

Course Description:

The course will equip students to address conflict in churches by exploring the theory, theology, and practice of conflict transformation. Basic skills, conceptual tools, and practical models for constructively addressing conflict in the church will be explored. Particular emphasis will be placed on equipping students in skills for mediating interpersonal and group conflict in churches, employing a transformational model of mediation placed within the context of family systems theory. Active and practical in focus, the course emphasizes hands-on skills training and real-life role plays based on the types of conflict typically found in churches. Although focused primarily on the church setting, the skills learned are directly transferable to other settings. Three mornings will also be devoted to on-site lectures in selected museums and churches in Florence, exploring the theme of *Artistic Rivalry and Revival: Conflict as an Impetus to Creativity in Italian Renaissance Art*. This course satisfies the 40-hour statutory requirement to serve as a mediator in Texas court-connected programs.

Course Objectives:

Key Learning Objectives	How Achieved
1. To gain a basic grounding in the theory and theology of church conflict transformation.	By using a mediation training manual, class lecture and discussion.
2. To become more aware of one's own personal style and approach to conflict, while seeking to improve one's ability to address one's own interpersonal conflicts in a constructive manner.	By using a mediation training manual, a style profile instrument, class lecture and discussion, followed by engaging in simulated negotiation role play exercises and writing a self-study paper.
3. To provide a theoretical definition of mediation, its goals and proper scope of use, while introducing students to three mediation models.	By using a mediation training manual, class lecture and discussion.
4. To develop practical skills for mediating interpersonal and group conflict in churches – to provide training in a facilitative mediation model, while also introducing students to skills relevant for integrating a transformative element into the practice of mediation.	By using a mediation skills training manual, class lecture and discussion, followed by engaging in simulated mediation role play exercises, accompanied by receiving individualized feedback from both students and the instructor in a small group setting.
5. To equip students with skills and techniques for improving communication and decision-making by disputants, while creating a favorable mediation environment, both psychologically and physically for disputants.	By using a mediation skills training manual, class lecture and student role play exercises, accompanied by receiving individualized feedback from both students and the instructor in a small group setting, followed by class discussion.
6. To learn to analyze conflicts facing congregations and church leaders, while gaining a deeper understanding of the congregation as an emotional system.	By using class lecture, including congregational case studies, discussion, and writing a case study paper that cites reading in books grounded in family systems theory and church conflict.
7. To explore a model for mediating congregational disputes as an outside consultant – to learn tools for mediating other large group conflicts.	By using a mediation skills training manual, class lecture and student role play exercises, followed by class discussion.
8. To reflect on how conflict can serve as an impetus to creativity – noting how that was true in regard to Renaissance art and how it can play a role in addressing the polarizing conflicts found in today's world.	By class lecture and discussion, as well as on-site lectures in the museums and churches of Florence.

Course Outline (see course itinerary for further information regarding lecture tours in Florence):

- I. Conflict in the Church: Entrusted with the Message of Reconciliation
 - A. Introduction: The Nature and Role of Conflict
 - B. Conflict in the Bible: Finding Renewal in Conflict
 - C. Understanding Your Own Style of Response to Conflict
 - D. Your Personal Style Profile for Communication in Groups
 - E. Interpersonal Peacemaking Skills
- II. Mediating Conflict Between Individuals in the Church
 - A. Premediation: Getting People to the Table
 - B. The Introduction and Story-Telling Stages
 - C. The Problem-Solving Stage
 - D. The Agreement Stage
 - E. Mediating Multi-Party Disputes
- III. Congregational Conflict
 - A. Understanding Conflict in the Church
 - B. Family Systems Theory and Church Conflict
- IV. Mediating Congregational Disputes
 - A. The Contracting Phase
 - B. The Information Gathering and Education Phases
 - C. The Healing and Problem-Solving Phases
 - D. Bringing Closure to the Intervention

Course Requirements:

1. **Class participation.** Punctual and regular attendance; attentive involvement in lectures; active participation in discussions and role plays.
2. **Self-Study.** A three to five page paper focusing on how you respond to conflict, including reflection on: your personal style profile; family of origin issues impacting the development of your style; goals for growth and change; obstacles you face in change.
3. **Book review.** Read one of the “Recommended Texts” listed below and write a two to three page book review, summarizing the content of the book, in addition to including your own critical reflections on the contribution the book makes to the broader field of church conflict transformation and mediation. The book should be one that you have not read previously; moreover, it should not be a textbook for one of the courses in the SMU Center Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management program.
4. **Case-Study.** A six to eight page study of an actual congregational conflict – that is, a large group conflict, not an interpersonal conflict – including: a brief description of events and dynamics, an in-depth family systems analysis, actual outcomes to-date, proposed intervention strategies, projected outcomes after appropriate intervention. The paper should also provide evidence of substantial reading from several of the books listed below among the “Recommended Texts,” by referencing at least ten insights gleaned from at least three of those books. One of the books can be the same book chosen for the book review.

