

Assessing and Managing Conflict

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Course Description

The usual method for presenting, analyzing, and resolving conflicts in Western society has centered on legalistic argument, with a goal of discovering the "right" answer and suppressing the "wrong" ones. However, the multiple worldviews operating in the world today make such an approach to conflict less and less viable. Ways of communicating about, and resolving, conflict have arisen that go beyond enforcement of rules or legal determinations of right and wrong to include mediation and other innovative approaches. In a related development, recent theories of cognitive and moral growth suggest that a shift from "us-versus-them" attitudes to more inclusive, integrative ones is occurring. In this course we will look at various methods for handling conflict and consider how we might apply them to hypothetical and real-life conflicts.

Course Learning Goals

After completing this course, you will be able to:

- your own and others' behavior in conflict
- Determine the impact of background, context, vision, and other variables on a conflict
- Manage conflict, using techniques of argument, negotiation, and mediation.

Course Resources

To buy your books, go to <http://www.mbsdirect.net>.

Hint: type DePaul for name of the school.

[Click here for help buying your books](#)

Required Movie

Williams, Tennessee. [A Streetcar Named Desire](#). (This is the movie version that stars Marlon Brando). Rent or buy. (You will need to watch portions of it twice - three times for H-3-D)

Required Readings

Please read material in the modules as directed.

Case Study Outline (F-X and L-7)

[Download](#) a printable version of the Case Study Outline

The case study is based on a conflict that you will identify and analyze. It may be a conflict at work, or it may be a family conflict, neighborhood conflict, etc. The group case study should be based on a more general topic — a community or international controversy for example. The following is an outline of the information you will need to provide in the written document in which you describe your study of this conflict. If you complete the assignments for each week (which will refer you to the outline), you will find that you have written the case study by the end of the term.

Note that in both cases you should present both sides (or more, if there are more than two) of the controversy, explaining the positions and needs and interests of each party. Then consider ways to resolve the conflict that will satisfy at least some of each party's needs. Ideally, both parties should be pleased with the result.

I. Introduction/description.

Give enough information about this situation so outsiders can understand it. Include information about the organization/group and the larger community or organization in which it rests.

- A. Background/Setting: Where and when did this conflict take place? What is it about? What is the context: the social and legal climate, trends, laws, policies, regulations, and/or traditions? On how many levels does the conflict take place?
- B. Participants: Who are they? What part do they play in the conflict? Are there secondary players or others who affect the conflict or are affected by it? What style of conflict management does each use?
- C. Actions: How has the conflict manifested? What has been done, said, implied, etc.? Which are overt (obvious) conflicts and which are covert (hidden) conflicts?
- D. What else affects the conflict or is affected by it?

II. What vision can you form for a positive resolution of the conflict? Describe it in detail as if it were happening now.

III. Analysis

- A. What is the primary dispute? Are there any secondary issues?
- B. What position does each participant take regarding what should happen? (Who wants what, and why do they say they want it?)
- C. What are the most significant barriers to resolution of this conflict?
- D. What are the stages of development of the participants? How does this affect their worldviews, assumptions, attitudes, values, and/or understandings?
- E. What are the real needs of the participants?

IV. Forming a perspective.

- A. What is the best argument for each position in this dispute?
- B. B. Under what circumstances might each person or group be correct?

V. Application of dispute resolution techniques (bridges to the vision). If you have the opportunity to witness in person (or apply to yourself) any of these techniques, describe what happened and how it influenced the conflict. If not, try to imagine what might happen and what effect it might have.

1. Force
2. Appeal
3. Formal argument/legal approaches such as filing suit, using lawyers to negotiate a deal, arbitration, etc.
4. Negotiation. Consider how you used or could use (comment on at least five):

1. Preparation
2. Hard on the issues, soft on the people
3. External standards
4. Generating options
5. Partial agreement
6. on interests, not positions
7. focus
8. Inquiry

5. Mediation? How did you or could you use (comment on at least 5):

1. Summarizing
2. Getting from positions to needs/interests
3. Reframing
4. Neutralizing language
5. Stroking
6. Dealing with emotion
7. BATNA
8. Reality testing
9. Effective questioning
10. Other? What other techniques might be helpful, and how might they be used? Consider humor, therapy, role-play, large-group problem solving, etc.

