship between interpersonal and systemic conflict and examine appropriate interventions for each

## Primary Reading

Boers, Arthur Paul, *Never Call Them Jerks: Healthy Responses to Difficult Behavior*, Alban Institute, Inc., 1999.

Schrock-Shenk, Carolyn, Ed. *Mediation and Facilitation Training Manual: Foundations for Constructive Conflict Transformation*, (4<sup>th</sup> Edition) Akron, PA: Mennonite Conciliation Service, 2000.

Straus, David, *How to Make Collaboration Work: Powerful Ways to Build Consensus, Solve Problems, and Make Decisions*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2002.

Readings on E-Reserve, Handouts.

## Primary Learning Activities

**A) Class attendance, class preparation/reading, and active participation, including the final “exam”.** You will need to read the material, be present in class, and participate fully or it won't work. There will likely be additional short homework assignments and/or readings not mentioned below. The nature of the final evaluation will be determined in class.

### **B) Listening and Interviewing**

This assignment will include two parts:

- Interviewing an organizational leader
- Interviewing a theological/political/philosophical "other"

Each interview reflection is worth 50 points and will be graded in the following way:

25 points - listening/interview analysis

20 points - conflict summary

5 points - writing logistics

#### **Interview 1 – With a leader (congregation, organization, community); Due Jan 17**

Content goal: To understand their role as a leader in relation to conflict in their org/cong/community

Process goal: To develop rapport and trust around conflict issues with a person in a power position and to increase listening and interviewing skills.

**Steps:**

- a. To prepare for content of the interview: Using the readings and the class discussion and your own life experience, develop areas of exploration and specific interview questions.
- b. To prepare for process of the interview: Review any readings above, as well as your own areas of needed focus.
- c. Find a leader of a congregation or organization or a community leader who is willing to talk to you in depth about the nature of conflict in their setting and their role in that conflict. You will need to assure them of confidentiality around any specific conflicts they may talk about (only you and I will be privy to the content any specific experiences). We will discuss learnings and leadership principles in class. You may do this interview in more than one setting.
- d. Write a 3-5 page reflection paper. About half the paper should summarize what you learned about this leader's understanding of conflict in his/her setting and his/her role in conflict. The other half should analyze the process of the interview, your interviewing and listening skills, and what you learned in the process.

**Interview 2 –With a theological/philosophical/political "other"; Due Jan 31**

Content goal: To understand deeply the perspective of an "other" and the various components behind that perspective

Process goal: To create a safe space of curiosity, openness and acceptance that will facilitate an "other" to explore his/her perspective on an issue, knowing that you are at a very different place

**Steps:**

- a. Find someone to interview who you know is at the opposite end of the political, theological, philosophical, etc. spectrum that is willing to talk to you about their views. Let them know that a key reason you want to listen to them is that you know they believe something differently than you and that you want to understand their viewpoint. Set up a time to talk.
- b. Your task in the interview is to understand, as deeply as possible, the other's views and what is behind those views. You may structure the conversation/interview however you would like but a general flow might follow a Public Conversations Project flow:
  - a. What formative experiences led you to this viewpoint?
  - b. What is at stake for you around this issue (values, principles, etc.)?
  - c. What are the questions or doubts that you have within/about your general viewpoint? (This one is the most demanding in terms of vulnerability and demands good trust of the listener.)
- c. The point of this exchange is to understand the other as deeply as you can and to let the other know that you have understood. That means that good listening skills, including paraphrasing and summarizing, are going to be critical. This is not about sharing your views on the issue and I would like you to stay away from that unless there are very compelling reasons to share them. Converting the other or showing him/her the error of a viewpoint is not a compelling reason. You may share your views if you are explicitly asked.
- d. Again, write a 3-5 page reflection paper. About half the paper should summarize your understanding of the views of the other. The other half should analyze the process of the interview, your interviewing and listening skills and what you learned in the process.

### **C) Group Process Design—Due Feb 16**

As we will learn, a significant part of any group process (dialogue, problem-solving, decision-making, etc.) is the assessment and planning process. In an attempt to bring this kind of planning to life, you will choose a group to which you belong and design an imaginary but realistic process for them, then design one specific meeting within that process. It could be designing a dialogue process about the war in your community or congregation. It could be a decision-making process about 4-year residency for your college. It could be addressing the problem of excessive food waste in the Rot. It could be addressing an escalating conflict in a club about power and leadership issues. The options are limitless. (The group needs to be large enough to challenge your thinking.) It may be good to check the appropriateness of the issue/situation you are addressing with me before you begin planning.

