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COMM 412.01: Communication and Conflict

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COMMUNICATION AND CONFLICT

SPRING 2013

Instructor: Dr. Christina G. Yoshimura

Office: LA 358 **Phone:** 243-4244

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00 – 12:00, Friday, 1-2, and by advance appointment

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Many people liken disagreement and conflict to wars, disasters, and destruction. However, each disagreement needn't lead to hostility or burst into flames - instead, disagreements can be positive for all types of relationships and contexts, if handled constructively. This course is designed to introduce you to the basic principles of effective communication and conflict interaction. Throughout the course of the class, we will explore conflict in a variety of contexts such as within groups, organizations, romantic relationships, family relationships, and friendships. We will build from a primarily interpersonal focus on communication to investigate how conflict occurs and is handled in a number of broader contexts.

Course Objectives:

- To be able to define the elements of a conflict and understand the potential for altering them in a given condition.
- To be familiar with the various internal and interactive theories that explain how and why conflict occurs.
- To understand how concepts such as power, face, climate, emotions, and styles influence the conflict process.
- To be able to determine when a third party should be brought in to a conflict situation, and which form of third party intervention is appropriate.

Required:

Your text for this course will be Wilmot, W. & Hocker, J. (2011) *Interpersonal Conflict* (8th edition). This text is available at the UM Bookstore, or secondhand on websites such as <http://www.half.com>. Supplemental materials will be provided online, in our Moodle page. Also required:

- At least 4 skinny red scantrons sold at the Bookstore (ParSCORE test form no. F-289-PAR-L)
- At least one #2 pencil

Policies:

Attendance & Participation - Class is conducted in order to share important information. By missing class, you not only are missing out on that information, but the rest of the class is missing out on information that you may have been able to share. If you choose to miss class, you must take responsibility for your choice. I give lectures only once, so you will need to gather the information from class in some other way. Although attendance will not be taken, classes may begin or end with an assignment. These exercises cannot be made up late and cannot be done early.

Think of learning as a chance to grow. Allow yourself to participate in discussion and don't sabotage other people's opportunities for education by discouraging them from participating. Be open to other people and be willing to respond to ideas that are different from what you believe is "normal." Never be afraid to share your ideas with others, although think carefully about what insight/relevance you are offering in personal anecdotes. Dialogue is how we advance knowledge. Believe that your ideas are as important as everyone else's and share them with us.

Deadlines: All assignments and exams (including dates and deadlines) will be announced during class and/or on our syllabus. No assignment or exam may be turned in late nor made up (except for the very rare instance approved by Dr. Yoshimura, generally in advance). For requests of alternate testing accommodations, you must approach Dr. Yoshimura by the second week of class in order to be effectively accommodated. Please note that

no late students will be allowed in to take the exam after the first person to finish the exam has left the room, so be sure to come to class on time.

Academic Integrity: All students taking this course must adhere to the University of Montana's academic dishonesty policy as presented in the Student Conduct Code (SCC). As noted in the code, students are expected to practice academic honesty. Any actions that include, but are not limited to, the following behaviors are reasons for pursuing academic and university sanctions: plagiarism, copying another student's exam, allowing another student to copy from your exam or work, sharing information with another student during testing sessions, acquiring or possessing an exam without the instructor's permission, tampering with course materials or resources (including library references) submitting false information (data, quotations, citations, etc.), representing someone else's work as your own, clicking for someone else in the response section of our course, putting someone's name on work they haven't done, etc. Students will be charged with academic dishonesty for any breach of these standards. No work done for credit in any other class may be turned in for credit in this class. The *minimum* consequence for engaging in cheating or plagiarism is failure on the related assignment, but this type of activity usually results in failure in the entire course. At worst, academic misconduct can result in expulsion, denial of your degree, and/or revocation of a degree that has already been awarded. See the Student Conduct Code for definitions and consequences of cheating and plagiarism. The unabridged student conduct code is located at: www.umt.edu/studentaffairs/policy/code.htm.