VI. Conclusion/results:

- A. What happened? What is your assessment of what happened (what worked well, what didn't, who changed, who didn't, what might be done differently next time)?
- B. VERY IMPORTANT: What is (are) the best integrative solution(s) you can suggest for this conflict?

Book List (H-3-D)

[Download](#) a printable version of the booklist

Check your local library, used bookstores and online booksellers for copies of the following:

Boal, August. *The Rainbow of Desire*. The Boal Method of Theater and Therapy. New York: Routledge, 1995.

Bohm, Sarah (from material by David Bohm). *On Dialogue*. London, Routledge, 1996.

Bush, Baruch and Joseph P. Folger. *The Promise of Mediation: Responding to Conflict*

- Through Empowerment and Recognition*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994.
- Cloke, Kenneth, Joan Goldsmith. *Resolving Conflict at Work*. Jossey Bass: San Francisco, 2000.
- Crum Thomas. *The Magic of Conflict: Personal Guidance System: Turning a Life of Work into a Work of Art*. Touchstone Books, 1988.
- Deutsch, Morton. *The Resolution of Conflict*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1973. [Difficult]
- Fisher, Roger and William Ury. *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*. New York: Penguin, 1983.
- Kahn, Michael. *The Tao of Conversation*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, Inc. 1995.
- Kottler, Jeffrey. *Beyond Blame: A New Way of Resolving Conflicts in Relationships*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass 1994.
- McKay, Matthew, Peter D. Rogers, and Judith McKay. *When Anger Hurts*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publication, Inc. 1989
- Mindell, Arnold. *Sitting in the Fire*. Portland, OR: Lao-Tse Press, 1995.
- Nierenberg, Gerard I. *The Art of Negotiating*. New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc. 1968.
- Riskin, Leonard and James Westbrook. *Dispute Resolution and Lawyers*, Abridged Edition and 1993 Supplement to Abridged Edition, West Publishing, 1987. (expensive and hard to find)
- Stone, Hal and Isidra Stone. *Embracing Our Selves*. Mill Valley, CA: Nataraj Publishing, 1989.
- Stone, Douglas, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen. *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1999.
- Tannen, Deborah. *The Argument Culture*. New York, Toronto: Random House, 1998.
- Weeks, Dudley, Ph.D. *The Eight Essential Steps to Conflict Resolution: Preserving Relationships at Work, at Home, and in the Community*. New York: Tarcher/Putnam, 1992, 1994.

Course Competences

This course addresses the following competences:

H-3-D: Can effectively employ the skills of negotiation, mediation, and interpersonal communications in the resolution of a dispute or conflict.

- A. Can identify the components of a specific relationship and describe the conflict or problem that exists within that relationship;
- B. Can apply principles of mediation or negotiation to resolve the conflict or problem;
- C. Can evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention and of the theoretical model underlying the negotiation or mediation strategies situations.

You will learn about various methods of conflict resolution, from "might makes right" to transformational conflict resolution, including law, negotiation, and mediation. At the end of the course, you will be able to apply these strategies to different types of conflicts, and evaluate the potential and actual short- and long-term effects of such strategies.

Tasks and grading weight: Main Discussions, Assignments, and Group Discussions (45%), Three Papers (30%), Book Report (25%).

F-X: Can apply knowledge of ways of understanding and managing conflict to conflicts that arise at work or involve the focus area.

You will learn ways to assess and manage conflict and apply their learning to actual conflicts involving their focus area. You will develop a case study of a particular conflict that reflects, among other things, your understanding of the participants, the issues, the worldviews and assumptions underlying the conflict, the environment in which the conflict is occurring, and appropriate methods for resolving or managing the conflict.

Tasks and grading weight: Main Discussions, Assignments, and Group Discussions (45%), Three Papers (30%), Individual Case Study (25%).

L-7: Collaborative Learning. Can learn collaboratively and examine the skills, knowledge, and values that contribute to such learning.

If you are registered for L-7 you will engage in several collaborative projects over the course of the term.

Tasks and grading weight: Main Discussions, Assignments, and Movie Discussions (41%), Weekly Group Case Study Discussions (49%), Group Reflection (10%).

