

# Communication and Conflict

Spring 2018 (3 Credits)

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## Course Description

Communication and Conflict examines the forces that generate and influence conflicts and the techniques that can be used to direct these forces toward productive outcomes. I proceed from basic premises that will guide my teaching of this class. The first premise is that conflict can be positive and when managed in a positive way is central to development and growth in both interpersonal and organizational relationships. The second premise is that people must understand conflicts before they can successfully manage or resolve them. We will analyze conflict as a form of interaction which is developed and managed through communication. My ultimate hope is that you will develop an understanding of conflict that will enable you to make more strategic choices about your communication in conflict episodes as well as help you assist others to manage their conflicts more productively.

## Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course, you will be able to:

- Identify the causes of conflict.
- Explain how various components and contexts (e.g., power, emotion, culture, gender) influence conflict interactions.
- Describe how their own and others' background and behaviors contribute to conflict interactions.
- Describe how they can modify their own behavior to manage conflict more effectively.
- Use conflict mapping to identify causes, components, and strategies in a given conflict interaction.
- Identify techniques for managing conflict interactions more effectively.
- Propose recommendations for improving conflict interactions.

## Required Text

Wilmot, W., & Hocker, J. (2018). *Interpersonal Conflict* (10th edition). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., ISBN 9780073523941

## Course Evaluation

Conflict Analyses (5 @ 5pts)	25 points
Conflict Styles Analysis	25 points
Personal Conflict Assessment	25 points
Participation	25 points
Simulations	25 points
Simulation Reflection	25 points
<b>Total for Undergraduates:</b>	<b>150 points</b>

## Letter grades will be based on the following scale:

A = 94-100%	A- = 90-93.9%	
B+ = 87-89.9%	B = 84-86.9%	B- = 80-83.9%
C+ = 77-79.9%	C = 74-76.9%	C- = 70-73.9%
D+ = 67-69.9%	D = 60-66.9%	F = 59.9% or below

## Graduate Students Additional Assignments

Article Presentations (3 @ 5pts)	15 points
Popular Press Book Review/Report	35 points
<b>Total for Graduates:</b>	<b>200 points</b>

See assignment sheets for specific assignment details.

### \*\*\* Communication Majors\*\*\*

When you complete your work for evaluation, make certain to upload a copy to your My Collections in D2L ePortfolio. You will need to access these materials when you complete your COMM 400 Capstone during your last semester.

## Course Policies

Attendance and Participation: Given that all of us have experience in conflict, your contribution to this class is invaluable. Our understanding of conflict can be enhanced by multiple perspectives, and therefore I will be looking to you to contribute to our discussion. Additionally, I encourage you to bring in any materials you find outside of class to our discussions that relate to the course content, including videos, advertisements, products, news clippings or articles, etc.).

Participation counts for a significant part of your grade. I assume you will all come to class and be prepared to discuss the material in a meaningful way. There are many things you can do to earn participation points. Here are a few examples:

- Being engaged in in-class activities
- Reading quizzes
- Asking questions and Answering questions
- Making comments that incorporate course materials and sharing relevant experiences
- Being respectful and professional toward your instructor and your classmates

There are also many things you can do to lose points. Here are a few examples:

- Not participating
- Not listening
- Being engaged in technology or other work not relevant to the course
- Interrupting the instructor or classmates
- Being disrespectful or unprofessional toward the instructor or classmates
- Not regularly attending class

Attendance will be taken during each face-to-face meeting. There is no point deduction for missing a class; however, the work you will complete each week on your own will be directly related to the content covered during the face-to-face lecture so attending class will increase the likelihood of earning full points on your assignments. In addition, **STUDENTS WHO ATTEND ALL FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS WILL EARN 10 POINTS OF EXTRA CREDIT** at the end of the semester. Students who miss one face-to-face class can still earn 5 extra credit points. Students who miss more than one class period are not eligible for this extra credit opportunity, regardless of the reason for missing class. In other words, you do not need to provide an excuse for missing a class; you can miss one class for any reason and do not need to check in with me about it. However, if you need to miss a second, third, fourth, etc. class, for any reason, you simply will not be eligible for the extra credit. Finally, attending class means you do not arrive late or leave early.

Grading: Grade inflation has led many students to expect that showing up and turning in every assignment guarantees them an “A” in the course. To avoid any later confusion, I’d like to clarify my grading philosophy:

- **A:** Exemplary, nearly flawless work, greatly exceeds expectations.
- **B:** Above average, consistently high achievement, exceeds expectations.
- **C:** Average, satisfactory performance. Meets minimum expectations.
- **D:** Below average, unsatisfactory, fails to meet minimum expectations of course.
- **F:** Insufficient quality for college-level work. Does not meet expectations.