- a. Choose one group to which you belong.
- b. Invent a realistic issue, problem, or conflict that needs to be addressed.
- c. Design a process that includes determining the stakeholders, information-gathering, analysis, and intervention. The intervention should include two or more face-to-face group meetings.
- d. Design one specific meeting in detail. It should include both the content outline and the process outline.
- e. Include an evaluation tool/process
- f. Write up your process design and your meeting design in a way that it could be implemented by someone else (5-8 pages).

### **D) Group “Tool” Demo—Proposal due Feb 21; Demos due Apr 4, 6, or 11**

There are a host of tools available to facilitate dialogue, brainstorming, option evaluation, consensus building, etc. You will be introduced to a variety in the class. In addition, you are to find a specific tool intended for working with groups and you will demonstrate that tool in class. Ideally the tool would be a tried and true one used by someone skilled in group work. Alternatively, you can find one on the web or in one of the many resource books. (The tool that you choose to demonstrate could easily be a part of your process design above.)

- a. Find a tool and understand how to use it in a group setting.
- b. Submit a proposal of the tool/process you would like to demonstrate. Include:
  - The goal or purpose of the tool/process
  - A short description of the tool
  - The source of the tool
  - The amount of time you will need to adequately demonstrate it (preferably no more than 30 minutes)
- c. On the assigned day, you will set up the class in whatever way needed in order to demonstrate the tool. This may mean finding or producing a short roleplay or case study and assigning roles to your classmates. Or it could demonstrate an actual process relevant to the class members (such as reaching consensus on an appropriate appreciation gift for your professor. ☺).
- d. Bring handouts to class that include a written, detailed description of the process so that your classmates will be able to use it themselves in the future.

**E) Class Project – 3 options: Proposal due March 9; Project due April 4,6,11**

- 1) Group Conflict/Dialogue Project (in pairs)
- 2) Case study/class discussion (individually)
- 3) Research/class presentation (individually)

**1. Group Conflict/Dialogue Project**

**Goals:**

- To facilitate the process of addressing (or beginning to address) a current controversial issue or small group conflict.
  - To create a forum where diverse voices engage each other respectfully.
- a. Choose a classmate to work with throughout this project (except the reflection paper). Together you will need to seek out a controversial issue or an already existing small group conflict (no need to go stir up anything...). Depending on the situation (if it is the latter, for example), you will need to go through the process of gaining entrée as a third party. Please talk with me about that process.
  - b. Using the readings and our learnings from class, gather any necessary data and use it to assess the situation and then design a process for addressing the issue or situation. You must write this out or come and talk to me about it. (I need to review it with you before any next steps.)
  - c. Implement at least one part of the process design. Generally this will involve leading some kind of dialogue activity which brings people face-to-face around the issues of the controversy. Or it could be a decision-making/problem-solving process.
  - d. Develop short written evaluation tool of the process for your participants. Also evaluate the intervention with your partner.
  - e. Individually, write a 3-6 page reflection paper about the project. The paper should have three parts:
    - a summary of the issue/conflict and the various viewpoints
    - a description of the process you went through from start to finish
    - reflections about yourself in the process—how you felt, your level of confidence and competence, your learnings

**Grading:** (120 points)

- 20 points - Selection of relevant situation/conflict/topic
- 30 points - Data gathering and planning
- 30 points - Implementation and evaluation
- 40 points - Reflection paper

**2. Case Study and Class Discussion**

In the form of a case study, you will present a community or organizational situation that includes a systemic conflict around an “ism.” You will lead a class discussion about the situation and possible responses.

- a. Find a current or recent (last 5 years or so) conflict situation from somewhere in the US that is at least partially the result of one of the “isms” (sexism, racism, classism, etc.). (If you are from another country, you may use a situation from your country.)

Familiarize yourself on the story in whatever way you choose (newspaper, magazine, interviews, internet). Submit a list of your sources.

- b. Write your findings in the form of a short case study (1-3 pages). Base the case study on the actual situation but you may add helpful hypothetical details. Be clear on who is managing or intervening in the conflict in your situation. Include discussion questions (or have them ready) that explore possible intervention, addressing any interpersonal issues involved as well as the structural/systemic ones (the “ism” in question).
- c. Present the case study in class and facilitate a discussion on how we as conflict transformation practitioners would analyze and respond to the situation.

