

# COM 691: Interpersonal Conflict Theory and Research

## Fall 2017

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### **Ms. Bailey Oliver**

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## **WELCOME TO SEMINAR**

Conflict is an inevitable part of most close relationships. Whenever two or more people are highly interdependent, there are times when they have differing goals or disagree. However, conflict does not necessarily have deleterious effects on relationships. Learning how to manage conflict in an appropriate and effective way is a cornerstone for maintaining, improving, and repairing relationships. In this course, we take an in-depth look at theory and research related to processes and contexts of conflict communication in interpersonal interaction. The course focuses on theory, research, and practical applications.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this seminar are for students to:

- (1) better understand the processes related to conflict communication in interpersonal interaction by reading and discussing seminal works, as well as participating in sophisticated class discussion,
- (2) be able to apply research and theory to practical problems by creating and analyzing a case study as well as consulting materials, and
- (3) be able to extend conflict research by proposing a Spotlight Study that has the potential to move an area or program of research in conflict communication in an important new direction.

## READINGS

A number of the readings assigned for this seminar come from Samp's (2017) edited volume, *Communicating Interpersonal Conflict in Close Relationships*. This book is completely accessible online through the ASU library and can also be purchased through Amazon. Several other readings come from the *SAGE Handbook of Conflict Communication* and other books plus journal articles. All of these readings will be available for you to copy. Readings for this course consist mainly of state-of-the-art summary chapters in handbooks plus chapters that contain "spotlight research" from the Samp book.

## ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Seminars provide graduate students with unique opportunities to participate in and shape their own learning experiences. A seminar is a better learning experience when students come prepared to participate and share their ideas. Therefore, it is essential that readings are completed before class. Part of each class will be run as a "roundtable" type discussion. Each week, a list of questions and issues will be posted on Blackboard. Please use this list as a guide to help you focus your reading. During selected seminars you will join your instructors as one of the round-table discussion leaders. However, every week you should be prepared to discuss the issues/questions on this list and, as such, contribute to a lively, intelligent roundtable discussion. Your participation grade will be based on both the quality and quantity of what you contribute in class. Most classes will also include practicum, with students presenting a case study and/or consulting workshop on the topic of the week. The consulting workshops often involve having students participate in activities. Such activity also counts as part of your participation grade.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is required of all Arizona State University students. Cheating of any kind will not be tolerated and can result in failing an exam or the entire course, as well as disciplinary action at the college or university level. In addition to "traditional" forms of cheating and plagiarism, it is unacceptable to turn the same paper into two classes. If you have not reviewed Arizona State University's policy on plagiarism and academic integrity, please see <https://provost.asu.edu/academic-integrity>

## GRADED ASSIGNMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Roundtable Leadership (3 @ 50 points each) -----	150 pts.
Case Study Paper -----	100 pts.
Case Study Presentation-----	50 pts.
Conflict Consultants Project -----	150 pts.
Spotlight Research Proposal-----	100 pts.
Spotlight Research Presentation-----	50 pts.
Participation in Class Discussion and Workshops-----	100 pts.

Final grades will be calculated based on the following scale (total points possible= 700)

651-700	A	560-580	B-
630-650	A-	539-559	C+
609-629	B+	490-538	C
581-608	B	420-489	D

## ASSIGNMENTS

### Roundtable Leadership

You will sign up to be a roundtable leader for three class periods. Along with your instructors and two other students, you will post a question or issue for discussion that is based on the readings for the week. Your question or issue should be thought-provoking. For example, it might involve addressing a controversial issue, synthesizing ideas from the different readings, asking about strengths and/or weaknesses of approaches, comparing and contrasting various constructs, etc. These are just some of many ideas for the type of questions/issues you could propose. You will also have examples from the first two weeks to guide you. You must post your question/issue on Blackboard at least one week prior to the day you are acting as a roundtable leader. In addition, on the three days that you are acting as a roundtable leader, you will need to type out answers to all of the questions posted on Blackboard for that week. Bring your answers with you to seminar that day as notes to help with your participation in the roundtable. These notes should typed and double-spaced, with each of the questions and answers listed separately. All roundtable leaders will lead discussion on their question and should also be equipped to answer all other questions for the day. Turn your typed roundtable notes in to Bailey at the end of class on the days you are a roundtable leader.

