

# **CMN 5150: Seminar in Interpersonal Communication: Communication & Conflict**

Spring 2021

3 credits

Online: January 11 – March 8

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Office hours: MWF noon – 1:30 via Teams

“We’re going to need to intentionally be with people who are different from us....we’re going to have to learn how to listen, have hard conversations, look for joy, share pain, and be more curious than defensive, all while seeking moments of togetherness.”

—Brené Brown

## **Course Description**

A detailed examination of specific theories in interpersonal communication. Specific topics will vary according to student demand, availability, and interest of faculty. May be repeated with a change in course content.

## **Section Description**

Conflict management skills are exercised almost every day in our work and personal lives, yet most of us rely on a limited range of tools based on imitation, tradition, or intuition even though there are more effective strategies available to us. Research confirms that training on effective conflict management and negotiation, from a professional standpoint, is linked to higher job satisfaction, increased equity and equality, employee retention, and expanded value for multiple stakeholders, among many other benefits. Improving these skills carries over to many of the challenges we face in our personal lives as well.

In this course students will refine their understanding of conflict and its dynamics, strategies and processes for improving cooperation and producing supportive environments, the fundamentals of negotiation, and a variety of conflict management approaches and communication skills used to overcome relational and communicative barriers.

## **Course Objectives**

This course is designed to prepare graduate students to understand and apply interpersonal communication theory in a variety of contexts. At the end of the semester students should be able to demonstrate:

- a. a detailed understanding of specific interpersonal communication theories or contexts.
- b. an understanding of criteria for evaluating different theories of interpersonal communication.

## **Readings**

Weekly readings are posted on d2l.

## **Teaching Format**

This is a technology-delivered course (meaning the learning environment is completely online in Desire2Learn). It applies discussion, critical thinking, and reflection. All assignments will be submitted to me in D2L. An integrative, collaborative teaching and learning approach will be utilized throughout this course. As your professor, I am a facilitator; one who is there to assist and provide input into the educational process. You are expected to actively engage in all aspects of the course in order to successfully meet course objectives.

## **Learning Modules**

Students will access all assignments in the weekly D2L learning modules. There are a total of 8 weeks/modules in the course. While readings will be available at all times through the course readings module, the discussion threads and weekly modules with assignment dropboxes will only be open during the week for which they are assigned. In other words, you are welcome to read ahead and work ahead on course assignments. However, in order to ensure robust class interactions, you must be actively engaged in the appropriate module each week and post to the assigned discussions during the week they are assigned. This allows us all to give our attention to one discussion thread at a time.

Note modules open at 8am on Mondays and must be completed by 7:59am the following Monday (prior to the official start of the next week's module). If you did not complete the discussion posts or turn in any assignments prior to the deadlines you will receive no credit for that work. **Late work will not be accepted**

## **Expectations**

- Please keep current in class. If something happens that is going to cause you to fall behind, contact me **immediately**. An extension will not be granted unless there is a serious, documented, and university-approved reason necessitating one.
- Completing your reading is vital to our class and to your learning. Each reading provides information that you will draw on to write your discussion posts and papers. Plus, all of the readings have been assigned for your personal and professional benefit. I hope you will learn something useful from each of them!
- You will be expected to provide thoughtful reflections on the weekly readings in your discussion posts. I am not assigning a tremendous amount of readings in any of the weeks, so your reflections should be thorough and thoughtful. Give yourself plenty of time each week to fully read and consider what's been assigned in order to construct your weekly post or paper.
- I also ask that you comment on at least three other people's posts. Participation is an important part of the graduate class experience. It is often when we challenge our own ideas and assumptions by listening to others' perspectives that the most learning takes place. With that in mind, I also want to stress the importance of maintaining a respectful online discussion board. Please see more information on discussion etiquette below.
- Always have a contingency plan for dealing with technology issues. I suggest you identify a backup computer that you can use in case something happens to your primary computer/internet access. Friends, family, co-workers and even your local library can be places for you to find computer and internet access.
- I will treat you with respect. I assume you will treat me, and your classmates, with respect. In an online environment we miss the nonverbal cues (smiles, tone, etc.) that may mark a comment as funny or harmless. Please be cautious of how you word things in your posts and responses. Please feel free to disagree, but do so in a civil and respectful way. Remember, words have consequences.
- Contact me via Panthermail with any questions or concerns you have as they arise. I will do my best to respond to all queries within 24 to 36 hours.

