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COUN 475.80: Forgiveness and Reconciliation

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COUN 475: Forgiveness and Reconciliation
University of Montana Department of Counselor Education
Spring 2021 Course Syllabus

Instructor:

Hana Meshesha, MEd, MA, ACLC, NCC

Email:

Hana.meshesha@umontana.edu

Phone:

406-303-1794

Office location:

PJWCoE 352

Office hours:

By appointment

Class Location and Time:

Social Sciences, room 352, Wednesdays 12-2:50pm

Required texts:

Cose, E. (2004). *Bone to pick: Of forgiveness, reconciliation, reparation, and revenge*. New York, NY: Washington Square.

Lazare, A. (2004). *On apology*. New York, NY: Oxford.

Waldron, V. R. & Kelley, D. L. (2008). *Communicating forgiveness*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Other readings as assigned; available on Moodle.

Course Description:

This course explores the process of forgiveness and its potential outcome in reconciliation. During the semester we will learn to recognize and dispel misconceptions about the process of forgiveness while working toward an understanding of what helps individuals, communities, and nations repair ruptured relationships. We will investigate the part that communication plays in both creating grievances and resolving them. We will also learn about what makes some apologies better than others. We will focus on how forgiveness and reconciliation work in interpersonal relationships but will also explore historical and international conflicts. In this course we look at forgiveness and reconciliation from as many angles as possible, learning to recognize course themes in films, essays, poems, and popular media. This course blends personal reflection, active discussion of course materials, and writing assignments in which students are

expected to demonstrate an ability to recognize and articulate course themes, as well as integrate theory and practice.

Method of Instruction:

- a) professor lectures
- b) guest lectures
- c) class discussion
- d) presentation of audiovisual material
- e) internet-based learning
- f) student presentations

Students with Disabilities Notice:

If you are a student with a disability and wish to discuss reasonable accommodations for this course, contact me privately to discuss the specific modifications you wish to request. Please be advised I may request that you provide a letter from Disability Services for Students verifying your right to reasonable modifications. If you have not yet contacted [Disability Services](#), located in Lommasson Center 154, please do so in order to verify your disability and to coordinate your reasonable modifications.

Electronic Device Notice:

As a matter of courtesy to your classmates and the instructor, please turn off your beepers, cell phones, and any other electronic devices that make any noise.

Laptop Policy:

You are welcome to use your laptop in class for purposes of taking notes. Please be respectful of your classmates and the instructor and do not engage in social networking, online chatting, or responding to emails during class.

E-mail Policy:

You are assigned a university e-mail account that will be used by professors. Students should make every effort to get to know their account and check it regularly.

Instructional format:

This course is organized in a Hyflex instruction model. This means class meets face-to-face on a regular basis with an option for students to attend their class via zoom. However, during guest lectures and student presentations, class may meet via zoom to facilitate group discussions using breakout rooms. Specific announcements to the change on the instructional format will be given in class.

Course Expectations:

Diversity Statement:

This is meant to be a safe, welcoming, and inclusive classroom environment for students of all races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, gender identities/variances, ages, religions, economic classes, and

ability statuses. As such, you will be encouraged and challenged to use language and basic communication skills that are respectful, inclusive, representative and culturally appropriate.

Attendance & Participation:

Because the themes of the class are deeply interwoven and we need each other to create a rich learning community, class participation is mandatory. If you have an emergency that requires you to miss class, please contact me ahead of time to arrange an alternate assignment.

Because this class is highly participatory, you are expected to read and be prepared to discuss assigned material **before** each class. You are expected to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of assigned readings, argue for your point of view while being open to the views of others, and integrate readings and discussion into your own life.

I welcome respectful interaction between students, not just with me. Honesty, enthusiasm, curiosity, imagination, and the ability to recognize connections between one source and another are signs of student involvement and bring energy to the learning environment.

You will receive a participation grade and this will reflect your professionalism including attendance, participation, preparation for class, and professional conduct. Attendance and participation will be worth 30 points towards your final grade. You are allowed **one excused absence** without losing participation points. Each additional absence will result in the loss of 5 participation points, unless prior arrangements are made with me to make up for missed class time. More than three absences will result in total loss of participation points, and one letter grade reduction for each class missed beyond four classes.