### Case Study Paper and Presentation

This assignment involves writing a 6-8 page (excluding cover page and references) paper that addresses issues raised in a case study that you create. There are case studies at the beginning of some of your readings. (See, for example, my chapter in *Close Encounters*, which starts with a scenario involving a couple and their teenage daughter). Your case study must be related to the topic we are discussing the week you sign up to present. After creating your opening scenario, you will present concepts and/or theories that are relevant to your case study, explain what is happening based on the research, and present practical advice that would be helpful to the people in your case study. The goal is for you to connect theory and research in a way that shows how people dealing with a particular conflict situation might better understand their conflict communication and cope in a more productive manner. Your pragmatic recommendations should be an extension of the literature rather than personal opinion. This paper should be written in a style that is highly readable, and would therefore be appropriate for a general audience. Use APA style for referencing. In addition to writing the paper, which is due to Safe Assignment by 11:59 pm the day that you present, you will also present the case study to the class. Your presentation should be 12-15 minutes long. Present the scenario and then discuss how the literature is related to your case study and the recommendations you would give.

### **Conflict Consultants Project**

For this assignment, you will work with a partner to create and present materials that you could use if you were hired as consultants to present a workshop on a particular conflict topic. Your presentation should be approximately 45-50 minutes long and can include activities, PowerPoint slides, video clips, and any other extra materials that you believe would be helpful to teach an audience about your selected topic. Aim your presentation at an appropriate audience (and we will pretend to be that audience!). For example, if you are presenting a session on cyberbullying your audience might be teenagers, whereas if you are presenting on interparental conflict, it could be couples with children who are undergoing counseling. In addition to presenting your session to the class, you will also turn in a consulting plan to Safe Assignment by 11:59 pm the night before you present. This plan should include the following: (a) your target audience; (b) your goals or objectives for the session (i.e., what do you want your audience to learn); (c) two or three paragraphs summarizing the literature/research that informed your session; (d) a reference list; and (e) any materials that you present in class, such as handouts, PowerPoint slides, etc.

### **Spotlight Research Proposal and Presentation**

The final class project consists of writing an 10-15 page (excluding cover page and references) research proposal that will extend the literature in a specific area related to interpersonal conflict. Your topic should be specific. (I am more interested in seeing depth than breadth in this paper.) So rather than choosing something broad such as “sibling conflict” or “power” focus on a more specific issue such as how competition or attachment impacts sibling conflict or how power dynamics affect the outcomes like the chilling effect during conflict. You should review the literature on your topic in a way that provides a strong rationale for taking the research in a particular direction. Please pose 3 hypotheses and/or research questions in your paper and propose the methods you would use to test them. Specifically, your paper should contain the following: (a) a literature review that focuses on the specific topic you are addressing; (b) within that literature review, a rationale for extending the research on your topic in the direction you are proposing; (c) three hypotheses and/or research questions revolving around concepts that you carefully conceptualized within your literature review/rationale; (d) proposed methods that include what specific method (survey, experiment, observation, etc.) you would use, how you would operationalize your variables, and how you would analyze the data relevant to your hypotheses/research questions; and (e) a brief conclusion that in a paragraph or two summarizes the contributions that your study could make. This paper is due at 11:59 pm on December 2<sup>nd</sup>. You will present your proposal to the class “convention-style” on either November 27<sup>th</sup> or December 4<sup>th</sup>. These will be 10-15 minute convention style presentations using PowerPoint slides.

