



Managerial Conflict Management (Spring 2016)  
37:533:321:01

Instructor: Ralph A. Rodriguez, Ph.D., SPHR  
Office Hours: Mon., Tues., & Thurs. 2:30 – 4:00 PM; and by appointment  
Email: [ralpharodriguezphdsphr@gmail.com](mailto:ralpharodriguezphdsphr@gmail.com)

Office: 215D Janice H. Levin  
Telephone: (973) 500-8789

Managerial Conflict Management 37:533:321:01	RC-1	Monday Thursday	10:20-11:40 AM
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**COURSE OVERVIEW:**

*Conflict, when managed well, has the potential to enhance organizational outcomes and relationships. It also has the potential to drain organizational resources, reduce productivity, demoralize employees, and increase uncertainty and litigation. In this class, we will analyze interpersonal and organizational conflict. We will study its causes and symptoms, the escalation process and its various stages. We will also consider and practice communication and facilitation skills required for productive conflict management or resolution.*

Presentation of the course content and requirements will engage students in a consideration of both academic and applied issues. The text will help you develop mental models which will be required to understand how various apparently intuitive conflict resolution styles work and/or don't work. Theory is a useful simplification. Organizational life is messy. We will always be trying to integrate the two.

**GOALS OF THE COURSE**

1. Examine beliefs, attitudes and behaviors related to conflict.
2. Understand and analyze conflict in order to shape more effective and productive responses to it.
3. Learn concepts and skills to resolve conflicts successfully.
4. Provide practice in basic skills of conflict resolution in interpersonal settings.
5. Learn feedback and debriefing skills in order to improve performance and understanding.
6. Enhance marketable abilities in conflict resolution, providing additional value to an individual's professional pursuits.

**OBJECTIVES**

Students who successfully complete this course should **develop an awareness of:**

1. personal conflict styles and the development of collaborative skills.
2. difference as a natural part of human interaction to be accepted and respected.
3. how values and emotions operate in conflict to block effective communication.
4. the role of gender and culture in conflict and conflict resolution.
5. the importance of impartiality and confidentiality in mediation.
6. the importance of feedback and debriefing to develop skill in analysis of conflict and effective responses to conflict.

Students who successfully complete this course should **develop knowledge of:**

1. the various types of conflict and how to analyze conflict.
2. the vocabulary and practice of conflict resolution.
3. the process of mediation.

Students who successfully complete this course should **develop skill in:**

1. the use of neutral language to build trust.
2. active listening and questioning techniques.
3. problem solving and conflict management.
4. facilitation/mediation techniques in role play situations.
5. feedback and debriefing following conflict resolution strategies.
6. use collaborative strategies and techniques to assist in collaborative resolution of conflict.

## **TEXTBOOKS/REQUIRED MATERIALS**

**Interpersonal Conflict**, Eighth Edition, by William Wilmot and Joyce Hocker, published by McGraw-Hill, 2001.

The web site for **Interpersonal Conflict**, located at [http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0073385131/student\\_view0/](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0073385131/student_view0/) has self-assessments to help you review the text material.

A website with many invaluable, free resources is <http://www.beyondintractability.org/>

## **ATTENDANCE:**

-Classroom attendance is essential and mandatory. Lectures are designed to supplement the text material with an emphasis on practice and application (as compared with the text, which is primarily theory-loaded.) Furthermore, since every class member is critical to our collective learning process, missing class will have negative repercussions on your own learning and that of your classmates. Therefore, good attendance will be rewarded and poor attendance penalized. If you attend all class sessions, 10 points will be added to your **class participation grade**. If you miss SIX or more classes, **for any reason**, your **course grade** will be reduced by 3 points for each class over five that you missed (e.g., if you miss 7 classes, your grade will be reduced by 6 points; 8 absences reduce your grade by 9 points; etc.).

## **ASSIGNMENT EXPECTATIONS**

**CLASS CONTRIBUTION:** Class contribution will be graded based on both frequency and quality of class participation, with quality weighted more heavily than frequency. Valued behaviors include: initiating discussions, voicing original ideas, challenging others, defending your own views, raising important and relevant points, attempting to answer unpopular questions, and generally demonstrating a command of assigned reading materials and current business news. Behaviors to avoid include: reiterating obvious points, making irrelevant remarks, distracting the class, and failing to participate when asked.

