

COMM 4380

COMMUNICATION AND CONFLICT

Introduction:

This course is based on two assumptions: (1) people must communicate humanely to live together as human beings, and (2) conflict is a natural part of life. Where these two assumptions intersect -- where we so often "lose it" -- will be the focal point of our attention and reflection. Unfortunately, too many people believe "communication" and "conflict" are mutually exclusive experiences, that conflicts prevent communication; such thinking stems from a very destructive system of belief. The purpose of this course is to supplant those kinds of misconceptions and to cultivate alternative and more effective ways to see, think and communicate *through* our conflicts with others. The goal of the course is to learn how to live more deliberately, more fully and more peacefully *as our true selves*, and in our relationships with others.

Objectives:

1. To develop applied communication skills of conflict awareness, management, resolution, and transformation.
2. To improve ones' intrapersonal, interpersonal, intercultural, group, and public communication skills.
3. To affirm vital communication values of cooperation, empathy, openness, tolerance, and respect for others.
4. To connect everyday communication practices with the larger social, political, and cultural conflicts of our time.
5. To explore, on a personal basis, the effects of our assumptions, perceptions, masks and emotions on our communication.

Texts:

Conflict: From Theory to Action. Roxanne S. Lulofs & Dudley D. Cahn, 2E. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2000.
Being Peace. Thich Nhat Hahn, Parallax, 1987.

ASSIGNMENTS

Weight	Assignment	Description
20%	Journal:	<p>Informal writing log kept throughout the course and turned in four times during the semester for credit (approx. every 3 weeks). You will earn 1-3 points per entry, depending upon quality of entries "Quality" will be judged in terms of depth and length. (Significant =3 pnts., Average =2 pnts., Fair =1 pnt.).</p> <p>'A' = 12-11 total points. 'B' = 8-10 total points 'C' = 6-7 total points</p>
20%	Analysis Paper:	A 5-page concise analysis of a conflict and the communication behavior of the conflicting parties. Suggestions as to how the conflict should be, or should have been, managed will conclude the paper.
20%	First Exam:	Covering theories and terms through first half of course.
20%	Second Exam:	Essay exam with questions distributed in advance.
20%	Participation:	Active, vocal, and fully engaged. Attendance.

[Grading scale: A = 90-100, B = 80-89, C = 70-79, D = 60-69, F = 0-59]

Attendance Policy: You are expected to attend every class. Five (5) absences will be allowed; thereafter, your final grade will be subtracted by 3 points for each absence. Essentially, you cannot, nor should not, pass this course by missing too many classes.

Academic Enrichment Credit: All students enrolled in communication classes are required to attend or participate in one outside-the-class educational event as approved by the Department of Communication. Notice of acceptable events will be announced in class and displayed on department bulletin boards in the TCA building. Failure to meet this requirement will result in subtracting 2 points from final course grade.

Planned Schedule of Class Meetings

Part I: Preparing To See

Readings/ Writings

1/19	W	Introduction & orientation to the course	
1/21	F	"First approximations"	
1/24	M	Know Thyself	
1/26	W	Intrapersonal communication	Nhat Hahn 1
1/28	F	A contemplative approach to communication	
1/31	M	Insight, intuition, and thinking	Nhat Hahn 2
2/2	W	Defining conflict	Ch. 1
2/4	F	Defining conflict (muddy water)	Ch. 1 / Journal #1
2/7	M	Conflict awareness	Ch. 2
2/9	W	Beliefs about resolving conflict	Ch. 2
2/11	F	Seeing conflict and seeing through conflict	

Part II: Preparing To Think

2/14	M	Types of conflict	Ch. 4
2/16	W	" "	"
2/18	F	Process of conflict	Ch. 5
2/21	M	" "	"
2/23	W	Conflict styles, strategies	Ch. 6
2/25	F	" " & tactics	"
2/28	M	Analyzing conflicts	Ch. 7 / Journal #2
3/1	W	Feelings and perceptions	Nhat Hahn, 3
3/3	F	Review	
3/6	M	First Exam	

Part III: Preparing To Do

3/8	W	The heart of practice	Nhat Hahn, 4
3/10	F	The problem of skillfulness	
- - - - -		SPRING BREAK	- - - - -

[NOTE: Chapter readings from hereon
will be assigned at class meetings]

3/20	M	Styles and tactics	
3/22	W	Communication competence	
3/24	F	Skills and practice	Journal #3
3/27	M	" "	
3/29	W	Skills and practice	
3/3	F	" "	

4/3	M	"	"	Analysis Paper Due
4/5	W	Skills and practice		
4/7	F	"	"	
4/10	M	Skills and practice		
4/12	W	"	"	
4/14	F	After conflict		Ch. 16 / Journal #4

Part IV: Preparing To Be

4/17	M	Third party interventions	Appendix
4/19	W	Mediation	"
4/21	F	Working for peace	Nhat Hahn, 5
4/24	M	Final discussion and semester evaluation	
4/26	W	<i>STUDY DAY / NO CLASS</i>	
5/1	M	Second Exam Due by noon	