Conflict Management and Resolution in Public and Nonprofit Organizations

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Course Overview

Conflict is inevitable. It affects families and friendships, neighborhoods, towns and governments, nations, organizations, and businesses. Resolving conflict often feels like a constant balancing act among the opposing needs and interests of spouses, children and siblings, town boards, citizens, governmental leaders, business partners, and other parties. Conflicts are also unpleasant and stressful. They distract people from pursuing more productive endeavors and are expensive—in terms of time and money. However, not all conflicts are destructive. Some lead to a sharpening of critical issues and the creation of new systems and institutions beneficial to society. In some instances conflict leads to much needed change. Thus, the challenge to public managers is not to try to eliminate conflict but to manage disagreements as productively as possible.

To that end, the course focuses on managing public disputes and emphasizes the significance of praxis—relating theory to practice. It is designed as a graduate seminar requiring participants to demonstrate initiative and perform independent study. Discussions of readings will be based on the experiences, knowledge, skills, and abilities of participants, in addition to those of the professor. This will require that all assignments (readings, case studies, presentations, and papers) be completed in a timely manner.

Student Learning Outcomes

· To identify traditional and contemporary theories of conflict resolution

· To demonstrate fluency in the use of conflict resolution terms, frames, and concepts

· To describe methods used to analyze conflict situations and design a resolution plan

· To understand the underlying principles to consider when conducting a conflict management program

· To identify and demonstrate knowledge, skill, and ability in using emerging models of conflict management and resolution

Required Texts


**Course Requirements and Grading**

**Expectations for Academic Conduct**

As members of the University of West Florida academic community, we commit ourselves to honesty. As we strive for excellence in performance and integrity (both personal and institutional), honesty is our most precious asset. Honesty in our academic work is vital, and we will not knowingly act in ways that erode that integrity. Accordingly, we pledge not to cheat, nor to tolerate cheating, nor to plagiarize the work of others. We pledge to share community resources in ways that are responsible and that comply with established policies of fairness. Cooperation and competition are means to high achievement and are encouraged. Indeed, cooperation is expected unless our directive is to individual performance. We will compete constructively and professionally for the purpose of stimulating high performance standards. Finally, we accept adherence to this set of expectations for academic conduct as a condition of membership in the University academic community.

**Academic Standards for Written Assignments**

Students are expected to read, understand, and comply with the requirements of the Sixth Edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* for all assignments and manuscripts. This includes the “Ethical Standards for the Reporting and Publishing of Scientific Information” included therein. To that end, all work submitted orally or in writing for this course must be the student’s own and may not have been used, whole or in part, for any other purpose without the professor’s prior written permission (if in doubt you must ask the professor).

**Assistance**

Students with special needs who require specific examination related or other course related accommodations should contact the Director of Disabled Student Services (DSS), dss@uwf.edu, at (850) 474-2387. DSS will provide the student with a letter for the instructor that will specify any recommended accommodations. Students must ensure that the appropriate letter is provided to the instructor prior to completing course requirements.
Course Requirements and Grading *(Timely submission of assignments is required)*

Midterm Examination (open book written essay in APA format/style) - 40%

Applied Research Paper - 40%

Case Study/Assignments - 10%

Class participation/threaded discussions - 10%

Class Schedule and Assignments

Week 1: *Building an Online Community*

Week 2: *Conflict Management and Resolution: An Overview*

The study of conflict is interdisciplinary and complex. The suggested optional readings listed below provide a deeper understanding of the material presented in the course, as well as a beginning guide of topics for the applied research paper. They represent a starting point, not a comprehensive list of conflict readings—that is your goal.

Week 3: *Theoretical Underpinnings in the Field of Conflict Studies*

D & C, Introduction & Chapter 1

C & M, Chapter 1

Suggested Readings


**Week 4: Procedural, Distributive and Substantive Justice**

D & C, Chapter 2

C & M, Chapter 2

**Suggested Readings**


**Week 5: The Role of Trust In Conflict Management and Resolution**

D & C, Chapter 4

**Suggested Readings**


**Week 6: Power and Conflict**

D & C, Chapter 5

D & C, Chapter 8

**Suggested Readings**


**Week 7: Problem Solving and Decision Making**

D & C, Chapter 9

D & C, Chapter 13

**Suggested Readings**


**Week 8: Midterm (Open book exam due in the drop box by the end of the academic course week)**

**Week 9: Communication and Conflict Resolution**

D & C, Chapter 6

**Suggested Readings**


**Week 10: Internal Dispute Resolution (IDR)**

D & C, Chapter 21


**Suggested Readings**


**Week 11: Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)**

D & C, Chapters 16 & 17

C & M Chapter 3 & Chapter 4

**Suggested Readings**


**Week 12: Applying Theory to Practice: Managing Public Disputes**

C & K, Part I, Public Controversies and Conflict Management,

Chapters 1-3

C & K, Part II, A Step-By-Step Process for Managing Public Disputes,
Chapters 4-7

**Week 13: Managing Public Disputes - Continued**

C & K, Part III, Ensuring the Success of Conflict Management,

Chapters 8-11

**Week 14: Designing Viable Conflict Management Systems**

C & M, Part II, Designing and Improving Conflict Management Systems,

Chapters 5-10

Suggested Readings


**Week 15: Course Summary and Conclusions**

Making Conflict Management Systems Work

C & M, Part III, Making the System Work, Chapters 11-13

Dropbox Assignment: (Course Feedback to Instructor)

Applied research paper due (in drop box by end of week)

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**RESEARCH PAPER GUIDELINES**

The major intellectual project of the directed study is the research paper. *The paper must be written in APA format and style.* To that end, students are expected to read, understand, and comply with the requirements of the *Sixth Edition* of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA)* for all assignments and manuscripts. This includes the “Ethical Standards for the Reporting and Publishing of Scientific Information” included therein. All work submitted orally and/or in writing for this directed study must be the student’s own and may not have been used whole and/or in part for any other purpose without the professor’s prior *written permission* (if in doubt you must ask the instructor).

Students should select a research paper topic consistent with their personal interests and intellectual curiosity that can be well managed within semester time parameters, based upon academic and other workloads. Thus, it is important to keep the focus of the research paper
narrow by defining an “angle on” or “dimension of” conflict management and resolution. The instructor is available to assist you in this effort. Please note that the instructor must approve your paper topic in advance.

*It is expected that the formal paper will be carefully researched and well written.* Toward that goal, the paper must use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation. The completed paper shall be a minimum of 15 pages in length and not exceed 20 pages (excluding cover, endnotes, appendices, and references/bibliography). The paper must be submitted in a timely manner. *Late papers will be substantially discounted in grade,* unless the delay is caused by a documented illness and/or personal emergency.

A. **Research papers will be graded based upon the following criteria:**

1. Grammar, spelling, and punctuation (proofread and spell check).

2. Knowledge and understanding of the assigned readings and classroom discussions.

3. The ability to integrate knowledge from different sources (texts, library research, class discussions, and real life situations).

4. Analysis of materials to reach conclusions and support them in an organized, coherent manner.

5. Compliance with minimum/maximum length and submission requirements.