**Grading:** (120 points)

20 points - Relevance to our class and presence of an “ism”

50 points - Research into situation; Quality of case study (clarity, substance, etc.),

20 points - Development of useful discussion questions

30 points - Presentation in class/facilitation of discussion

### 3. Class Presentation on Relevant Topic

You will choose a topic relevant to this course, research it and present your learnings to the class. Your presentation should be 15-20 minutes in length, be creative, informative and interactive if appropriate. You need at least four sources that include a mix (books, journals, internet, interviews, etc.).

Your topic should be something that interests you and that expands our understanding of a topic that is relevant to conflict in groups. Some possible options include:

- Leadership and emotional intelligence
- Robert’s rules/voting vs consensus
- Intractable conflicts
- Values conflicts
- Role of forgiveness in group conflict
- Polarity management

**Grading:** (120 points)

20 points - Relevance to course

60 points - Thoroughness of research; appropriate sources used

30 points - Presentation (clarity, creativity, audience engagement, etc.)

## **F) Attendance at Two Facilitated Meetings OR Participation in IPF Conference**

### **Facilitated Meetings (Due one week after events- no later than March 28)**

You will attend two facilitated meetings that include dialogue and/or decision-making around contentious issue/s. The intent of this assignment is to stretch your learning and to apply some of the principles we are exploring in class to other kinds of situations. There are all kinds of ways to fulfill this requirement including a city council meeting, library board meeting, church business meeting, etc. Please let me know what you intend to do before you do it so that I can okay it. Write a two-page reflection paper on what you learned in both meetings relating to our course content.

**Participation in, reflections on, IPF conference Feb 24-25 (Due one week after conference)**

Actively participate in the conference. Summarize your learnings, questions, and observations in a two-page reflection paper.

## **Grading**

Attendance in this course is critical; therefore, each unexcused absence will affect your grade, as will repeated tardiness or evidence that you have not read or prepared for class. (For an absence to be excused, please contact me by phone or email before class.) All work is due at the beginning of the class period for which it is assigned. Late work will affect your grade. Missed in-class work must be discussed with me before any make-up. Grades will be posted regularly on Blackboard so you can check your progress regularly.

**25% - Activity A:** Class attendance, participation (including misc. homework and end of term presentation/evaluation)

**20% - Activity B:** Listening and Interviewing

**15% - Activity C:** Group Process Design

**10% - Activity D:** Group Tool Demo

**20% - Activity E:** Class Project

**10% - Activity F:** Facilitated Meetings or IPF

### **Grading scale:**

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| (90-100%)   | A |
| (80-90%)    | B |
| (70-80%)    | C |
| (65-70%)    | D |
| (below 65%) | F |

### **Disability Accommodations**

Goshen College wants to help all students be as academically successful as possible. If you have a disability and require accommodations, please contact the instructor or the Director of the Academic Support Center, Lois Martin, early in the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. In order to receive accommodations, documentation concerning your disability must be on file with the Academic Support Center, KU004, x7576, [lmartin@goshen.edu](mailto:lmartin@goshen.edu). All information will be held in the strictest confidence. The Academic Support Center offers tutoring and writing assistance for all students. For further information, please see [www.goshen.edu/studentlife/asc.php](http://www.goshen.edu/studentlife/asc.php).

## Tentative Schedule with Reading/Project Assignments – PJCS 426

(These topics are tentative and subject to change based on the needs of the students and the whims of the instructor.)

**Abbreviations:**    **Boers**—*Never Call Them Jerks: Healthy Responses to Difficult Behavior*  
**MCS**—*MCS Mediation and Facilitation Training Manual*  
**Straus**—*How to Make Collaboration Work*  
**CQ**—*Conciliation Quarterly*  
**E-Reserves**—see library homepage  
**HO**—Handout

Cohen, Cynthia. Working With Integrity: A Guidebook for Peacebuilders Asking Ethical Questions @ [http://www.brandeis.edu/ethics/resources/publications/Guidebook\\_Announce.html](http://www.brandeis.edu/ethics/resources/publications/Guidebook_Announce.html)

Jones, Robert. Consensus Building Tools for New Challenges at the State and Local Levels @ <http://www.mediate.com/articles/pciJones1.cfm>