**ANALYSIS OF PERSONAL CONFLICT STYLE:** Use the Putnam/Wilson Conflict Behavior Scale and the theoretical background of Hocker/Wilmot (Chapter 5) to analyze your conflict style in personal and public settings. Then, interview someone who knows your style through personal experience. Write a crisply-written paper (as short as you can get it: a reasonable standard is 1500 words) that describes your dominant style(s). What experiences have led you to depend on these styles? How have they been effective/ineffective in your personal experience? How do you explain differences between your analysis and the interviewee's? Any surprises? Does this assessment suggest any changes that would help you to manage conflict more productively?

**PRESENTATION ON A PRACTITIONER-ORIENTED PAPER (OPTION "A"):** You and one other classmate (YOU choose your own partner) will read a short practitioner-oriented paper on conflict (to be selected from a list of eligible papers provided by Prof. Rodriguez) and make a short (10 minute) presentation to the class that summarizes the paper, links the content to the management of the modern workforce, and

suggests changes that we might consider that would lead to more productive conflict management. Also, submit a 1-page Executive Summary of the most critical “takeaways” from your presentation. **Date(s): T.B.A.**

**INTERVIEW OF H.R. PROFESSIONAL (OPTION “B”):** You and one other classmate (YOU choose your own partner) will interview a SENIOR H.R. professional (level of “Manager” or higher). (For THIS group task, you will self-select into pairs. Teams must submit a list of their 2 members and the name, phone number, and professional email address of their interviewee by February 18<sup>th</sup>.) A one-page, single-spaced, paper in newspaper/magazine format that summarizes the interview and makes appropriate conclusions must be submitted by April 1<sup>st</sup>. The authors of the best papers will be given the opportunity to make a 5-8 minute presentation to the class in late April for EXTRA CREDIT. (Yes, this DOES mean that the BEST papers will get extra credit!) Your interview “theme” must focus on a “real life” aspect of interpersonal and/or organizational conflict.

**PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE ANALYSIS (OPTION “C”):** Analyze either the Feb. 26 NBC/Telemundo Republican debate or the March 9 Univision/ Washington Post Democratic debate from the perspective of how each candidate handles the inherent conflict of the debate. How do they handle the emotion, as well as the more substantive issues? (To resist the temptation of injecting your political opinion into the paper, I suggest that you watch the debate least friendly to your personal choice.) How important is the process developed by the organizers on the ability of the debaters? What do you believe is the preferred “Conflict Style” of each debater? How did their preparation affect how they represented their positions? If you were an advisor to one of the candidates, what suggestions would you make for preparing for the next debate?

**QUIZZES:** Ten short quizzes (10-20 questions) quizzes will be administered, as posted in the Course Schedule. They will include material from both the text and classroom discussions. While they will consist mostly of multiple choice questions, they might also include several short answer questions. NOTE: “Short answer” is NOT “fill in the blank”! It’s more like an objective essay question (e.g., “What are the five \_\_\_\_\_?”, etc.). For purposes of grading, your lowest two quiz grades will be dropped. THERE WILL BE NO QUIZ MAKEUPS.

**GROUP COMPONENT:** Students will be assigned to project teams. These teams will exist for the entire semester and will have two responsibilities.

**PRESENTATION:** Each team will be responsible for preparing a presentation on an assigned topic or book. Preparation includes researching print and electronic media, interviewing at least one HR professional, and incorporating the text (as appropriate) to analyze the topic/book, contextualize it within the material presented in this course, and identify key theoretical and, especially, practical “learnings” that would be most beneficial to your colleagues in class. You may choose to present a comprehensive overview of your topic or you may focus on one particular aspect... whatever you feel will be most helpful to the class. (If you choose to focus on only one aspect of the topic, your presentation should show evidence of mastering the general topic/book. Each group, then, will make a 10-12 minute “training” presentation to the class. (Therefore, your group must be sure to train us on how to actually do something.) Groups are free to determine the most effective format for their presentations (skits, lecturettes, Powerpoint, etc.).

In addition to the presentations, all groups will also submit a 1-2 page “How to...” executive summary of their presentation through the Sakai LMS (“Assignments”).

**The following class rules will be strictly enforced. Do not ask for exceptions.**

**TIMELINESS AND FORMATTING OF ASSIGNMENTS:** Assignments are **due by the beginning of class on their due dates**. ALL LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE PENALIZED NO MATTER WHAT THE EXCUSE/REASON.

