

# Integrating Conflict Resolution Theories

October 25-27, and November 8-10, 2013

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## Course Workspace

I will set up an online workspace for this course, on which I will post readings, course material, and other information generated during our sessions. Only class members and invited guests will have access to the workspace.

The only way I have to contact class members is through the SMU e-mail address provided to me by the Department – even if you’ve given me a personal e-mail before, I will begin by using the SMU e-mail address because I know it is current – PLEASE CHECK YOUR SMU E-MAIL REGULARLY FOR UPDATES TO THIS SYLLABUS AND FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE CLASS.

## Course Overview

This course is designed to help students learn methods of integrating multiple approaches, stakeholders, and methods into practical conflict analysis and resolution work. I have designed this course as the first of two related courses. In "Integrating Theories" we will engage in a comprehensive conflict analysis of a conflict situation. The conflict analyses produced in this course may be used by the next "International Dispute Resolution" class as a base from which to work on designing a conflict intervention and producing a proposal for funding.

This course will begin with a consideration of the role of theory in dispute analysis and resolution, and the nature of the "third party" in conflict intervention, the basic goals involved in conflict intervention, and the basic framework in which conflict system design occurs. Discussions and work in the course will be structured around **Roles** interveners can play, **Goals** interveners have for their work, **Analysis** of conflict and dispute situations, leading to **Proposals** for concrete action based on the perceived roles and goals.

Students in the course will self-select into groups, based upon conflict intervention opportunities presented by the instructor. The groups will be responsible for evaluating the conflict situations and presenting a full conflict analysis.

During the class, we may be joined online by a conflict resolution practitioners who will speak to the breadth of the field, and the role theory plays in the development of “real-world” interventions.

### **Course Philosophy**

The instructor for this class appreciates the myriad possible approaches to any conflict situation, and the role that our own professional experiences, ethnic backgrounds, religious beliefs, and political orientations play in the way we analyze and act. The members of the class bring in many experiences and viewpoints, all of which can contribute to our understanding of how conflict intervention develops. In light of this acknowledgement, I invite you to:

- a) Respect all points of view regardless of where you are on these issues;
- b) Listen to gain insight; reflect on what the other person is trying to communicate;
- c) Accept that we are here as a learning community, in which each person is both a teacher and a learner.

### **Course Expectations**

Due to the intensive nature of the three-day weekend format, the following expectations will ensure that you get the most rewarding and engaging experience from the class.

**Preparation:** The success of this class is dependent on our ability to discuss class readings intelligently and to actively participate in class discussions. In the weeks before the first class meeting there will be readings and assignments posted on the class online workspace that must be completed before we get together face to face. We have ambitious goals for the class and they cannot be met if everyone is not ready to work when we get together.

**Attendance:** Consistent attendance is required. Much of the time in class will be spent in working groups, developing the conflict analysis that is the centerpiece of the course. If you are not in attendance, it is not possible for you to contribute meaningfully.

**Participation:** In order for us to really be a learning community, everyone must participate fully in class discussions and in the group activities. It is the case that if you pursue a career in conflict intervention of any kind, it is very likely that much of your work will be done in conjunction with groups or teams. Being present and being involved is essential for successful team work.

## **REQUIRED BOOKS:**

Bernie Mayer. (2004) *Beyond Neutrality*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass (John Wiley).

Alan C. Tidwell. (2001) *Conflict Resolved?: A Critical Assessment of Conflict Resolution*. (Continuum).

Other readings will be assigned and available online before the first class meeting.

## **COURSE ASSIGNMENTS & GRADES:**

### **Assignment # 1 - Pre-Meeting Activity**

Before the first class meeting each student must complete the online course survey, read all of the assigned readings, and register for one of the work groups. The groups will form around some specific conflict environments or issues identified by the instructor. This is an individual grade based on completion of the survey and membership in one of the working groups.

### **Assignment # 2 - Class Meetings (20 percent)**

Each student must attend and be active in each of the face-to-face class meetings. This is an individual grade based on attendance and activity.

### **Assignment # 3 - Readings (20 percent)**

**Due Date: To be assigned by the Instructor**

Each student must complete a survey for each of the assigned books. The survey will ask the student to identify one concept or idea from each book that he or she thinks is the most important element of the reading, and then to offer an example of how that concept or idea relates to the practice of dispute resolution. This is an individual grade.

### **Assignment # 4 - Conflict Analysis (20 percent)**

**Due: October 27, 2013**

On Sunday, October 27, each work group will be responsible for presenting an initial briefing to the class on their conflict analysis. The presentation must outline the conflict environment, explain the roles and goals inherent in the group's approach to the conflict, and generally conform to the conflict analysis template we will develop in class. This is a group grade.

**Assignment # 5 - Final Presentation (40 percent)**  
**Due: November 10, 2013**

On Sunday, November 10, each work group will be responsible for presenting a final conflict analysis (adjusted from the initial presentation). Each group will have a maximum of two hours to present the project and respond to questions from the class and instructor. Each group will also have two weeks from the last day of class to submit a polished conflict analysis that can be used by a group in the International class as a basis for an intervention design. This is a group grade.

### Grading Scale

The following scale, based on the department standard, will be used to calculate final grades:

- 94-100 = A
- 90-93 = A-
- 87-89 = B+
- 84-86 = B
- 80-83 = B-
- 77-79 = C+
- 74-76 = C
- 70-73 = C-

<b>Key Learning Objectives</b>	<b>How Achieved</b>
1. Students will learn to apply conflict resolution theory to the analysis of specific conflict environments.	The major literature in the field addressing third party roles, goals, and actions will be discussed and applied to concrete conflict environments.
2. Students will learn create and present proposals for conflict intervention.	Working in teams, the students will engage in analysis, theory application, and presentation of comprehensive analyses that can serve as a basis for conflict intervention.

**NOTE:**

**The information below is required content for all SMU syllabi – the language is taken from standard university guidelines.**

**Disability Accommodations:** Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first contact Ms. Rebecca Marin, Coordinator, Services for Students with Disabilities (214-768-4557) to verify the disability and establish eligibility for accommodations. They should then schedule an appointment with the professor to make appropriate arrangements. ( See University Policy No. 2.4.)

**Religious Observance:** Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on the holidays that require missing class should notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester, and should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of absence. ( See University Policy No. 1.9.)

**Honor Code:** Students are reminded of the SMU Honor Code as referenced in the *Student Handbook*. Intellectual integrity and academic honesty are both the foundation and the goals for this program. Please reference and review the university policies on the responsibilities, policies, and penalties regarding academic honesty at the URL below:

[http://www.smu.edu/studentlife/PCL\\_05\\_HC.asp](http://www.smu.edu/studentlife/PCL_05_HC.asp)

**Class Decorum:** Turn off (or set on vibrate) all cell phones or pagers. Do not read newspapers, books for other classes, or other outside reading material during class. Walking into class late is disruptive as is leaving early. If you have to leave early, make arrangements before class begins, and then, when you leave, do so quietly. Professional respect and courtesy for your fellow students is imperative at all times.