Course Structure

You will examine various conflicts and apply various techniques of assessment and resolution to them. You will complete certain exercises outside of class (during "real-life" situations) and reflect on the impact of those exercises. All students will work together in groups of three to six with regard to the conflict in a movie, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, posting answers to various questions on the Discussion Board and responding to other groups' postings.

The following are additional competence specific requirements:

H-3-D: Students will: 1) read a book on conflict resolution (see suggested reading list in Course Resources section) and post a report on it to the discussion forum. 2) Write three short (two- to three-page) papers in which they argue a position, present an opposing viewpoint, and integrate the two.

FX: Students will: 1) prepare a detailed written analysis of a selected conflict (the individual case study). An outline of the information to be provided can be found in the case study outline in the Help area of Bb. Portions of this case study are assigned on a regular basis over the term so that by the tenth week when it is due, it will be largely completed and will need only revising and editing. 2) Write three short (two- to three-page) papers in which they argue a position, present an opposing viewpoint, and integrate the two.

L-7: Students will: 1) work in collaborative learning groups to prepare a group analysis of a selected conflict (the group case study). An outline of the information to be provided can be found in the case study outline in the Help area of Bb. 2) Write a reflective paper on the group experience in which they examine, among other things: valuable skills for group interaction; what situations or behaviors increase or decrease group conflict; successful and unsuccessful conflict resolution practices; how effectively the group manages time; and how much time is devoted to the process versus to the final product.

The course is divided into ten modules. The estimated time needed to complete each module is one week.

Please note that each competence has its own list of assignments. All assignments are to be posted by Sunday evening of each week unless otherwise noted by your facilitator. Several assignments will require group work prior to that time, however, so plan accordingly.

Note: all responses to a posting should be on your own not as part of a group unless stated otherwise.

To view the course schedule, click on the Schedule link on the left-hand navigation bar. This page contains the most recently updated listing of the topics and assignments due for each week of the course.

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Assessment

Course Grading Criteria

[Download](#) a printable version of the Course Grading Criteria

1. Case study. The assignment will be evaluated on the following criteria.
 1. Does the case study address all the points on the case study outline?
 2. Does the case study describe the genesis and development of the conflict in a way that a non-participant can understand?
 3. Does the case study include a resolution that addresses the needs and interests of all parties?
 4. Has the case study been checked for structural and grammatical errors?
2. Group interaction and participation.
 1. Has the group member participated in each of the discussions?
 2. Has the group member done an amount of work equal to that of the other group members?
 3. Has the group member made an effort to apply conflict- resolution techniques to any conflicts that arose?
 4. Has the group member put forth his/her ideas?
 5. Has the group member responded to other members' ideas?
 6. Has the group member adequately performed the role assigned to him/her?
3. Book report. Concentrate on practical tips that you find in the book you read. Give a brief general overview of the book and then describe some of the key ideas in it. You will be evaluated on whether you:
 1. Provide an overview of the book
 2. Outline the conflict resolution techniques covered in the book
 3. Use specific examples so that they will be useful to other students.
4. Argument/Opposing/Integrative papers. Together these will form one paper. However, they will be written and posted individually.

- The argument paper. You will be evaluated on the following criteria:
 1. Whether you identify the issue in one, or at most two, sentences
 2. Whether your position is stated concisely in the first few paragraphs
 3. Whether your reasoning is presented in a logical order
 4. Whether you provide evidence to support your assertions.
 - The opposing perspective paper. You will be evaluated on the following criteria:
 1. Whether you present the opposite point of view as forcefully as you presented your own point of view.
 2. Whether you provide evidence to support the other side's assertions —evidence that someone with those beliefs would present.
 - The integrative paper. You will be evaluated on the following criteria:
 1. Your creativity in coming up with solutions that work for everyone
 2. The extent to which you deal with the needs of all parties.
5. Group evaluation/reflection. You will be evaluated on your ability to thoughtfully assess the collaborative learning experience and on the extent to which you can relate the course concepts to that experience.
 6. Discussion forum exercises. The entries will be evaluated as to the extent they meet the requirements for each discussion. You also will be evaluated on how often you contribute and in what depth. For example, do you do your best to answer a question raised? Are your contributions specific enough so others can understand them? Do you take into account a variety of perspectives? Are your comments original? Do your comments refer to the conflict-resolution techniques covered in the course?
 7. Petition for Separate Grade in L-7. The option to be graded separately for the L-7 competence is available at the end of the term AFTER you have made every effort possible to encourage the group to function well. If you want to be considered for a separate grade you will need to submit the following in writing on the last day of class:
 - a. A concise description of the issues in the group that prevented it from working successfully.
 - b. A discussion as to how you might have approached them differently so as to prevent an unsuccessful outcome.
 - c. A description of the conflict resolution techniques you tried and their outcome.
 - d. A description of your own behavior in the group. This involves focusing on your strengths and weaknesses rather than those of the other group members.
 - e. Written documentation as to what you did toward the final product.