Required Texts:

Two training manuals and one book to be purchased ahead of time (\$82.00 total, plus shipping and handling) and brought with students to the class:

- Blackburn, Richard (ed.). *Mediation Skills Training Institute*, (Lombard Mennonite Peace Center, 2012).
- Gilmore, Susan and Fraleigh, Patrick. *The Friendly Style Profile*, (Friendly Press, 2004).
- Kerr, Michael. *One Family’s Story: A Primer on Bowen Theory*, (Georgetown Family Center, 2003).

Recommended Texts:

- Augsburger, David. *Conflict Mediation Across Cultures: Pathways and Patterns*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992.
- Boers, Arthur Paul. *Never Call Them Jerks: Healthy Responses to Difficult Behavior*. Washington D.C: The Alban Institute, 1999.
- Brubaker, David. *Promise and Peril: Understanding and Managing Conflict and Change in Congregations*. Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2009.

- Friedman, Edwin H. *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix*. New York: Seabury Books, 2007.
- Friedman, Edwin H. *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue*. New York: The Guilford Press, 1985.
- Herrington, Jim; Creech, Robert; Taylor, Trisha. *The Leader's Journey: Accepting the Call to Personal and Congregational Transformation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2003.
- Lederach, John Paul. *The Journey Toward Reconciliation*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1999.
- Richardson, Ronald W. *Creating a Healthier Church: Family Systems Theory, Leadership, and Congregational Life*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996.
- Schrock-Shenk, Carolyn and Ressler, Lawrence (ed.). *Making Peace With Conflict: Practical Skills for Conflict Transformation*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1999.
- Steinke, Peter. *Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach*. Washington D.C: The Alban Institute, 1996.
- Steinke, Peter. *How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems*. Washington D.C: The Alban Institute, 1993.

Evaluation and Due Dates:

The various course requirements will carry the following weight in assessing the final evaluation:

- 30% – Class attendance and participation
 - 20% – Self-study (due by August 1, 2013)
 - 15% – Book review (due by August 8, 2013)
 - 35% – Case-study (due by August 15, 2013)
- Late papers are accepted only by prearrangement with the instructor. The grade for papers turned in after August 30, 2013, will be assessed a 10% penalty.

All papers should be typewritten, double-spaced, 12-point font, with one-inch margins. Papers are expected to reflect a graduate level of competence in research, analytical skills, and writing ability. They can be sent via email attachment to admin@LMPeaceCenter.org – or to the postal address for the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center (see below). If you would like to have the paper returned to you after grading, you may provide the instructor with a self-addressed envelope (9 1/2" x 12 1/2 ") with sufficient postage attached.

Guidelines for Evaluating Class Participation

	100-94	93-90	89-84	83-Below
Preparation for class / class discussion	Regularly asks questions or makes observations that indicate reflection, knowledge of readings for class.	Occasionally asks questions or makes comments that indicate reflection, some knowledge of class readings.	Rarely asks questions or makes comments that indicate familiarity with the topics being presented.	Does not ask questions or make comments that indicate familiarity with topics being presented.
Attentive involvement in lectures	Fully attentive to all lectures, including those in class and those delivered on-site during tours.	Not entirely attentive to lectures.	Only selectively attentive; day dreams or engages in side conversations during lectures.	Rarely attentive to lectures; either day dreams in class regularly or is not engaged during on-site lectures.
Participation in small groups and role play exercises	Participates actively and provides skilled leadership in small groups and role plays.	Participates actively in small groups and demonstrates good skills in role plays.	Does not fully participate in small groups, while demonstrating adequate skills in role plays.	Does not participate in small groups and demonstrates minimal skills in role plays.
Class attendance and punctuality	No missed classes; always punctual in returning from breaks.	No missed classes; rarely returns late from breaks.	Misses some class sessions; regularly returns late from breaks.	Misses large portions of class; regularly returns late from breaks.