Assignments:

Assignments are to be turned in via Moodle on the day the assignment is due. Only in the event of documentable extenuating circumstances are assignments accepted late. With the exception of documentable emergencies, late assignments will be assessed a 2-point deduction per day of lateness up to two weeks, after which late assignments will not be accepted. With the exception of quizzes, you are encouraged to work together, however your finished work must always be unique to you, and is your individual responsibility to complete. All assignments will be submitted via Moodle unless otherwise instructed.

Quizzes:

There will be **two quizzes** in this course. The quizzes will consist of multiple choice questions, true-false questions, and/or short answer questions. Quizzes will be worth 25 points each, and cannot be made up if missed.

Academic Integrity:

Students are expected to practice professionalism and academic integrity in all assignments and class discussions. This includes but is not limited to treating other students and the professor respectfully, engaging in meaningful class discussions, thinking and writing critically and thoughtfully, creating original works, and citing all resources using APA format. Plagiarism will result in loss of credit for this course, and further consequences may result from the university system.

Assignments and Grading:

1. Primers (10 points)

To begin each class, one or two students will be responsible for selecting a “primer” related to the course content. The primer could be a song, a poem, a news headline, a fictional or nonfictional story from a novel or other written work, a piece of art, etc. The students will present the primer to the class and facilitate a brief discussion about the meaning and purpose of the primer to its creator (writer, artist, etc.), incorporating relevant themes and content from class. Please limit the primer to 7 minutes, with 15-20 minutes for discussion. If you are considering a primer that is longer than 7 minutes, please contact me in advance to discuss the relevance and obtain prior approval.

2. Intersection Paper (February 3; 20 points)

Write a short paper (approx. 3 pages) that describes your current awareness of the intersection between your own life and the themes of the course, as you understand them to date. As you prepare to write this paper you might ask yourself, “Where have I encountered the themes of forgiveness and reconciliation in my own life or in the life of someone I know?” You may be struggling to forgive someone who caused you harm. You may be struggling to forgive yourself for harm *you* caused. You may be interested in the stories of other people as they struggle to forgive. Or you may be interested in forgiveness for purely academic or professional reasons. Give the reader a sense of the intersection between your own life and course themes. I will hold the content of your paper in confidence. This assignment is aimed at getting a sense of your own perspective on these subjects before the Final Project. It is perfectly acceptable to tell a story in this paper and to offer initial reflections on it.

3. Public Apology (March 31; 15 points; 10 for Apology/assessment, 5 for presentation)

On this date you need to bring an example of a QUALITY public apology to class. Be prepared to share with the class a description or expression of the public apology you have encountered or researched (keep an eye out for public apologies in the newspaper or an internet source), as well as your assessment of its quality in the form of an informal oral presentation. Submit your apology and assessment of its quality to Moodle. If your example of a public apology is a video that you accessed online, or a news article, it is acceptable to provide a link to the corresponding web page, and your assessment of the quality of the apology in the same document.

4. Personal Apologies (April 7; 20 points)

This is a two-part assignment where you will prepare two apologies: 1) a written apology that you would like to offer, and 2) a written apology that you would like to receive (the level of personal disclosure should be determined by you; more instructions will follow). You will submit both to Moodle, and choose one to bring to class. On the due date, we will arrange ourselves in small groups and practice giving and receiving apologies based on what you choose to share. Each apology you prepare is worth 10 points.

5. Final Project/Research paper (April 14; 50 points)

This paper should provide substantial evidence of your understanding of course materials and themes. You have three primary options:

1. There are several works focused on the forgiveness process. Robert Enright's *Forgiveness is a Choice* is one of which that offers direction for a journaling process. If an intensely personal situation brought you to this class, you might want to consider this option. Select a "forgiveness" book that will help to guide you through the process of forgiveness. Please consult with me prior to selecting the book. Write a dated journal in which you keep track of your own forgiveness journey. In a sense this journal is a dialogue between your own experience and course materials. This project will be evaluated not for its personal content, but for the student's ability to closely relate course material and the personal struggle to forgive. The journal is for your own purposes of journeying through the book. The final project will be a 10-12 page reflection on what you've written in your journal, incorporating course content and themes with your chosen reading, and weaving in your experience of the process. The paper will be written in the first person, should include your original reflections, as well as content from your chosen text, and evidence of incorporation of course content and themes, cited using APA 7th edition format.