## COURSE CALENDAR

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>
<b>8/21</b>	<b>Course Overview and Sign Ups</b>
<b>8/28</b>	<b>Introduction to Conflict Communication</b> <p>Putman, L. L. (2013). Definitions and approaches to conflict and communication. In J. G. Oetzel &amp; S. Ting-Toomey (Eds.), <i>The SAGE Handbook of Conflict Communication</i> (pp. 1-39). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.</p> <p>Guerrero, L. K., Andersen, P. A., &amp; Afifi, W. A. (2017). <i>Close encounters: Communication in relationships</i> (5<sup>th</sup> ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (Chapter on Conflict)</p>
<b>9/4</b>	<b>No Class—Labor Day</b>
<b>9/11</b>	<b>Methodological Approaches for Studying Conflict</b> <p>Fink, E. L, Cai, D. A., &amp; Wang, Q. (2013). Quantitative Methods for Conflict Communication Research. In J. G. Oetzel &amp; S. Ting-Toomey (Eds.), <i>The SAGE Handbook of Conflict Communication</i> (pp. 41-66). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.</p> <p>Jiang, M., &amp; Buzzanell, P. M. (2013). Qualitative Research on Communication and Conflict. In J. G. Oetzel &amp; S. Ting-Toomey (Eds.), <i>The SAGE Handbook of Conflict Communication</i> (pp. 67-98). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.</p>
<b>9/18</b>	<b>Emotion and Cognition in Conflict</b> <p>Guerrero, L. K. (2013). Emotion and communication in conflict interaction. In J. G. Oetzel &amp; S. Ting-Toomey (Eds.), <i>The SAGE Handbook of Conflict Communication</i> (pp. 105-131). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.</p> <p>Roloff, M. E., &amp; Wright, C. N. (2013). Social cognition and conflict. In J. G. Oetzel &amp; S. Ting-Toomey (Eds.), <i>The SAGE Handbook of Conflict Communication</i> (pp. 133-160). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.</p>

9/25

### **Power Dynamics in Interpersonal Conflict**

Coleman, P. T. (2014). Power and conflict. In P. T. Coleman, M. Deutsch, & E. C Marcus (Eds), *The handbook of conflict resolution: Theory and practice* (pp. 137-167). John Wiley & Sons: San Francisco.

Dunbar, N. E., Lane, B. L., & Abra, G. (2017). Power in close relationships: A dyadic power theory perspective. In J. A. Samp (Ed.), *Communicating interpersonal conflict in close relationships: Contexts, challenges, and opportunities* (pp. 75-92). New York: Routledge.

Worley, T. R. (2017). Complaint expression in close relationships: A dependence power perspective In J. A. Samp (Ed.), *Communicating interpersonal conflict in close relationships: Contexts, challenges, and opportunities* (pp. 93-108). New York: Routledge.

10/2

### **Technology, Conflict, and Cyberbullying**

Caughlin, J. P., Basinger, E. D., & Sharabi, L. L. (2017). The connections between communication technologies and relational conflict: A multiple goals and communication interdependence perspective. In J. A. Samp (Ed.), *Communicating interpersonal conflict in close relationships: Contexts, challenges, and opportunities* (pp.57-72). New York: Routledge.

Tokunaga, R. S. (2010). Following you home from school: A critical review and synthesis of research on cyberbullying victimization. *Computers in Human Behavior, 26*, 277-287.

Lenhart, A. (2015, August 06). Chapter 5: Conflict, Friendships and Technology. Retrieve from <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/08/06/chapter-5-conflict-friendships-and-technology/>

10/9

### **No Class—Fall Break**

10/16

### **Serial Arguing**

Roloff, M. E., & Johnson, K. L. (2002). Serial arguing over the relational life course: Antecedents and consequences. In A. L. Vangelisti & M. A. Fitzpatrick (Eds.), *Stability and change in relationships* (pp. 107-128).

Cambridge, UK: University Press.

Johnson, A. J., & Cionea, I. A. (2017). Serial arguments in interpersonal relationships: Relational dynamics and interdependence. In J. A. Samp (Ed.), *Communicating interpersonal conflict in close relationships: Contexts, challenges, and opportunities* (pp. 111-127). New York: Routledge.

Bevan, J. L. Cummings, M. B., Engert, M. L., & Sparks, L. (2017). Romantic serial argument perceived resolvability, goals, rumination, and conflict strategy usage: A preliminary longitudinal study. In J. A. Samp (Ed.), *Communicating interpersonal conflict in close relationships: Contexts, challenges, and opportunities* (pp. 128-143). New York: Routledge.

**10/23**

### **Conflict in Romantic Relationships**

Caughlin, J. P., Vangelisti, A. L., & Mikucki-Enyart, S. L. (2013). Conflict in dating and marital relationships. In J. G. Oetzel & S. Ting-Toomey (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Conflict* (pp. 161-185). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kline, G. H., Pleasant, N. D., Whitton, S. W., & Markman, H. J. (2006). Understanding couple conflict. In A. L. Vangelisti & D. Perlman (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of personal relationships* (pp. 445-462). Cambridge University Press. *The Cambridge handbook of personal relationships*, 445-462.