If, from what is submitted, it appears that the difficulties were not of your own making; or, if they were, that you made every effort to overcome them and have learned from the process; and you did your share, then I will provide an individual grade.

Additional Assessment Criteria for your integrative paper and case studies.

They should:

- Demonstrate that you are able to integrate the evidence derived from your chosen

- sources into your argument according in Standard English using proper grammar, mechanics, and sentence structure.
- Use proper quotation form, including introduction of your quotation as well as your commentary following the quotation.
 - Have an introduction and concluding paragraph.
 - Contain proper APA or MLA citation form for in-text references as well as for the bibliography.

General Online Participation Guidelines

The following guidelines may encourage you to be active and critical in your participation. Only together we will make this course a significant and pleasant learning experience:

- Participation is essential, so please connect to the course daily or at least every second day.
- Post your assignment in the first part of the week; in the second part of the week post comments to the other students
- Please accept the challenge of working with others and constructing knowledge in negotiation with them. Working individually on the assignments and just posting them is not sufficient.
- Some difficulties at the beginning of an online course are quite normal; solving them is part of every distance learning experience.

Course grading scale

A	95–100
A-	90–94
B+	87–89
B	83–86
B-	80–82
C+	77–79
C	73–76
C-	70–72
D+	67–69
D	63–66
D-	60–62
F	59 and below

Helpful Hints for Successful and Insightful Online Discussions

- Keep up with the assignments related to the individual or group case studies; then they will be written by the time they are due.
- Turn in all work on time. Because we will all be relying on one another, particularly

- for group work, late work is a major problem.
- There is one module per week. Work is to be posted in your Assignments area or posted on the discussion forum as directed.
 - Assignments are to be done by everyone, unless the assignment is specifically reserved to one competency. In that case you will see a note (L-7 only etc.)
 - Carefully read the study guide and all communications from the facilitator. Distance learning implies an ability to comprehend written instructions and work independently.

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Policies

Academic Integrity

DePaul University is a learning community that fosters the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas within a context that emphasizes a sense of responsibility for oneself, for others and for society at large. Violations of academic integrity, in any of their forms, are, therefore, detrimental to the values of DePaul, to the students' own development as responsible members of society, and to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Violations include but are not limited to the following categories: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification or sabotage of research data; destruction or misuse of the university's academic resources; alteration or falsification of academic records; and academic misconduct. Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could result in additional disciplinary actions by other university officials and possible civil or criminal prosecution. Please refer to your Student Handbook or visit <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/homehandbook.html> for further details.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a major form of academic dishonesty involving the presentation of the work of another as one's own. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following:

- The direct copying of any source, such as written and verbal material, computer files, audio disks, video programs or musical scores, whether published or unpublished, in whole or part, without proper acknowledgement that it is someone else's.
- Copying of any source in whole or part with only minor changes in wording or syntax, even with acknowledgement.
- Submitting as one's own work a report, examination paper, computer file, lab report or other assignment that has been prepared by someone else. This includes research papers purchased from any other person or agency.
- The paraphrasing of another's work or ideas without proper acknowledgement.

Plagiarism, like other forms of academic dishonesty, is always a serious matter. If a instructor finds that a student has plagiarized, the appropriate penalty is at the instructor's discretion.

Disability Accommodations

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with disabilities on an individualized and flexible basis. The Office of Students with Disabilities (OSD) determines appropriate accommodations through consultation with the student. For certain learning disabilities and/or attention deficit disorders, the Productive Learning Strategies Program (PLuS) determines the appropriate accommodations. See the

instructor for more information or call OSD at 773-325-7290 (phone) or 773-325-7296 (TTY); or call PLS at 773-325-1677.