Philosophy and Consideration – I am committed to fairness. I generally abide by the ethical system of the categorical imperative – something is just and fair if it can be applied to everyone in the same circumstance. I created the policies in this syllabus to be applied to everyone in the course – I do not grant exemptions, extensions, or extra credit to one person if I cannot do so for the entire class. The entire class is being held to the policies in this syllabus, and the timeline and schedule for this course – please make sure that you are willing to accept this if you choose to continue in the course.

The overall atmosphere in the class should be that of respect - for yourself and everyone else in the class. In the course of our discussions, personal information may be disclosed. Please do not repeat this information or use it to harm others. Help foster a classroom where education and consideration for one another are valued. Please understand that harassment of any kind is both inappropriate and intolerable, and disciplinary action will be taken should it occur.

E-Mail – Although you may come meet with me during office hours, many people choose to communicate via e-mail. Please always put COMM 412 in the subject of your e-mail, especially if you are not emailing from your university account. Please allow up to 48 hours for me to reply to any email. Generally, I will reply well before 48 hours is up, however, you should not email questions the night before an exam. You may or may not receive a reply. When emailing, please write professionally and courteously. This means forming complete sentences, with appropriate punctuation and capitalization, as well as formulating your questions or requests in a considerate way. I will reply to you in the same manner. If your e-mail deviates too far from these expectations, I will reply by gently pointing you back to this section of the syllabus and asking you to try again.

Contesting Grades - I am willing to go over any assignment or exam with you to discuss concerns that you might have. I ask that you abide by three guidelines, all of which make it easier to concentrate on your concerns. 1) Please contact me a minimum of 24 hours after an assignment/test grade has been posted and a maximum of two weeks after an assignment/test grade has been posted. 2) Please write your concerns and your backing for these concerns down so that we can look them over as we meet. 3) Please approach me only during office hours or during an appointment that we've scheduled - discussing your grade in class violates your privacy and doesn't provide an environment where we can adequately focus on your concerns. If you wish to contest a grade, you must make an appointment to do so within one week after the assignment has been returned.

Assignments and Grades:

Grade Points:

Exams (3 @ 100 points)	300
Case Studies in class (3 @ 50 points)	150
Conflict Interview (50 points)	50

Total Points 500

Exam questions (3 @ 5 points) 15 points, extra credit

I do not use the +/- system in this course, nor do I curve grades.

Exams: The exams in this class are not cumulative, and each will cover only a portion of the class. You will be provided with a study guide and/or review prior to each exam. Exams may include any of the following: multiple choice, true/false, or matching. Four exams will be given – your three highest scores will become part of your final grade. PLAN TO TAKE ALL FOUR EXAMS and drop the lowest score – but if you are unable to make an exam (documented illness/school-sponsored event/family emergency) this will be the exam that is dropped from your final grade automatically. If you will miss more than one exam day please consult with me as early as possible to determine your plan for this course.

Case Studies: Four times during the course of the semester we will group up in class to take a set of interpersonal conflict communication concepts and apply them to a case study in a larger context (workplace conflicts, domestic and international conflicts, etc.). I will assign you to a group in class on that day, and you will be responsible for creating an outline with this group by the end of the class that documents your work together in extending our interpersonal conflict concepts. One grade will be awarded for the entire group. Your three best grades on these assignments will become part of your final grade. If you are unable to make it to class on a day when we are working in this way ((documented illness/school-sponsored event/family emergency) this will be the case study grade that is dropped from your final grade automatically. If you will miss more than one case study day please consult with me as early as possible to determine your plan for this course.

Conflict Interview: You will conduct one interview with someone two generations removed from you regarding their views on conflict and communication. An interview guide and further directions will be posted on our Moodle course supplement. This person may be related to you (grandparent, great-aunt/great-uncle, grandchild, etc.) or unrelated (family friend, co-worker, etc.) but their age must be separated from yours by at least 40 years. You will create a digital audio recording of this interview to turn in to me on CD, and you will also write a paper including interview content and reflections that will be turned in to me in hard copy.