Grade reassessment: If you disagree with a grade you are assigned, you have the right to request a grade reassessment. I will not answer questions about grades before, during, or immediately after class. Any grade inquiry must be made through a written grade reassessment request. Please be aware that a reassessment of your work means it will be regarded. Reassessments may result in a grade change, and reassessment grades may be lower or higher than the original grade. Once reassessed, the new grade will be entered in the grade book, cancelling out the original grade. If you would like to request a grade reassessment, please adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Grade reassessment requests can be submitted beginning 24 hours after grades have been posted.
2. To request a grade reassessment, you must provide a 1-2 page, typed justification for the reassessment, and must indicate how the work met the requirements of the assignment.
3. Grade reassessment requests must be received within one week of grades being posted and should be submitted via email.

Written work: Turning in well-prepared, carefully proofread, and on-time written work says a great deal about yourself and your level of respect for me. Below are the specific guidelines for written documents in this course:

1. Written assignments should be prepared using word processing software (e.g., Word, Pages). Written work should follow *APA* 6<sup>th</sup> edition style manual guidelines. Work should be carefully proofread for errors.
2. All assignments should include a title centered on the top of the page and your name in the top right corner of the page.
3. Written work should be submitted through the “Dropbox” tab on D2L. I will NOT accept homework via email or in hard copy. Homework submitted via email or hard copy and not to D2L will be subject to late penalties, outlined below.
4. All uploaded assignments must use the following format for filenames: LastNameAssignment (e.g., MaierHomework1). When I download and grade your assignments, this aids in ensuring the correct document is being uploaded for each student. Thank you in advance.
5. All written assignments are due 30 minutes before class time on the due date indicated on the syllabus, or as otherwise posted on D2L. Assignments become late when they are turned in after the due time on their due date. A late assignment will receive an initial 10% penalty, and an additional 10% deduction for each weekday that it is late. You are provided ample time to complete each assignment. Please plan accordingly and use your time wisely, as extensions will not be granted. Technology problems, athletic schedules and the like will not excuse you from adhering to the deadlines.

Office hours: I am available to meet with you during my office hours (noted on page 1) and always by appointment. Please feel free to drop in during my office hours or email me for an appointment if you are unable to see me during the allotted time. In addition to meeting in my office, I am fairly accessible via email. Should you have a question about something covered in class, an assignment, or about life in general, send me an email and I will try to respond to you within a reasonable time. Questions regarding specific assignments sent within 24 hours of the assignment deadline will not receive a response. Be aware of this and plan accordingly. Additionally, I have other obligations immediately after our class. Because I need time to transition, I will not answer questions after class. If you have questions after class, plan to stop by my office during office hours.

Email policy: Teaching is very important to me. So is this course; however, this course is not my only responsibility during the semester. I teach other courses during the semester, as well as conduct research and perform service as part of my job responsibilities, in addition to my personal responsibilities. Email consumes a great deal of my time. Considering this, I ask that you consider carefully before emailing me, and please adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Emails should be reserved for setting up appointments with me.
2. Emails should not ask general questions about assignments, deadlines, etc. All policies, assignment guidelines and rubrics are posted to D2L, or on the course syllabus. If you cannot find the answer to your questions in those places first, ask a classmate.
3. Emails should not ask grade questions. Please see the grade reassessment policy above. I will not discuss grades over email.
4. I will respond to emails within 2 business days, during regular business hours. I can typically respond to emails fairly quickly; however, there are times when I am unable to do so. I will do my best to respond as quickly as I am able, but please allow 2 business days for a response before sending a follow-up email.
5. Emails should be professional and respectful. Emails should be written in full sentences with appropriate greetings (my official title is Dr. Maier) and salutations. Please include the course number in the subject line.

Equal treatment: The principle of equal treatment of all students is a fundamental guide in responding to requests for special consideration. No student will be given an opportunity to improve a grade that is not made available to all members of the class. This policy applies to requests for special treatment both before and after the course is completed. Examples of unacceptable opportunities for an individual include “extra credit” work, redoing an assignment, retaking an exam, taking an extra exam, or an extension of time on an assignment or exam. This policy is not intended to exclude reasonable accommodation of verified student disability or circumstances beyond a student’s control.