Incomplete Grades

The intent of the Incomplete grade is to allow students extra time to complete their final assignments. This need arises because, in the closing weeks of the course, they have an event of significant magnitude that adversely affects their ability to complete the course, e.g. serious illness, death in the family, overseas deployment, or natural disaster.

You must request an incomplete grade in writing two weeks before the end of the quarter. Incomplete grades will be considered only after you have satisfactorily completed at least 75 percent of the coursework, and you have such an unexpected, uncontrollable event that prevents you from completing your course. Do not assume that you will qualify for an incomplete. Students who are failing the course at the point where they request an incomplete will not receive one, nor will they be granted after the end of the quarter. Incomplete grades are given at the discretion of the instructor.

If you do receive permission from the instructor to take an incomplete in the course, you will be required to complete a contract with the instructor, specifying how you will finish the missing work within the next two quarters (excluding summer). Incompletes not finished by the end of the second quarter (excluding summer) will automatically become an F grade on your transcript.

Instructors may not change incomplete grades after the end of the grace period without the permission of a college-based Exceptions Committee.

NOTE: In the case of a student who has applied for graduation and who has been approved for an Incomplete in his or her final term, the incomplete must be resolved within the four week grace period before final degree certification.

Protection of Human Subjects

For more information see: <http://research.depaul.edu/>.

Demonstrating the acquisition of competences in this course can involve "interactions" —interviewing and or observing other people—discussing those interviews or observations with other class members and writing them up in one or more final report(s). As such, these activities qualify as "research" with "human subjects" and are subject to University and Federal guidelines. Because it takes place in the context of this course, your research is exempt from approval by the School for New Learning's Local Review Board only under the following conditions:

1. The information you collect is EXCLUSIVELY for the purpose of classroom discussion and will NOT be used after the term is over. If there is any possibility that you will EVER use it in further research or for publication, you must obtain approval from the Local Review Board before you begin.
2. You assess and ensure that no "harm"—physical, mental, or social—does or could result from either your interviews and/or observations or your discussion and/or reports.
3. The privacy and confidentiality of those that you interview or observe must be protected. Unless you receive specific permission, in writing, from the person(s) you interview or observe, please change their names, and make sure that their identity cannot be readily ascertained from the information you provide.
 - a. If you want to use real names and relationships, they must sign an

"informed consent" document. For information on creating an "informed consent document" see, for example, <http://www.research.umn.edu/consent>.

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Course Expectations

Time Management and Attendance

SNL's online courses are not self-paced and require a regular time commitment EACH week throughout the quarter.

You are required to log in to your course at least four times a week so that you can participate in the ongoing course discussions.

Online courses are no less time consuming than "face to face" courses. You will have to dedicate some time every day or at least every second day to your studies. A typical four credit hour "face to face" course at SNL involves three hours of classroom meeting per week, plus at least three to six hours of study and homework per week.

This course will require at least the same time commitment, but your learning activities will be spread out through the week. If you have any problems with your technology, or if you need to improve your reading or writing skills, it may take even longer.

The instructor should be notified if your life events do not allow you to participate in the course and the online discussions for more than one week. This is particularly important when there are group discussions or you are working as part of a team.

If you find yourself getting behind, please contact the instructor immediately.

Your Instructor's Role

Your instructor's role in this course is that of a discussion facilitator and learning advisor. It is not their responsibility to make sure you log in regularly and submit your assignments. As instructor, s/he will read all postings to the general discussion forums on a daily basis but may not choose to respond to each posting. You will receive feedback to assignments.

The instructor may choose to designate "office hours" when s/he will be online and available and will immediately respond to questions. Depending on the instructor, this response may be by e-mail, instant messenger or telephone. Otherwise, you will generally receive a response to emailed or posted queries within 48 hours.

Your Role as a Student

As an online student, you will be taking a proactive approach to your learning. As the course instructor's role is that of a learning guide, your role is that of the leader in your own learning.

You will be managing your own time so that you can complete the readings, activities and assignments for the course, and you will also be expected to take a more active role in peer learning.

Credits

This course was designed and produced by Lynn Holaday Royster and staff of SNL

Online at DePaul University.

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