Extra Credit Exam Questions: For optional extra credit you may create a list of five exam questions prior to each exam. Each question must be based in our text/class readings and be referenced in some way on the study guide. You should include four multiple choice options with only one correct answer, but with no glaringly incorrect answers or “none of the above/all of the above” answers. You should put an asterisk (*) beside the correct answer. These questions should be posted by you to our Moodle supplement (directions will follow) in the time frame no more than one week in advance of the exam, and no less than 72 hours before the exam. You can receive one point per question (up to five questions) that you post in this way before each exam.

Week 1 - Groundwork

Monday, Jan 28 – Introductions to the class and one another

Wednesday, Jan 30 – Definitions of conflict – read Chapter 1

Friday, Feb 1 – Perspectives on conflict – read Chapter 2

Week 2 – The Inner Experience of Conflict

Monday, Feb 4 – Theories – read online reading (Folger, Poole, Stutman – FPS)

Wednesday, Feb 6 – Interests and Goals – read Chapter 3

Friday, Feb 8 – Personality and Traits – no reading

Week 3 – The External Experience of Conflict

Monday, Feb 11 – Theories – read online reading (FPS)

Wednesday, Feb 13 – Interaction dynamics – no reading

Friday, Feb 15 – **NO CLASS** – Western States Communication Association Conference

Week 4

Monday, February 18 – **NO CLASS** – President's Day

Wednesday, February 20 – **In-Class Case Study Assignment**

Friday, February 22 – **Exam 1**

Week 5 – Emotions and Power

Monday, February 25 – Power – read Chapter 4 and online reading (McIntosh)

Wednesday, February 27 – Emotions – read Chapter 6

Friday, March 1 – Emotional Intelligence and Power Assessment – no reading

Week 6 – Styles and Tactics

Monday, March 4 – Styles and Tactics – read Chapter 5

Wednesday, March 6 – Styles and Tactics – no reading

Friday, March 8 – In-class conflict experience – no reading

Week 7

Monday, March 11 – Mapping Conflicts – read Chapter 7

Wednesday, March 13 – **In-Class Case Study Assignment**

Friday, March 15 – **Exam 2**

Week 8 – Conflict Contexts – The Workplace

Monday, March 18 – Workplace Conflict – no reading

Wednesday, March 20 – Conflict with colleagues - read online reading

Friday, March 22 - Conflict between groups/hierarchy – read online reading

Week 9 – Conflict Contexts – The Family

Monday, March 25 – Family conflict – no reading

Wednesday, March 27 – Conflicts with parents – read online reading

Friday, March 29 – Conflicts with siblings – read online reading

Week 10

Monday, April 1 – **NO CLASS, Spring Break**

Wednesday, April 3 - **NO CLASS, Spring Break**

Friday, April 5 - **NO CLASS, Spring Break**

Week 11– Conflict Contexts – Chosen Personal Relationships

Monday, April 8 – Conflict and Friendship - read online reading

Wednesday, April 10 – Conflict and Romantic Relationships – read online reading

Friday, April 12 – Conflict and Romantic Relationships – no reading

Week 12

Monday, April 15 –Political conflict – read online reading

Wednesday, April 17 – **In Class Case Study Assignment**

Friday, April 19 – **Exam 3**

Week 13 - Negotiation

Monday, April 22 – Introduction to Negotiation – read Chapter 8

Wednesday, April 24 – Applications of Negotiation – read online reading

Friday, April 26 – In-class Negotiation Practice – no reading

Week 14 – Third Party Intervention

Monday, April 29 – Types of Intervention – read online reading

Wednesday, May 1 – Mediation – read online reading

Friday, May 3 – In-class mediation practice – no reading

Week 15

Monday, May 6 – Forgiveness and Reconciliation – read Chapter 10

Wednesday, May 8 – Peace – read online reading

Friday, May 10 – **In-Class Case Study Assignment**

Final Exam

Wednesday, May 15, 10:10-12:10

All readings/lecture notes from this class are copyrighted materials. You may print one copy for your own use, but you may not reproduce or use them beyond your own academic pursuits.

None of the material on the preceding pages is negotiable.

If you choose to remain in class beyond the first day, you are agreeing to abide by the principles and requirements set forth for this class.