## **Course policies**

### **Discussion Etiquette**

Eastern Illinois University (EIU) is committed to open, frank, and insightful dialogue in all of its courses. Diversity has many manifestations, including diversity of thought, opinion, and values. We encourage all learners to be respectful of that diversity and to refrain from inappropriate commentary. Should such inappropriate comments occur, the instructor will intervene as she monitors the dialogue in the course. The instructor will request that inappropriate content be removed and will recommend university disciplinary action. Learners as well as faculty should be guided by common sense and basic etiquette. The following are good guidelines to follow:

- Never post, transmit, promote, or distribute content that is known to be illegal.
- Never post harassing, threatening, or embarrassing comments.
- If you disagree with someone, respond to the subject, not the person.
- Never post content that is harmful, abusive; racially, ethnically, or religiously offensive; vulgar; sexually explicit; or otherwise potentially offensive.

### **Student Responsibilities**

Students ultimately are responsible for their learning and success in class. Reading assignments, taking notes, actively engaging in online discussions, asking questions, and consulting with the professor will help you learn and succeed. Students are responsible for all assigned reading material. In a technology-delivered format it is essential for you to keep up with all course material and assignments.

### **Student Conduct**

Appropriate student conduct is very important to this class. Disruptive and/or disrespectful behavior is not acceptable to the instructor, your classmates, or the university. Student behavior should conform to the guidelines described in Eastern Illinois University's "Student Conduct Code" which is available at the following address: [http://www.eiu.edu/~judicial/student\\_conduct\\_code.php](http://www.eiu.edu/~judicial/student_conduct_code.php).

Disruptive and disrespectful behavior detracts from the learning environment. Unacceptable behavior includes but is not limited to ridiculing class members and using inappropriate language (including name-calling and cursing). Students who violate standards of appropriate behavior will be asked to modify the unacceptable behavior. Points will be deducted for failure to adhere to standards of appropriate student conduct. Students who violate the conduct code will be asked to leave the class & may be removed permanently.

**Please also see the Discussion Etiquette section above.**

### **Plagiarism and Cheating**

**Plagiarism and/or cheating will result in a "0" for assignment and probable failure in the course.**

Plagiarizing includes presenting someone else's work as your own. Cheating includes activities such as using unauthorized materials or assistance, copying from other students, and not completing your own work.

### **Late Work**

Late work will not be accepted. Assignments, exams, quizzes or discussion posts not completed by the specified due dates and times will receive a zero.

### **Student Email Addresses**

The School of Communication and Journalism requires each student to use his/her university email address for any class, department, college, or university email correspondence. The university email address is used for many purposes, including accessing d2l and PAWS, receiving billing statements from the library, and receiving

departmental correspondence and announcements through the undergraduate listserv. For information on how to obtain your email address or to obtain a password, please visit the following web address:  
<http://www.eiu.edu/~itshelp/email/index/php>.

### Incompletes

Incompletes will be granted only under very stringent conditions (e.g., serious illness or accident). Students who experience an extended absence should investigate withdrawal from the university.

### Academic integrity

Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>). Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards.

### Students with disabilities

If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Please stop by McAfee Gym, Room 1210, or call 217-581-6583 to make an appointment.

### The Student Success Center

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center ([www.eiu.edu/success](http://www.eiu.edu/success)) for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to McAfee Gym, Room 1301.

## **Course Requirements**

### Discussion Posts and Peer Responses

A significant part of any graduate class is discussion of the weekly readings. Since we aren't going to gather for three hours on a weekly basis we will accomplish this through discussion boards.

Each week I expect you to reflect on the readings in a coherent and thoughtful way. I want you to explore and discuss those ideas raised in the readings that you felt most important, interesting, and/or challenging. Some weeks I will pose discussion questions to help guide your thinking and writing while other weeks will be more open-ended. Your posts should be approximately 300-600 words. You also need to post a response to at least three other posts from your classmates each week.

I am not going to grade each individual post. Instead your discussion grade will be given at the end of the course and account for the quality and depth of all your posts and responses as a whole. I will be reading everything you write, of course, and if you are not hitting the mark or are headed towards a poor grade I will let you know so you can right the ship. If you don't hear from me during the semester about your posts then you can assume you are on the right track (maybe not perfect, but definitely in the A range).

### Two Application Papers

You will write two short (2- to 3-page) papers, one due in week 3 and one due in week 6. Application papers serve as sources of reflection, discovery, and change. They clarify insights and provide a space to work through course materials in their applications to practice. In each paper you should reflect on how our course readings to that point translate to your professional and/or personal life. Each log should accomplish two objectives: *a) raise two to three concepts from separate readings, and b) connect these concepts to one or more personal*

*examples*. These papers provide an opportunity for you to show that you grasp the practical implications of course concepts and can apply them in specific situations. Each paper should only cover the readings in the week it is due or the previous 2 weeks (thus you should be addressing different concepts in each paper).