Guidelines for Evaluating Written Assignments

	100-94	93-90	89-84	83-Below
Depth of Thought and Analysis 20%	Paper is constructed in a logical and coherent fashion. Conclusions flow from a well-executed plan, in succinct and clear statements. Where required, systems analysis is insightful; reveals in-depth understanding of family systems theory concepts.	Paper is written with some degree of coherency, with some insightful analysis. Conclusions flow logically, for the most part, with some areas lacking support. Where required, systems analysis includes some insight, with concepts understood to a certain degree.	Topic is stated clearly. Remarks show a degree of analysis. Some areas of the paper lack logical support for conclusions being presented. Where required, systems analysis is limited, demonstrating a sketchy understanding of systems theory concepts.	Topic is vague and underdeveloped. Paper lacks the level of effort for original graduate work. Where required, systems analysis is significantly lacking, with little understanding of systems theory concepts.
Synthesis and Congruency 20%	Paper is well integrated and flows as one complete narrative. Paper flows from general ideas to specific conclusions.	For the most part, the paper is well integrated. General ideas flow fairly well to specific conclusions, with a few exceptions.	Sections of the paper connect to some degree; however, not all sections or paragraphs fall in a natural or logical order.	The paper appears to have no direction, with subtopics appearing disjointed.
Thoroughness 30%	The appropriate content is covered in depth without being redundant. Covers all the elements required by the assignment, as spelled out in the syllabus.	Pertinent content is covered, although not in as much depth as would be possible. Covers most elements of the assignment, as spelled out in the syllabus.	Essential material is not covered sufficiently to explain the topic thoroughly. Omits several elements of the assignment, as spelled out in the syllabus.	Major sections are omitted, glossed over, or unnecessarily repeated. Fails to include the key elements of the assignment, as spelled out in the syllabus.
Personalization 10%	Personal history and critical reflections are appropriately integrated into the narrative.	Personal history and insights are included, with some missed opportunities for doing so.	There is some attempt to integrate personal examples and critical reflections into the paper.	The paper includes little to no personal history, critical reflection, or insights.
Clarity of Writing and Mechanics 20%	Writing is crisp, clear, engaging, and succinct, with no ambiguity. No spelling, grammar, or punctuation errors are made.	Writing is fairly clear and succinct, with minimal ambiguity. Spelling, grammar, or punctuation errors are minimal.	Unnecessary words and ambiguous statements are made. Meaning is unclear in parts of the paper. Several spelling and grammar errors are made.	It is hard to know what the writer is trying to express. Writing is convoluted. Misspelled words, incorrect grammar, and improper punctuation are frequent.

Grading Scale

100-94 = A Exceptional	A superior, outstanding performance. Has mastered the concepts and skills, as noted in role plays and written assignments; adds unique contributions to class discussions.
93-90 = A- Excellent	A very good, admirable performance. Displays understanding of concepts and well integrated skills in all areas of the class; contributes successfully to class discussions.
89-87 = B+ Very good	Above average performance. A few insignificant flaws appear, but overall has a fine understanding of the concepts and skills; contributes to discussions.
84-86 = B Good	A generally good, satisfactory performance. Some significant flaws in understanding the concepts and skills; contributions to discussions are adequate, but minimal.
80-83 = B- Adequate	A barely satisfactory performance. Contributes little to class discussions and lacks a clear understanding of concepts and skills, as evidenced in written assignments.
77-79 = C+ Not sufficient	An unacceptable performance. Unable to engage thoughtfully in class discussions and written assignments show little comprehension of concepts and skills.

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 (http://www.smu.edu/studentlife/PCL_05_HC.asp) on the responsibilities, policies, and penalties regarding academic honesty. Any form of cheating or plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in an *F* grade for the class.

Instructor Contact Information:

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Other Relevant SMU Center for Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management Policies:

Class decorum: Turn off all cell phones or pagers. Do not read newspapers, books for other classes, or other outside reading material during class. Professional respect and courtesy for your fellow students is imperative at all times. Do not engage in side-discussions during class as this distracts the instructor and fellow students. Walking into class late or leaving early is disruptive, as is returning to class late after breaks. If you have to leave early, make arrangements before class begins, and then, when you leave, do so quietly. Be aware that arriving late and leaving early – or returning late from breaks – can impact the portion of the grade assigned for class attendance and participation.

Statement on confidentiality and emotional safety: In order to provide a safe learning environment for students in the class and to protect the confidentiality of class members and those involved in case studies being presented, students will discuss case material and other personal information, reactions, etc. only while in class or privately with other current class members. It is the responsibility of each class member to treat classmates with respect and integrity, thus providing emotional safety for each other during class activities. Failure to do so can result in termination from the department.

Religious observance: Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their professor in writing at the beginning of the term, and should discuss with the professor, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence.

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.