

**Conflict Transformation Skills**  
**INTD 0232 Syllabus**  
**Laurie L. Patton and Sarah S. Stroup**

### **What We're About this Semester**

How do we think about conflict? Is there a common way to talk about conflict across cultural divides, or should we simply concur that conflict is like art, where “We can’t define it, but we know it when we see it?” This course will take us through the basic theories in the study of conflict and explore “ways of practicing” the management of conflict: restorative practices, conflict resolution, conflict transformation, and deliberative dialogue. All these ways of perceiving conflict play a crucial role in the way we think across boundaries in the midst of difficult disagreements.

Our discussions will be framed by three important questions:

- What is Conflict?
- Who am I In Conflict?
- What Skills and Dispositions Can Help Transform Conflicts?

### **The Case Studies**

In this class, students will be asked to take a single case of conflict—a case that is compelling to them at this moment in their lives. Students will follow their case through the semester as we read the different theorists and their points of view. We will begin by considering which theoretical voices are most sympathetic to our approach, and which are the most distant, and how preconceptions about conflict affect real life attitudes. Do we think conflict is primarily politically motivated or experientially based? Does that view affect how we think about members of the other side when we are participants in a conflict? Does it affect how we analyze a conflict when we are trying to resolve it, or make it livable? In answering these questions, this course will assume that theory is a form of practice, and deeply relevant to our daily life.

Students will take moments to practice addressing conflict during and after each class. Particularly through working on their case studies, students will develop a set of skills that will allow them to be practitioners of an art—the art of addressing conflict in different spheres of their lives.

### **Course Requirements**

This is a half-credit course that is ungraded (pass/fail). We want to focus on understanding conflict and building our skills, which requires that we allow you space to try new things, assess their success and failure, and reflect on what you have learned in that process.

**Participation: 33%**

**Journals: 33%**

**Final Project (including presentation): 33%**

We will be asking you throughout the class what application the ideas we are discussing have to your daily life, and to your future as a thoughtful citizen of a polarized world.

You will be required to attend and participate in class discussions fully. By “participate fully” we mean that you show evidence that you have completed the reading and stick closely to the assigned text in your comments in class. This is also a serious seminar class; talking, passing notes, and other forms of behavior that show disrespect to your fellow classmates are not acceptable.

More than 1 unexcused absence will adversely affect your grade. By “excused,” we mean that you notify us least 12 hours in advance that you will be absent from class, and that you hand in your assignment for that week.

You will also be required to write in a journal. These assignments will be short, and they will not be graded. However, if you do not hand them in to us that week your grade will be adversely affected. In effect, you will write the equivalent of a research paper in this class, only you will do so in short segments throughout the class. You will need to be fully present to yourself, to your instructors, and to each other, during every week of the class to benefit fully from what this class has to offer.

Finally, we will be treating you as intellectual adults. That means you will be developing the intellectual skills we enumerate below. That also means there is more, and denser, reading than you might be used to. You will need to learn the habit of planning your reading time well in advance of the day when the assignment is due. You will also learn the habit of speaking effectively about ideas in public in a highly supportive setting. You will take this skill with you for the rest of your life.

You will be required to follow the Middlebury Honor Code, which you can find [here](#). Please let us know if you have any accommodations you would like us to be aware of so that you can learn in the most vibrant way possible in this class.

### **Required Readings (all available on Canvas)**

- Selections from Rioux, Vern Neufeld and Redekop, Jean-Francois, Eds. *An Introduction to Conflict Studies: Empirical, Theoretical, and Ethical Dimensions*. New York and London: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Roger Fisher and William Ury, *Getting to Yes* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012)
- John Paul Lederach, *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation*

### **Course Meeting Structure**

We will meet on Monday nights, 7:30-10:15, in Old Chapel 206. We will be doing lots of different activities during these sessions, so please be prepared to discuss the readings, engage in exercises, and analyze the case study that you will be working on. The first half of our sessions will focus reflections and the week’s material, and we will take a break roughly halfway through.

We have listed the exercises that we have planned in the syllabus. We will let you know in advance whether you need to prepare/complete anything before class. We will make adjustments as we go.

## **WEEK 1 (April 3): The Basics of Conflict**

Rioux/Redekop, “What is Conflict?” and “Processes for Dealing with Conflict”

### **Classroom Exercises:**

- Introductions & Small Groups
- Developing Guidelines for Engagement
- Communication: Listen to Understand, Speak to be Understood ([Nail Video](#))
- Listening Exercise in Groups: *Tell a story of a conflict you were involved in where you feel like your engagement didn't go well. What would you do differently?*
- Case Study: Conflict Mapping & Actor Mapping (From Fisher et al 2000: 23)

## **WEEK 2 (April 10): Restorative Practices and Personal Approaches**

Rioux/Redekop, “Small Group & Interpersonal Conflict” and “Psychological Approaches”  
An RP Introduction: Ted Wachtell, “Defining Restorative” ([link here](#))

### **Classroom Exercises**

- *Complete before class and print out:* Conflict styles assessment (USIP [free version here](#))
- Discussion of conflict styles
- Listening Exercise in small groups: *What is one assumption that you think people might make about you based on your identity that bothers you? Why does it bother you?*
- Identifying needs in Restorative Practice exercise: *Think of a time when you harmed someone. What did you need?. Think of a time when someone harmed you. What did you need?*
- Case Study: (1) Timeline: including triggers, trends, (de)escalation; (2) Onion: positions, interests, needs

## **WEEK 3 (April 17): Conflict Mediation/Resolution and Group Conflicts**

Rioux/Redekop, “Large Scale Societal Conflict” and “Conflict as a Social Outcome” and  
Roger Fisher and William Ury, *Getting to Yes*

### **Classroom Exercises**

- To complete before class: Moral Foundations Survey ([link here](#), use Midd account)
- Communication Exercises
  - Listening Across Values: *(In small groups) Care, Fairness, Loyalty, Authority, or Sanctity. Choose one of these values that you hold deeply. Share an experience from your life that would help others understand how you have come to hold that belief or value.*
  - Listening exercise: *(in pairs) Take a moment to write down a position statement on a controversial topic. It should be something that you really believe in, but you can decide the level of intensity. Present your position.*
  - Conversational Receptiveness: write a reply to someone you disagree with and [submit here](#).

- Case Study: Causal Analysis. Conflict Tree. Power Analysis. Culture, Information/Communication, Values, Structure, History

#### **WEEK 4 (April 24): Large Scale Conflict and Conflict Transformation**

Rioux/Redekop, “International Conflict” and “The Prevention and Resolution of Violent Conflict”  
John Paul Lederach, *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation* (2014).

##### **Classroom Exercises**

- Mediation: role playing exercises
- Case Study: paths to conflict transformation. Identifying disrupters, brokers, peacebuilders, spoilers. Brainstorming possible interventions.

#### **WEEK 5 (May 1): Deliberative Dialogue and Making Decisions in Conflict**

Rioux/Redekop, “Reconciliation” and “What is the Relationship Between Conflict and Peace?”  
Scott London, “The Power of Deliberative Dialogue,” <http://scott.london/reports/dialogue.html>

##### **Classroom Exercises**

- Deliberative dialogue ([see here](#))
- Case Study: continued work on actors, dynamics, interests, history, and paths to transformation

#### **WEEK 6 (May 8)**

Class Presentations and Final Discussions