

HDDR 6320 Navigating Congregational Conflict

Southern Methodist University
Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education and Human Development
Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management
5228 Tennyson Parkway Suite 118
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Summer Term

June 16-July 18

Class Time: Mondays and Wednesdays, 6-10:15PM

Instructor Information

Lisa Hancock, MA

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Mobile: 214-215-6841

Office Hours: By appointment

Credit: 3 hours

Course Description

HDDR 6320 Navigating Congregational Conflict

This course applies a transformational systems approach to the emotional life and health of congregations and their leaders. Systems theory views human behavior within congregations and families as living systems that are symbiotically connected to form a single emotional unit. What disrupts one faction or member can end up impacting the whole social system. When discord and anxiety strike, the whole system can disintegrate into chaos and conflict.

Students will learn to utilize systems thinking when assessing conflicts and managing themselves and their emotional reactivity during the processes of mediation. Studying habitual patterns of reactivity that have been passed down through generations of congregations and their families draws attention to how interactions and reactions are mutually influenced and how they become repeated and turn into patterns. This happens on an unconscious level and becomes part of a congregation's history. Looking at conflict through a systems lens creates an objective viewpoint in which to respond to conflict in healthier and more respectful ways. Students will also learn to identify the disparate elements of conflict that lead to congregational disharmony and the steps necessary to assess the emotional health of a congregation and what can be done to create a healthier church and family.

This course will serve as a reflective resource in your life and faith as we explore systems theory as a tool for preventing and responding to conflict. Skills learned in this course will be useful for application to any type of organization, and is not limited solely to congregations.

Learning Objectives

- To understand the difference in congregational and societal conflict, and the types of conflicts that congregations face.
- To gain a basic grounding of Bowen Systems Theory.
- To become more aware of your own family of origin dynamics while seeking to grow in your capacity to function in a more healthy and differentiated way.
- To develop the skills to view organizational or congregational conflict in a broader perspective.
- To integrate systems thinking into your functioning as a leader and mediator.
- To understand the emotional functioning and processes of your congregation or organization and be able to assess the problems and needs in order to identify a course of action.

Required Texts

“Creating a Healthier Church: Family Systems Theory, Leadership, and Congregational Life”

Ronald W. Richardson

“Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue” Edwin Friedman

“The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory” Roberta Gilbert

“Conflict Transformation Skills for Churches” Lombard Mennonite Peace Center

Pages from this workbook will be purchased for \$10 from instructor in class.

Class Schedule and Assignments

Class Schedule	Assignments
Monday, June 16	<p>Read: <i>“Theological Foundations for Resolving Church Conflict: Understanding Expectations and Perceptions”</i> Kenneth C. Newburger http://www.resolvechurchconflict.com/theological_foundations_for_church_conflict_resolution_essay.htm</p> <p>Read: Chapters 1-3 <i>“Creating a Healthier Church”</i> Read: Chapter 8 <i>“The 8 Concepts of Bowen Theory”</i> Read: Chapter 8 <i>“Generation to Generation”</i> Class Participation</p>
Wednesday, June 18	<p>Read: Chapters 6 and 7 <i>“Creating a Healthier Church”</i> Read: Chapters 1, 3 and 4 <i>“The 8 Concepts of Bowen Theory”</i></p>

<p>Monday, June 23</p>	<p>Read: Chapters 1,2, and 10 <i>“Generation to Generation”</i> Class Participation</p>
<p>Monday, June 23</p>	<p>Read: Chapter 6 <i>“Creating a Healthier Church”</i> Read: Chapters 2, 5, 6 <i>“The 8 Concepts of Bowen Theory”</i> Read: Pages 27-29, 32-34 and Chapter 12 <i>“Generation to Generation”</i> Class Participation</p>
<p>Wednesday, June 25</p>	<p>Read: Chapter 11 <i>“Creating a Healthier Church”</i> Read: Chapter 7 <i>“The 8 Concepts of Bowen Theory”</i> Read: Pages 54-55 <i>“Generation to Generation”</i> View: <i>“Mass Appeal”</i> and answer questions Class Participation</p>
<p>Monday, June 30</p>	<p>Read: Pages 31-35 and Chapter 7 <i>“Generation to Generation”</i> View: <i>“Eugene O’Neill: An American Experience”</i> and answer questions Class Participation</p>
<p>Wednesday, July 2</p>	<p>Read: Chapters 4, 5, 8, and 9 <i>“Creating a Healthier Church”</i> Class Participation</p>
<p>Monday, July 7</p>	<p>Read: Chapters 10 and 13 <i>“Creating a Healthier Church”</i> Read: Chapter 9 and Pages 2-5 <i>“Generation to Generation”</i> Class Participation</p>
<p>Wednesday, July 9</p>	<p>Answer and Class Participation: Questions from 7/7 class <i>“Applying Systems Theory to Mediation”</i></p>
<p>Monday, July 14</p>	<p>First Self/Case Study and Genogram Due Read: Chapter 12 <i>“Creating a Healthier Church”</i> Read: Chapters 11 and 12 <i>“Generation to Generation”</i> Read: <i>“Conflict Transformation Skills for Churches”</i> pages Class Participation</p>
<p>Wednesday, July 16</p>	<p>Individual Presentations of Congregation/ Organization Case Studies in Class Class Participation</p>