**ACADEMIC HONESTY:** Academic integrity is the cornerstone of a university education, business practice in general, and HR practice specifically. It is our joint responsibility as a learning community to foster an environment of trust, honesty, fairness, respect, and responsibility. In addition to the formal Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy (see <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml>), all members of our class

community are expected to report observed instances of cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty in order to ensure the integrity of what we accomplish in this course.

Electronic comparison will be used to detect plagiarism, which will result in AUTOMATIC FAILURE in the COURSE.

**ABSENCES AND MISSED EXAMS:** There are 28 classes scheduled for this course. You are permitted to miss 5 before penalties. (The job-equivalent would be 45 workdays a year!) Don't ask for an absence to be "excused"; your first five classes will be so automatically. There will be 10 quizzes during the semester and your lowest two grades will be dropped. NOTE: For EXTREME, UNCONTROLLABLE, and DOCUMENTED life events, ONE absence exception will be considered during the semester.

# COURSE OUTLINE

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Assignment</b>
Jan. 21	Introduction to the Course	Read syllabus.
Jan. 25 Jan. 28	HR Negotiation Strategies Perspectives on Conflict	Read Ch. 1, Perspectives on Conflict, <b>Interpersonal Conflict</b>
Feb. 1 Feb. 4	(cont. & Cases*) Nature of Conflict	Quiz on Ch. 1 Read Ch. 2, The Nature of Conflict, <b>Interpersonal Conflict</b>
Feb. 8 Feb. 11	(cont. & Cases*) Goals of Conflict	Quiz on Ch. 2 Read Ch. 3, Interests & Goals, <b>Interpersonal Conflict</b> ; <i>Course Contracts Due</i>
Feb. 15 Feb. 18	(cont. & Cases*) Power	Quiz on Ch. 3 Read Ch. 4, Power: The Structure of Conflict, <b>Interpersonal Conflict</b> ; <i>Interviewee Contact Information Due</i>
Feb. 22 Feb. 25	(cont. & Cases*) Styles & Tactics	Quiz on Ch. 4; <i>Political Debate Paper Due</i> Read Ch. 5, Styles & Tactics, <b>Interpersonal Conflict</b>
Feb. 29 Mar. 3	(cont. & Cases*) Assessment	Quiz on Ch. 5 Read Ch. 6, Assessing Conflicts, <b>Interpersonal Conflict</b>
Mar. 7 Mar. 10	(cont. & Cases*) Negotiation	Quiz on Ch.6; <i>Personal Conflict Style Paper Due</i> Read Ch. 7, Negotiating for Mutual Gains, <b>Interpersonal Conflict</b>
<b>March 12-20 SPRING BREAK</b>		
Mar. 21 Mar. 24	(cont. & Cases*) Anger & Emotions in Conflict	Quiz on Ch. 7; <i>Presidential Debate Analysis Due</i> Read Ch. 8, Moderating Your Conflicts, <b>Interpersonal Conflict</b>
Mar. 28 Mar. 31	(cont. & Cases*) Third Party Intervention	Quiz on Ch. 8 Read Ch. 9, Third-Party Intervention, <b>Interpersonal Conflict</b> ; <b>April 1st: Interview of HR Professional Due</b>
April 4 April 7	(cont. & Cases*) Transcending Transgressions	Quiz on Ch. 9 Read Ch. 10, Transcending Transgressions, <b>Interpersonal Conflict</b>
April 11 April 14	(cont. & Cases*) Happy Thanksgiving!	Quiz on Ch. 10
April 18 April 21	Performance Management Workshop "Discipline and Terminations" Workshop	
April 25 April 28	<b>GROUP PRESENTATIONS</b> <b>GROUP PRESENTATIONS</b>	
May 2	<b>GROUP PRESENTATIONS</b>	

**\*Be prepared to publicly summarize each case and its issues, address the text questions, and (if relevant) propose solutions.**

Print Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

ASSIGNMENT	WEIGHT
<b><u>Individual Component</u></b>	
Class Contribution and Case Discussions	10%
Personal Conflict Style Paper	10%
Individual Project (Circle your choice):	10%
Presentation on a Practitioner-Oriented Paper	
Interview of H.R. Professional	
Presidential Debate Analysis	
Quizzes	30%
Final	15%
<b><u>Group Project</u></b>	
Group Component	10%
Individual Component	15%

The signature below certifies that I, \_\_\_\_\_ have read and understand Rutgers University’s policy on plagiarism. I, further, understand that the penalty for plagiarism in this course shall be automatic failure of the course.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Prof. Rodriguez

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*Student: Before submitting, make a copy for your own records.*