Kraybill, Ron. Skills for Transformative Facilitation @ <http://www.mediate.com/articles/kraybillR1.cfm>

| <b>Class/ Date</b> | <b>Topic</b>  | <b>Readings/Assignment</b>   |
|--------------------|---|--|
| 1 - Thurs, Jan 5   | Intro to course and ourselves                         |  |
| 2 - Tues, Jan 10   | Practitioner Integrity: Values, Strengths, Challenges | MCS 28-30; 278-281<br>CQ 18.1: Integrity (HO)<br>Cohen (See URL)   |
| 3 - Thurs, Jan 12  | Listening as Practitioners; Role of Interviewing      | MCS 131-144, 161-162, 179-183  |
| 4 - Tues, Jan 17   | Overview of Conflict in Groups                        | <b>Interview A due</b>   |
| 5 - Thurs, Jan 19  | Basic Review of Conflict and Systems                  | Boers-Intro, Ch 2<br>MCS 235-240   |
| 6 - Tues, Jan 24   | Assessment & Analysis: Data Gathering                 | Ch 4 – <i>Managing Public Disputes</i> (E-Reserve)   |
| 7 - Thurs, Jan 26  | Assessment & Analysis: Levels of Conflict             | MCS 241-246, 254-258; <i>Moving Your Church Through Conflict</i> (HO)  |
| 8 – Tues, Jan 31   | Options/Strategies for Intervention                   | <b>Interview B due</b>   |
| 9 – Thurs, Feb 2   | Role of ground rules                                  | <i>Reaching for Higher Ground</i> , Ch Ch 5 (E-Reserve)  |
| 10 – Tues, Feb 7   | Strategy – Appreciative Inquiry overview              | <i>Systems Thinker</i> , AI: Igniting Transformative Action; (HO)<br><i>Positive Approaches to Peacebuilding</i> , Ch 2,3,13 (E-Reserve) |
| 11 - Thurs, Feb 9  | Strategy – Dialogue Overview                          | CQ 15.2: Let's Talk, pp 1-12, 18-20; (E-Reserve); MCS 206-210  |

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|---|--|---|
| 12 – Tues, Feb 14                             | Dialogue Tools/Exercise<br>Valentine’s Day Party ☺           | “Talking With the Enemy”<br>( <i>Boston Sunday Globe</i> );<br>“Commanded to Keep<br>Wrestling” ( <i>To Continue the<br/>Dialogue</i> ); (E-Reserves) |
| 13 – Thurs, Feb 16                            | Strategy – Decision-Making Overview<br>Relevant Stakeholders | Straus-Intro, Ch 1,2;<br>MCS 209-211; 226-232<br><b>C) Group Process Design due</b>   |
| 14 – Tues, Feb 21                             | Decision Rule: Consensus (vs voting)                         | Straus-Ch 3<br>MCS 216-217; 227-232<br>Jones (see URL)<br><b>D) Proposal Due - “Tool”<br/>Demo</b>  |
| 15 – Thurs, Feb 23                            | Process Planning for Decision-Making                         | Straus-Ch 4<br>MCS 214-215  |
| 16 – Tues, Mar 7                              | Process Facilitation<br>Process Recording                    | Straus-Ch 5,6;<br>Kraybill (see URL);<br>MCS 212-213; 218-225   |
| 17 – Thurs, Mar 9                             | Facilitation cont.   | Kraybill (see URL)<br><b>E) Proposal Due – Class<br/>project</b>  |
| 18 – Tues, Mar 14                             | Dealing with Difficult People                                | Boers – Ch 1,3,4,5  |
| 19 - Thurs, Mar 16                            | Leadership for Collaboration                                 | Straus – Ch 7; Boers - Ch 7,8;<br>MCS 253; 259-263; 288-290   |
| 20 - Tues, Mar 21                             | Role of Power in Conflict                                    | MCS 41-45; 78-91, 113-124,<br>291-292; CQ 22.1 “Estranged<br>Relatives, pp 4-6 (E-Reserve)  |
| 21 - Thurs, Mar 23                            | Ritual in Conflict and Healing                               | MCS 31-38, 125-126<br>Bring ritual or story   |
| 22 - Tues, Mar 28                             | Healthy Organizations & Communities                          | Straus – Ch 8,9,10;<br>Boers – Ch 6<br><b>F) Meeting learnings due</b>  |
| 23 - Thurs, Mar 30                            | Healthy Congregations  | MCS 247-252   |
| 24, 25, 26<br>Tues,Thurs,Tues<br>Apr 4, 6, 11 | Case studies, Exercises<br>Presentations,<br>Catch-up, Misc. | <b>D) “Tool” Demo<br/>E) Class projects due</b>   |
| 27 – Thurs, Apr 13                            | Spirituality and Self-Care                                   | Boers – Ch 9; Portions from<br>CQ21.3, “Creating Sacred<br>Space”; CQ22.2 “The Search for<br>Authentic Hope” (E-Reserves)                             |
| 28 – Wed, Apr 19<br>1:00 pm                   | Final exam   |   |