2. Conduct an interview with a person who has been through or is going through a forgiveness and/or reconciliation process. Schedule in advance at least two interview times with this person so that your *initial* questions elicit *subsequent* reflection on the part of the interviewee. Record the story you hear and your own responses to the interviewee. Analyze the process the person goes through in relation to any of our course materials. It is extremely important that you **prepare** the person you interview by letting him/her know *in advance* the kinds of questions you will ask. Please contact me if you take this option. You must obtain informed consent from your chosen interviewee before conducting the interview. Please see Appendix A for the informed consent document, and Appendix B for sample interview questions. Also see Appendix B of Waldron and Kelley (2008) for examples of three narrative prompts to inform your interview. Your reflection on the interview should be approximately 10 pages, and incorporate at least three relevant citations that connect what you learn from your interviewee with course themes.

3. Because the themes of forgiveness and reconciliation are central to human experience, countless topics are worthy of further exploration. Write a substantial research paper in APA 7th edition format (10-pages not including title or Reference page) in which you explore a central question and possible responses to it. Your paper should include at least **five outside references**, in addition to relevant material that you cite from our class materials. For example you might explore any of the following topics in greater depth:
 - Analyze a pair of contemporary apologies in relation to apology theory (compare and contrast)
 - Trauma and forgiveness (Possible case study and analysis)
 - Forgiveness in one or more novels (Comparison study)
 - Forgiveness in short stories (a couple possibilities are short stories by Anne Lamott and Wendell Berry)
 - Forgiveness themes in one or more films (compare and contrast)

- Forgiveness in the aftermath of crime (Case study and theory)
- An historical case study (e.g. South Africa; Rwanda; Cherokee Nation)
- Forgiveness in the life of a client/therapist relationship
- An in-depth analysis of spiritual resources in the forgiveness process
- Forgiveness in relation to sexual orientation and/or expression
- Forgiveness in the lives of those affected by drug/alcohol addiction
- Dream analysis to chart path to forgiveness
- Failure to forgive and analysis of rationale and consequences
- Physiology of forgiveness
- A family case study involving siblings, parents, step-children, or adoptee(s)
- Forgiveness complicated by interaction with a larger system (racism, economic injustice)
- Role of ceremony and ritual in a forgiveness process
- Analyze the process of self-forgiveness
- A case study and analysis of relational betrayal

Students who take this third option are strongly encouraged to visit with me before beginning in depth work on this project.

6. Oral reflection on Final Project (April 21 & 28; 10 points)

During Final's week we will review our work during the semester. In addition, prepare a **8-10 minute** oral presentation in which you reflect on how the perspective you took in your Intersection Paper has changed as a result of all that we have read, seen, and discussed, and what culminated in your final project. While this is not required, you may find it extremely helpful to keep a private journal of moments when course material struck a chord, made sense, led to more reflection. Drawing from a journal you keep along the way will significantly deepen these class presentations. Please be respectful of other students' time to present, and limit your presentation to the time allotted.

Grading Criteria

Class preparation and participation is expected. The quality of participation can influence a final grade, especially if a student stands between two grades.

Assignment	Points
Attendance and Participation	30
Primers	10
Quizzes (2)	50
Intersection paper	20
Public Apology and Oral presentation	15
Personal Apologies	20
Oral Presentation on Final Project	10
Final Project	50
Total points possible for the course	205

A = 93-100%	B = 83-86%	C = 73-77%	D = 63-66%
A- = 90-92%	B- = 80-82%	C- = 70-72%	D- = 60-62%
B+ = 87-89%	C+ = 77-79%	D+ = 67-69%	F = Below 60%

CLASS SCHEDULE:

WEEK 1: January 13

Topics/Readings:

- Introduction & Review of Syllabus
- Primer:
- What is forgiveness and what is not forgiveness?

Assignments/Activities:

- Assign "Primers"

WEEK 2: January 20

Topics/Readings:

- To Forgive or Not to Forgive: That is the Question: Cose, Intro – Chapter 2

Assignments/Activities:

- Primer: _____

WEEK 3: January 27

Topics/Readings:

- Revenge to Reconciliation: Cose, Chapters 3 and 4

Assignments/Activities:

- Primer: _____
- Film: *The Power of Forgiveness*

WEEK 4: February 3

Topics/Readings:

- Resolution: Cose, Chapter 5 – Epilogue

Assignments/Activities:

- Intersection paper due**
- Primer: _____

WEEK 5: February 10

Topics/Readings:

- Conceptual Foundations on Forgiveness: Waldron & Kelley, Chapter 1

Assignments/Activities:

- Primer: _____

WEEK 6: February 17

Topics/Readings:

- Elements of the Forgiveness Process: Waldron & Kelley, Chapter 2
- Theorizing Forgiveness: Waldron & Kelley, Chapter 3

