

Unbound Prometheus Program - Summer 2017

Managing Conflict and Collaboration

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SUMMARY OF THE COURSE

Conflict is a force for change and collaboration is a force for stability. Both are needed in any organization. In the realms where we need stability and predictability in organizations, we also need space for healthy changes to occur. In the realms where we need in change and innovation in organizations, we have to build on what's already in place. As such, healthy collaboration between people requires us to simultaneously not only accept but actually to value the conflicts that occur. Likewise, healthy conflict between people needs to be based on a degree of collaboration in order for it to be constructive. These dynamic forces shape every aspect of our lives and permeate every personal and group interaction in all organizations large and small.

This course is a sociological exploration of human conflict and collaboration using case studies. Some of this exploration will occur through virtual-dialogues with real people immersed in their own conflict and conflict transformation. The rest will occur through readings, classroom discussions and practical skill development. You will be expected to reach a beginning understanding of what defines conflict and collaboration as well as build some practical tools for addressing it in any organizational setting. As a result, you will end the course with a few solid principles that shape the forces of conflict and collaboration--along with some meaningful ways to manage both in different organizational settings.

MISSION OF THE COURSE

To use a sociological lens to illuminate what happens when people are in conflict and collaboration--and how to manage this process.

LEARNING DESIGN

As you will see, the design of this class is different than most others. While the texts in conventional classes are usually given to you in the form of lectures and required readings, much of the reading materials in this class will be *generated by you and your classmates*--through your curiosities, the information examined and shared in your individualized research, and the personal narratives that you and your peers discuss with us during class.

Besides the iterative and incremental nature of this kind of learning process, another significant deviation from a conventional classroom is that our inquiry will proceed inductively rather than deductively. In other words, you will examine a small number of "cases" with respect to

conflict/collaboration and you will seek to identify larger patterns (or generalizations) from what you observe in those individual examples. Those patterns will be the foundation of the educated hypotheses you will generate by the semester's end (with regards to the factors that cause, maintain and transform conflict/collaboration). By contrast, conventional learning introduces you to larger principles (or generalizations) that can later be applied to individual cases. So it is important to keep in mind: The patterns you observe and the conclusions you generate in this class will only be hypotheses. But the learning will be live and dynamic and engaging. And you will end the course with some *grounded* hypotheses and practical skills for managing an organization of people.

There will also be required readings to help ground our exploration in theories of social organizations.

READINGS

Transforming Conflict and Collaboration: Introduction to Facilitation Skills, online course (Mulvey, Frisby, Minnick, Spielvogel)

[*Managing Conflict in Organizations*](#), 4th Ed. (M. Afzalur Rahim)

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK ONE: Theory and Application in Four Managerial Environments

Day One: Introduction to the Management Model of Conflict - Collaboration

Day Two: Macro -- International Relations

Day Three: Mezo -- Large Organizations

Day Four: Mezo -- Small Organizations

Day Five: Micro -- Interpersonal Relations

WEEK TWO: Key Skills for Managing Conflict and Collaboration

Day One: Open-Ended Questions

Day Two: Reflective Listening

Day Three: Version of the Socratic Method

Day Four: Managing Process and Content

Day Five: Holding a Neutral Position

COURSE ATTENDANCE (4 points x 10 days = 40 points)

As this is a two-week seminar, attendance to every session is essential. Just about *everything* happens during class time and builds on the subsequent sessions. There is no way to "make up" what you've missed. With this in mind, each absence will be penalized, as will each late arrival.

If you are more than 5 minutes late, ONE point will be deducted from your total score. If you are more than 30 minutes late, TWO points will be deducted from total score.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Essays on Hypotheses (2 points each x 10 = 20 points)

You will be required to produce one 250-word essay after each session. These essays should begin with an hypothesis that you generate based on the material that we're exploring. We want to see how you're making sense of all of the information and, of course, what connections you're making in the process.

2. Media Posts (2 points each x 10 = 20 points)

Twice per week, you will have to post some relevant media to the (secret) Facebook group for our class ("S17 Managing Conflict") including a **short paragraph of at least 100 words** explaining why you chose this to post. Most times, you will choose the topic. However, for certain sessions we will provide a specific topic for you to explore. One must be posted by midnight after each class.

If you are not on Facebook, you can create a temporary account because the discussion and sharing of information that happens in the FB group are essential to your learning.

What is "relevant media?"

You are required to search out information online (infographics, videos, essays, news articles, excerpts from fiction/non-fiction, poems, etc) that is relevant to understanding conflict and collaboration. We are all beginning with different levels of knowledge and different curiosities. So we want to encourage you to fill in the blanks of your own knowledge and follow your unique curiosity.

3. Comments (1 point each for 10 sessions = 10 points)

We know that you will naturally make comments on one another's FB posts throughout the course. But we want you to take this one step further by posting an alternative media source to something that one of your peers has posted on our Facebook group. You will be required to post once per day during all 10 days.

4. Final Exam (10 points)

You will test three of the hypotheses that you generate in a group setting after the completion of our sessions together. You will report your findings to us in a video conference call within three weeks of the completion of the course. We will evaluate you on your ability to operationalize your hypotheses and carry out a meaningful exploration based on the core concepts that we cover in the course.

YOUR GRADE

Your final letter grade will be assigned as follows based on a maximum score of 100 points:

94-100 = A

87-93 = B

80-86 = C

73-79 = D

You are required to bring a laptop computer or a tablet to this course; a smart phone will not be sufficient for completing the work.