

**COMM 308: COMMUNICATION AND CONFLICT**

**(20490R) Fall 2017**  
**ASC 240; 12:30 – 1:50**

**Instructor:** Dr. Colleen M. Keough

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**Office Hours:** 2 – 3:00, 6:00 – 6:30 Monday and 3:00 – 5:30 Wednesday, other days by appointment.

Course Description:

This course examines how communication can be used to manage conflict productively in interpersonal relations, organizational, consumer and public disputes. Topics include the characteristics of conflict; power; goal attainment; conflict styles, competitive and collaborative strategies & tactics; bullying; and alternative dispute resolution methods.

**Course Objectives:**

1. To examine the communicative aspects of conflict.
2. To analyze conflict in a variety of contexts: interpersonal, organizational, and public.
3. To identify communicative strategies for managing conflict effectively.
4. To practice negotiation and mediation skills.

**Text:**

Littlejohn, S. W. & Domenici, K. (2007). *Communication, conflict, and the management of difference*. Long Grove, ILL: Waveland Press.

Stone, D., Patton, B. & Heen, S. (1999). *Difficult conversations: How to discuss what matters most*. New York: Viking Press.

Other readings will be posted on Blackboard.

**Assignments:**

Research Paper (Due 10/30)	100 points
Working File (Due 11/29)	50 points
Midterm (Approximately week 6)	100 points
Final Exam (Friday, Dec. 8, 11 – 1)	125 points
Participation/Miscellaneous Activities	25 points

Total

400 points

*The world will be regenerated  
by the people who...heroically  
seek.... by whatever hardship,  
by whatever toil, the methods  
by which people can agree."*

*Mary Parker*

*Follett*

## Course Policies:

1. The University of Southern California **prohibits** the awarding of points solely on a student's physical presence in a class. However, they allow the use of unexcused absences and excessive tardiness to count against a grade. This includes leaving class early. **Unexcused absences will lower your final course grade.** Emailing me that you will not be in class does not mean it is an excused absence – that is just professional courtesy.

Arriving late or leaving early counts as 1/3 unexcused absence *per incident*. Your **final course grade** will be reduced beginning with the 3<sup>rd</sup> unexcused absence. The amount of the reduction is calculated on the total number of unexcused absences accrued during the semester. Students with 6 or more unexcused absences will receive an F.

2. **Turn off cell phones/other mobile devices not being used for class activities.** Students who are instant messaging, web surfing, or involved in other similar activities during class will be marked **absent**. Instructors are allowed to ban laptops in the classroom at their discretion.
3. In order to make up an assignment (test or paper) without incurring a grade penalty, you must be able to document your absence (e.g., a doctor's note). You must make up any missed assignments within one week of returning to school.
4. Your participation in class activities will earn you points toward your final course grade. If you are not in class during these activities (even if you have an excused absence), you will receive no points – and these activities and points *cannot* be made up.
5. Reading assignments are to be done prior to class. Chapters are given for each week and should be read before Tuesday's class. Class discussion will affect grades.
6. Failure to complete all assignments is grounds for course failure.
7. You must pass at least one of the exams (60% or better) in order to pass the course.
8. All assignments must be the original work of the student and cannot have been used or currently submitted for any other academic course.
9. **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY IS IMPORTANT!** The Annenberg School for Communication is committed to upholding the University's Academic Integrity code as detailed in the Scampus guide. It is the policy of the School of Communication to report all violations of the code. Any serious violations or pattern of violations of the Academic Integrity Code will result in the student's expulsion from the Communication major or minor.

### **University Statement on Academic Conduct**

Plagiarism - presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words - is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety of the whole USC community. Another member of the university community - such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member - can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage <http://sarc.usc.edu/> describes reporting options and other resources.

### **Support Systems**

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* [http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency

makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

Fortunate are the flexible for they will not be bent out of shape.

### Assignments:

#### **WORKING FILE**

Assignment's Objective: To enable students to examine their personal growth as conflict managers.

### Contents:

- 1) Five (5) journal entries about your experiences with conflict during the semester. A journal entry would include date, description of conflict situation, who is involved and how you approached the conflict situation. The entry only needs be a few sentences to a couple of paragraphs; but may be longer if you need it to be. (10 points)
- 2) Reflections on 3 in-class activities. Identify whether you were an observer, participant, or both. What did you learn from the activity about the academic theory/concept underlying the activity? What did you learn about your own skills? In particular, pay attention to other students' comments during the debriefing discussion. You might write about your reactions to those comments. For example, what surprised you in their remarks? What comforted you? Etc. You should do the reflections after each class activity and then select the 3 most valuable ones for inclusion in the working file. (15 points)
- 3) Summary paper (3-4 pages). After completing the journal entries and in-class reflections, write a summary paper of what you learned during the semester about the nature of conflict, how you manage it, and what you will need to work on in the future. Include relevant concepts from textbooks/course readings. Include citations as appropriate. (25 points)

### Grading:

The working file is worth 50 points. Grades will be based upon correct application of concepts, clarity of idea, and composition.

**DUE DATE:** No later than **November 29, 2017**. Submit through Blackboard.

#### **TERM PROJECT**

Select one of the following options.