### Conflict Narrative Analysis Paper

You will interview someone about a significant experience they had with a conflict. You will record and transcribe the interview, and then analyze their narrative based upon course concepts. Following your analysis, you'll write a 6- to 7- page essay presenting your analysis of the conflict narrative based on course materials as well as your own reflection about what you learned through the analysis process. Additional details will be provided in d2l.

### Determination of Final Grade

Discussion posts and peer responses...	30%
Application Paper 1.....	15%
Application Paper 2.....	20%
Conflict Narrative Analysis Paper.....	35%

### Final Evaluation:

90% and above=	A
80-89% =	B
70-70% =	C
60-69% =	D
59% and below =	F

## **TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

<b>Week 1 Jan 11-18</b> Course introduction; Defining conflict and conflict competence; Understanding conflict from a communication paradigm	Readings: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Nature of Conflict (Hocker and Wilmot)</li> <li>2. Developing your conflict competence chapter 1 (Runde and Flanagan)</li> <li>3. Communication and Conflict: A System-Theoretic Perspective (Ruben)</li> </ol> Post to Discussion 1	Module Opens: 1/11, 8am Assignments Close: 1/18, 7:59am
<b>Week 2 Jan 18-25</b> Difficult Conversations: Dialogue about difference	Readings: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Difficult Conversations (Stone, Patton, and Heen) chapters 1-4</li> </ol> View “Why I have coffee with people who send me hate mail” (video)  Post to Discussion 2	Module Opens: 1/18, 8am Assignments Close: 1/25, 7:59am
<b>Week 3 Jan 25-Feb 1</b> Selected Theories for analyzing conflicts and understanding human behavior: Systems Theory CMM Verbal Aggressiveness Attribution Theory	Readings: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Analyzing Conflicts (Hocker and Wilmot)</li> <li>2. Relational Transformation in Mediation: Following Constitutive and Regulative Rules (Jorgensen)</li> <li>3. What the _ is your problem? Attribution Theory and perceived reasons for profanity (Young)</li> <li>4. Affirming and non-affirming style... (Infante)</li> </ol> Post to Discussion 3 Submit Application Paper 1	Module Opens: 1/25, 8am Assignments Close: 2/1, 7:59am
<b>Week 4 Feb 1-8</b> (Wellness Day Feb 2)  Conflict styles, climate, and self-assessment	Readings: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conflict Styles (Hocker and Wilmot)</li> <li>2. Interpersonal Conflict in Organizations: Explaining Conflict Styles via Face-Negotiation Theory (Oetzel et al)</li> <li>3. Competitive and Cooperative Conflict Approaches (McCorkle and Reese)</li> </ol> View “Radical Candor” with Kim Scott (video)  Complete self-assessment  Post to Discussion 4	Module Opens: 2/1, 8am Assignment Closes: 2/8, 7:59am
<b>Week 5 Feb 8-15</b> Difficult Conversations: Importance of Listening and Expression	Readings: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Difficult Conversations (Stone, Patton, and Heen) chapters 8-11</li> </ol> View “What happens when you reimagine the difficult conversation about guns?” (video)  Post to Discussion 5	Module Opens: 2/8, 8am Assignments Close: 2/15, 7:59am

<b>Week 6 Feb 15-22</b> Moving toward conflict resolution	Readings: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Negotiation (McCorkle and Reese)</li> <li>2. Integrative Negotiation (Lewicki and Tomlinson)</li> <li>3. Trust and Power as Determinants of Conflict Resolution Strategy (Davidson, et al)</li> <li>4. When Hurt Continues... (Miller and Roloff)</li> </ol> Post to Discussion 6 Submit Application Paper 2	Module Opens: 2/15, 8am Assignment Closes: 2/22, 7:59am
<b>Week 7 Feb 22-Mar 1</b> (Wellness Day 2/24) Relational repair and forgiveness	Readings: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Forgiveness Following Conflict... (Merolla)</li> <li>2. How do you like your forgiveness?... (Merolla, et al)</li> <li>3. Transgressor communication... (Knight)</li> </ol> Post to Discussion 7	Module Opens: 2/22, 8am Assignments Close: 3/1, 7:59am
<b>Week 8 Mar 1-8</b>	<b>Conflict Narrative Analysis papers due</b>	Module Opens: 3/1, 8am Assignment Closes: 3/8, 7:59am