Class behavior: I have a strong commitment to the development and maintenance of an instructional climate that supports equality of opportunity and respect for differences based on sex, culture, race, ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation. Your enrollment in this class assumes that you will treat your fellow students with respect. I also expect that you will treat me with respect. Your behavior in our classroom is based on a single assumption—all members of the class are adults. You will therefore be expected to comport yourself as an adult. While a number of controversial topics

may be discussed in class, and your active engagement in class discussions is desired, your engagement in class should give the utmost importance to showing respect for those around you. Instances of intolerant, disrespectful, or belligerent behavior will not be tolerated. If you are being deliberately intolerant, disrespectful, or hostile you will be required to leave the room. Patterns of unacceptable behavior may result in a failing grade in the class.

Technology and Cell Phones: As a member of the learning community, each student has a responsibility to other students who are members of the community. When cell phones or pagers ring and students respond in class or leave class to respond, it disrupts the class. Therefore, the use by students of cell phones, pagers, PDAs, or similar communication devices during class is prohibited. All such devices must be turned off or put in a silent (vibrate) mode and ordinarily should not be taken out during class. Given the fact that these same communication devices are an integral part of the University's emergency notification system, an exception to this policy would occur when numerous devices activate simultaneously. When this occurs, students may consult their devices to determine if a university emergency exists. If that is not the case, the devices should be immediately returned to silent mode and put away. Other exceptions to this policy may be granted at the discretion of the instructor. Additionally, laptops used in class should be used for note-taking purposes only. Violating this policy will result in a grade deduction.

## University Policies

Academic Dishonesty: Academic integrity is central to the mission of higher education in general and UWSP in particular. Academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism, etc.) is taken very seriously. Don't do it! The minimum penalty for a violation of academic integrity is a failure (zero) for the assignment. For more information, see the "Student Academic Standards and Disciplinary Procedures" section of the Community Rights and Responsibilities document, UWSP Chapter 14. This can be accessed by viewing page 11 of the document at: <http://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Documents/CommunityRights.pdf>.

Disability Accommodation: Students are required to provide documentation of disability to the Disability and Assistive Technology Center prior to receiving accommodations. To request academic accommodations for a disability, contact the Disability and Assistive Technology Center (6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Library Resource Center), or visit: <http://www.uwsp.edu/disability/Pages/default.aspx>

Religious Accommodation: Relief from any academic requirement due to religious beliefs will be accommodated according to UWS 22.03, with notification within the first three weeks of class.

Dropping a class: It is your responsibility to understand the University's procedure for dropping a class. If you stop attending this class but do not follow proper procedure for dropping the class, you will receive a failing grade and will also be financially obligated to pay for the class. For information about dropping a class or withdrawing from the university, contact the Office of the Registrar at 346-4301.

Emergency Response Statement: In the event of a medical emergency call 9-1-1 or use Red Emergency Phone located outside CAC 203. Offer assistance if trained and willing to do so. Guide emergency responders to victim. In the event of a tornado warning, proceed to the lowest level interior room without window exposure at CAC 118. In the event of a fire alarm, evacuate the building in a calm manner. Meet at north entrance to Old Main. Notify instructor or emergency command personnel of any missing individuals.

Active Shooter/Code React – Run/Escape, Hide, Fight. If trapped hide, lock doors, turn off lights, spread out and remain quiet. Call 9-1-1 when it is safe to do so. Follow instructions of emergency responders. See UW-Stevens Point Emergency Procedures at [www.uwsp.edu/rmgt/Pages/em/procedures](http://www.uwsp.edu/rmgt/Pages/em/procedures) for details on all emergency response at UW-Stevens Point.

## Tentative Course Schedule

	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Assignment due</b>
1	Jan. 24	Course Introduction		
2	Jan. 31	Introduction to Conflict/Conflict Framing	Chapters 1 & 2	
3	Feb. 7	Interests, Goals, and Power	Chapters 3 & 4	Conflict Analysis 1
4	Feb. 14	Conflict Styles & Emotions	Chapters 5 & 6	Conflict Analysis 2
5	Feb. 21	<b>No Class</b>		
6	Feb. 28	Conflict in Context	D2L Readings	Conflict Styles Analysis
7	Mar. 7	Analyzing Conflicts Grad Book Reports	Chapter 7	Conflict Analysis 3 Grad Book Review
8	Mar. 14	Negotiation & Third-Party Intervention	Chapters 8 & 9	Conflict Analysis 4
9	Mar. 21	Forgiveness & Reconciliation	Chapter 10	Conflict Analysis 5
	Mar. 28	No Class: Spring Break		
10	Apr. 4	No Class: CSCA Conference		
11	Apr. 11	Conflict Simulations		Personal Conflict Assessment
12	Apr. 18	Conflict Simulations		
13	Apr. 25	Conflict Simulations		
14	May 2	Conflict Simulations		
15	May 9	Conflict Simulations debrief		Simulation Reflection
	<b>May 16</b>	<b>Finals Week</b>		