Student Evaluation and Grading Scale

Class Participation 30%

Self/Case Study and Genogram 30%

Individual Congregation/Organization Case Studies 40%

Class Participation 30%

This experiential and highly participatory class is greatly enriched by your attendance, feedback, and personal experiences. It will be necessary to prepare for each class by reading and thinking through assignments in order to follow and contribute to class conversations.

Self/Case Study and Genogram 30%

This reflective paper focuses on your personal functioning during an anxiety-producing event in your life. The paper should be double-spaced, 2-4 pages long, and include the following:

- Description of events and dynamics
- Family systems analysis of the event
- Reflections on your own best and worst functioning
- Proposed strategies for future self management and growth

Family of origin genogram should use appropriate symbols covered in class and free template found on Genopro.com or utilize the “Draw” application in Microsoft Word.

Accompanying paper should be double-spaced, 2-4 pages, and cover the following:

- Research and document at least 3 generations
- Research and paper should include at least 3 interviews with relatives
- Response to nodal events
- Application of family systems terminology to genogram
- Identify problematic patterns that have influenced you as an adult
- Identify strengths in your family of origin and how they have enriched your adult life

Congregation/Organization Case Study 40%

Students must present a case study in class and expect feedback, suggestions, and coaching from classmates. Amount of time allotted per student TBD. This 4-6 page, double-spaced paper must include the following:

- Summarization of conflict providing description of events and dynamics
- Analyze the conflict by applying concepts and theories discussed in class and covered in texts
- Describe the overall current state of conflict
- Outline an assessment strategy covered in class or develop a plan designed by you
- Predict future outcomes based on assessment or plan

STUDENT EVALUATION AND GRADING SCALE

93-100 = A Exceptional	A superior / outstanding performance. Has mastered the concepts and adds unique contributions to class discussions.
90-92 = A- Excellent	A very good / admirable performance. Displays understanding in all areas of the class, and contributes successfully to class discussions.
87-89 = B+ Outstanding	Above average performance. A few insignificant flaws may appear, but overall has great application of the field.
83-86 = B Good	A generally satisfactory, intellectually adequate performance. Few significant flaws in performance.
80-82 = B- Adequate	A barely satisfactory performance. Contributes little to class discussions and lacks a clear understanding of concepts.
77-79 = C+ Not sufficient	An unacceptable performance. Unable to engage in class discussions and has little comprehension of concepts.

CLASS DECORUM

Attendance is mandatory and roll will be taken. Be punctual. Class begins on time.

Breaks will be granted, but students are expected to be back to class on time.

Do not read newspapers, books for other classes, or other outside reading material during class.

Cell phone use, texting, and checking or receiving email during class are not acceptable, except during break times. Please have cell phones turned off or on "silent" when class is in session.

Be prepared for class. Engage in class discussions and activities. Professional respect and courtesy is expected at all times. Do not engage in side-discussions during class because this distracts other students and the instructor.

COURSE POLICIES

Honor Code

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

http://www.smu.edu/studentlife/PCL_05_HC.asp

Notification of Absence Due to Religious holy day(s)

Students who will be absent from class for the observance of a religious holiday must notify the instructor in advance. Please refer to the Student Obligations section of the university catalog for more explanations. You are required to complete any assignments or take any examinations missed as a result of the absence within the time frame specified by your instructor.

Disabilities Accommodations

Students needing academic accommodations for disability must contact Ms. Rebecca Marin, Coordinator of 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.

Add/Drop Policy

If you are unable to complete this course, you must officially withdraw by the university deadline; the last day to Add/Drop regular courses without a grade record or Billing. Withdrawing is a formal procedure which you must initiate; your instructor cannot do it for you.

SMU Emergency Preparedness

1) In the event of a major campus emergency at SMU, course requirements, deadlines, and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances beyond the instructor's control.