Write an 8-10 page paper. You may select either Option A or Option B. Papers must be written to college-level English standards. Only academic resources may be used towards the research. Proper citation of research sources (i.e., books, magazines, pamphlets, and personal interviews) is required. Use the APA style guide (6<sup>th</sup> edition). Descriptive papers will receive grades in the C range. Analytical and critical papers will receive grades in the B and A ranges. **Papers are due Oct. 30**. Late papers will be penalized 3 points for each 24-hour period late, including weekends. Bring a hard copy to class and submit an electronic version to Blackboard.

#### **Option A: Individuals or Organizations Dedicated to Conflict Management/Dispute Resolution**

### Objectives:

\* To learn how professional conflict managers use communication.

Process:

1. Conduct research to identify various organizations or individuals whose main purpose is conflict management/dispute resolution. Select one that matches your interest.
2. It is expected that a minimum of 8 academic articles published within the past five years references will be used as the foundation for your project. You may use your textbook but it does NOT count towards meeting the research requirement for the assignment. You should explore the conflict management literature within the communication discipline before using sources from other disciplines. The fastest/easiest way to find communication journals is to use the database Communication Source.
3. Conduct an interview with the individual/organization to compare how they approach conflict management with what is in the academic literature.
4. Focus your analysis on *“How this person/organization uses communication skills/processes/technologies etc., to perform conflict management/dispute resolution activities?” “How does this compare with material presented in the textbooks, lectures, and other academic sources?”*

**Option B: Communication and Conflict Management Term Paper**

Purpose:

To conduct extensive research about a specific aspect of communication and conflict management in interpersonal relations.

Description

This option is a “typical” college-level term paper. It is an extensive review and analysis of a specific topic/concept/theory related to communication’s role in conflict management.

2. It is expected that a minimum of 12 academic articles published within the past five years references will be used as the foundation for your project. You may use your textbook but it does NOT count towards meeting the research requirement for the assignment. You should explore the conflict management literature within the communication discipline before using sources from other disciplines. The fastest/easiest way to find communication journals is to use the database Communication Source.

Readings for weeks 1 – 7. All readings are from Littlejohn and Domenici textbook. Readings should be done **prior** to class.

Week	Dates	Readings	Assignments Due
1			
	8/21	Introduction	
	8/23	Chapter 1 Conflict: When Differences Challenge Us	
2			
	8/28	Chapter 2 The World of Difference	
	8/30	No In-class meeting Watch 1 of the following videos and post response on Blackboard of two points you found most inspiring:  Video options: William Ury’s Tedx Midwest Talk: The Walk from No to Yes ( <a href="https://www.ted.com/talks/william_ury">https://www.ted.com/talks/william_ury</a> )  William Ury “From the Board Room to the Borders: Negotiating Sustainable Agreements” <a href="http://www.williamury.com/sustainable-agreements/">http://www.williamury.com/sustainable-agreements/</a>	Post 2 take-aways on the Discussion Board in Blackboard
3			
	9/4	Labor Day University Holiday No Class	
	9/6	Chapter 2 and Chapter 3: Taking a Systems View	Debrief Roommate
4			
	9/11 - 13	Chapter 3: A Closer Look at the Conflict System	Mapping Activity – in class
5		Chapter 4: A Closer Look at the Conflict System	
	9/18	Personal Conflict Management Style	Self-assessment instrument
	9/20	Emotions and Culture Elements of Conflict Systems	
6			
	9/25	Chapter 5 Communication and the Challenge of Conflict Management In Blackboard: Keough, C. M. (2017). Negotiation and bargaining. In Craig R. Scott & Laurie K. Lewis (Eds.) <i>International Encyclopedia of Organizational Communication</i> . Wiley & Blackwell.	
	9/27	In Blackboard: Lewicki, R. J., Saunders, D. M., Barry, B. & Minton, J. W. (2004). <i>Essentials of negotiation</i> (pp. 59-93). Boston: Irwin McGraw-Hill.	Negotiation simulation

7			
	10/2	Lewicki, R. J., Saunders, D. M., Barry, B. & Minton, J. W. (2004). <i>Essentials of negotiation</i> (pp. 94-119). Boston: Irwin McGraw-Hill.	Negotiation simulation
	10/4	Take home midterm due by 5:00 pm to Blackboard	

### Readings for weeks 8 – 15

8			
	10/9	Difficult Conversations (Chapters 1 – 4, pp 23 - 82)	
	10/11	Difficult Conversations (Chapters 5 – 6, pp. 83 – 128)	
9			
	10/16	Creating a Learning Conversations (Chapters 7 – 12, pp. 129 – 234)	
	10/18	Finish Difficult Conversation Activities	
10			
	10/23 - 25	Chapter 6 Moving toward Value in Relational Conflict	
11			
	10/30	Papers due at class time	
	11/1	Chapter 7 Moving toward Value in Family Conflicts	
12			
	11/6	Family conflict (continued)	
	11/8	Chapter 8 Moving toward Value in Organizational and Community Conflicts	
13			
	11/13	Chapter 10 Transcendence and Transformation	
	11/15		
14			
	11/20	Chapter 11 – Reorienting to Difference	
	11/22	University Holiday – No Class	
15			
	11/27	Finish what is left undone	
	11/29	Working File Due – Submit via Blackboard, Due by 5:00 pm	
	12/08	Final Examination Per University Official Schedule 11 - 1	