Assignments/Activities:

- Primer: _____

WEEK 7: February 24

Topics/Readings:

- Enright, Chapter 4 (on Moodle)

Assignments/Activities:

- Primer: _____

WEEK 8: March 3

Topics/Readings:

- Communicating Forgiveness: Waldron & Kelley, Chapter 4

Assignments/Activities:

- Primer: _____
- Quiz 1 DUE – Cose; Enright, Chapter 4; and Waldron & Kelley, Chapters 1-3**

WEEK 9: March 10

Topics/Readings:

- Practicing Forgiveness: Waldron & Kelley, Chapter 5

Assignments/Activities:

- Primer: _____

WEEK 10: March 17

Topics/Readings:

- Studying Forgiveness: Waldron & Kelley, Chapter 6; McCullough, et al. (2000), Chapter 13 (On Moodle)

Assignments/Activities:

- Primer: _____

WEEK 11: March 24

Topics/Readings:

- Self-forgiveness: Enright (2015), Key 7 (materials on Moodle)
- Apology: Lazare, Chapters 1-3

Assignments/Activities:

- Primer: _____

WEEK 12: March 31

Topics/Readings:

- How to Apologize: Lazare, Chapters 4-6

Assignments/Activities:

- Primer: _____
- Public Apology Due – Oral Presentations**

WEEK 13: April 7

Topics/Readings:

- How Not to Apologize: Lazare, Chapters 7-9

Assignments/Activities:

- Primer: _____
- Personal Apology due**
- Public Apology Oral Presentations, cont'd**

WEEK 14: April 14

Topics/Readings:

- Looking Ahead: Lazare, Chapters 10-12

Assignments/Activities:

- Final Project Due**
- Primer: _____
- Personal Apology Oral Presentations**

WEEK 15: April 21

Topics/Readings:

- Bringing it all together

Assignments/Activities:

- Quiz 2 – Waldron & Kelley, Chapters 4-6, and Lazare DUE**
- Primer: _____
- Oral Presentations on Final Project**

WEEK 16: April 28

FINALS WEEK

- Oral Presentations on Final Project, Cont'd**
- Primer: _____
- Complete course evaluations

APPENDIX A
Consent for Interview

Forgiveness and Reconciliation, Spring 2021

You are being asked to participate in a two-session interview conducted by a student enrolled in COUN 475: Forgiveness and Reconciliation at the University of Montana. The purpose of this interview is to understand your experience of a relationship rupture and how you have processed it. Forgiveness, and/or reconciliation are not required in order for you to participate in the interview process. The purpose is for the student to understand your process of working through the relationship rupture to whatever degree you have, and to apply some of the concepts that he or she has learned in the course to understand your story.

The interviews will take place on two occasions – during the first, the student will ask you several questions that invite you to tell your story about the relationship rupture. The second interview will take place several weeks later and will focus around your reflections and reactions to the first interview.

For review purposes, and to aid in writing the paper, the student will request that the interview be audio-recorded. The recorded interview is only for the purpose of the student using it to assist in the writing process, and will be destroyed once the paper is submitted. The instructor will not have access to the audio recording. Pseudonyms will be used in the paper to protect your identity.

If at any time you wish to stop the interview and cease your participation in the interview process, please feel free to do so without concern for the student's grade being affected. In such a case, the student would be given an alternate assignment to complete.

Please feel free to contact the instructor of the course, Hana Meshesha, with any questions or concerns you may have at any time before, during, or after your interview. Hana can be reached by email at hana.meshesha@umontana.edu or by phone at 406-303-1794.

Your signature below indicates that you give your consent to participate in the interview, and that you consent for the interview to be recorded.

Signature

Date

Student Signature

Date

APPENDIX B

Sample Interview Questions

1. How would you describe forgiveness? What does forgiveness mean to you?
2. Please describe the role that forgiveness has played in your life.
3. What has influenced your decision to forgive, or not forgive, someone who has hurt you?
4. What do you think the benefits of practicing forgiveness are? What do you think the drawbacks of practicing forgiveness are?
5. What do you think the relationship is between forgiveness and reconciliation – does a person need to reconcile in order to forgive, or forgive, and then reconcile?
6. Do you have any specific memories of a decision to forgive? Can you describe them?
7. What do you think are the specific steps towards forgiveness?
8. Do you think it is necessary to forgive?
9. Are there certain situations that you could never forgive?