Moon, S. S., Webb, L. M., & Amason, P. (2017). Conflicts with heterosexual partners about sexual discrepancies: Conflict avoidance, de-escalation strategies, facilitators to conversation. In J. A. Samp (Ed.), *Communicating interpersonal conflict in close relationships: Contexts, challenges, and opportunities* (pp. 40-56). New York: Routledge.

**10/30**

### **Domestic and Work-Life Conflict**

Knight, K., & Alberts, J. K. (2017). Worth fighting for: The correlates, context, and consequences of avoiding versus engaging domestic labor conflict. J. A. Samp (Ed.), *Communicating interpersonal conflict in close relationships: Contexts, challenges, and opportunities* (pp. 144-161). New York: Routledge.

Kirby, E. L., Wieland, S. M. B., & McBride M. C. (2013). Work-life conflict. In J. G. Oetzel & S. Ting-Toomey (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Conflict*

*Communication* (pp. 377-402). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

**11/6 Intimate Partner Violence and Verbal Aggression**

Spitzberg, B. H. (2013). Intimate partner violence. In J. G. Oetzel & S. Ting-Toomey (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Conflict Communication* (pp. 187-210). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Johnson, M. P. (2006). Violence and abuse in personal relationships: Conflict, terror, and resistance in intimate partnerships.

Aloia, L. S., & Solomon, D. H. (2017). Cognitive and physiological systems linking childhood exposure to family verbal aggression and reactions to conflict in adulthood. J. A. Samp (Ed.), *Communicating interpersonal conflict in close relationships: Contexts, challenges, and opportunities* (pp.11-27). New York: Routledge.

**11/13 Interparental and Parent-Child Conflict**

Canary, H. E., & Canary, D. J. (2013). *Family conflict*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press. (Chapters on “Interparental Conflict” and “Conflict between Parents and Children,” pp. 52-112).

Afifi, T. D., Shardé, D., Merrill, A. F., & Coveleski, S. (2017). The role of perception in interparental contact. In J. A. Samp (Ed.), *Communicating interpersonal conflict in close relationships: Contexts, challenges, and opportunities* (pp. 185-206). New York: Routledge.

Huggins, C. E., Sturge-Apple, M., & Davies, P. T. (2017). Demand and withdraw behavior and emotion in mother-adolescent conflict. In J. A. Samp (Ed.), *Communicating interpersonal conflict in close relationships: Contexts, challenges, and opportunities* (pp. 165-184). New York: Routledge.

**11/20 Conflict in Peer Relationships: Siblings and Friends**

Canary, H. E., & Canary, D. J. (2013). *Family conflict*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press. (Chapter on “Siblings in Conflict,” pp. 113-140).

Vandell, D. L., & Bailey, M. D. (1992). Conflict between siblings. In Shantz, C. U. & Hartup, W. W. (Eds.). *Conflict in child and adolescent development*

(pp.242-269). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Whiteman, S. D., McHale, S. M., & Soli, A. (2011). Theoretical perspectives on sibling relationships. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 3, 124-139.

Hartup, W. W. (1992). Conflict and friendship relations. In Shantz, C. U. & Hartup, W. W. (Eds.). *Conflict in child and adolescent development* (pp.186-215). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

## 11/27 **Forgiveness and Recovery**

Merolla, A. J. (2017). Forgiveness following conflict: What it is, why it happens, and how it's done. In J. A. Samp (Ed.), *Communicating interpersonal conflict in close relationships: Contexts, challenges, and opportunities* (pp. 227-249). New York: Routledge.

Kloeber, D. N., & Waldron, V. R. (2017). Expressing and suppressing conditional forgiveness in serious romantic relationships. In J. A. Samp (Ed.), *Communicating interpersonal conflict in close relationships: Contexts, challenges, and opportunities* (pp. 250-266). New York: Routledge.

Salvatore, J. E., Kuo, S. I. C., Steele, R. D., Simpson, J. A., & Collins, W. A. (2011). Recovering from conflict in romantic relationships: A developmental perspective. *Psychological Science*, 22, 376-383.

### *Final Presentations Part 1*

## 12/4 **Final Presentations Part 2**

More information regarding all assignments will be presented in class ☺. Good luck and we hope you enjoy the course!