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# COMM 371:

## Communication in Conflict and Negotiation

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### Course Syllabus Spring 2016

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Office hours: Tues/Thurs 10am-12pm and by appointment  
Class Meetings: Tues/Thurs 2:00-3:15 OTHM 110

#### Course Overview

At its core, conflict is a type of human interaction that is constituted and sustained by the verbal and nonverbal communication of the parties involved that serve to shape perceptions of incompatibility and that occurs, with different implications, across interpersonal, group, organizational, and public settings. Despite its prevalence and its importance to our ability to develop and maintain productive personal and professional relationships, be responsible members of teams and organizations, as well as our ability to engage in responsible citizenship, it is often regarded as something negative that should be minimized or avoided altogether. In taking a close look at conflict interaction, students can understand both their agency in conflict situations as well as their responsibility. Thus, this course is focused on embracing conflict across contexts and understanding it as an interaction constituted and sustained in communication.

#### Course Objectives

By the end of the semester, you should be able to demonstrate:

- (1) An understanding of a communication approach to conflict,
- (2) An appreciation for and understanding of the layered complexity of conflict interaction across interpersonal, organizational, and public contexts
- (3) Comprehension of communication theories of conflict interaction
- (4) Increased self-awareness of your own agency in and approach to conflict situations
- (5) An enhanced ability to approach conflict responsibly and productively in your personal and professional lives

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#### Required Reading

Folger, J. P., Poole, M. S., & Stutman, R. K. (2013). *Working through conflict: Strategies for relationships, groups, and organizations* (7<sup>th</sup> edition). Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

*Selected outside readings as provided by the instructor throughout the semester.*

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Course Syllabus Spring 2016

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### **Mission Statement of the Department of Communication Studies**

The mission of the faculty and students of the Department of Communication Studies is to examine human symbolic activity as it shapes and is shaped by relationships, institutions, technology, and culture. This work concerns the creation, analysis, and critique of messages ranging from face-to-face to digital media contexts.

The department's research and teaching devote particular attention to scholarly initiatives aimed at understanding and explaining the role of communication in (a) facilitating civic engagement, mediating public controversies, and organizing for social change, (b) constituting individual and family health, promoting healthy behaviors, and helping persons navigate relational challenges, and (c) creating, maintaining, and challenging personal, social, and community identity in a complex and diverse world.

### **Learning Management System: CANVAS**

This semester, this course will be taught using the Canvas learning management system. You may have experience using the Blackboard LMS (known on this campus as MyUNL). Canvas is a system that offers many of the same tools as Blackboard. UNL is piloting the Canvas system this semester to determine if all UNL courses should switch from Blackboard to Canvas.

When you login to this course's Blackboard site, you will see that there is no content there – only a link that will direct you to Canvas. You can access Canvas by going to [canvas.unl.edu](http://canvas.unl.edu). When you do, you can login using the same username and password you typically use to login to Blackboard.

Once you login to this course's Canvas site, you will see that there is a module in the course dedicated called Intro to Canvas. This section will provide an overview of the Canvas LMS, give you access to resources about Canvas, and provide you with information about how to get help using Canvas.

As part of this Canvas pilot, you will be asked to participate in a research study concerning the system. More information about that study will be forthcoming.

This pilot is being administered by the ITS Learning and Emerging Technologies group at UNL. The ITS staff members serve as the external evaluators for the Evaluation of Canvas Learning Management System Pilot at UNL, and adhere to all federal and state legal and ethical guidelines for data security and privacy. If you have any questions about the pilot, please contact Jeremy Van Hof at

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# COMM 371: Communication in Conflict and Negotiation

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Course Syllabus Spring 2016

jvanhof@unl.edu or 402-472-4266.

## Course Expectations

### READING

The assigned reading is one of the cornerstones of learning in this course. Thus, I expect you to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned materials. This means that you have completed the reading assignments for that day and have given some thought as to how this material relates to your personal, professional, and academic pursuits. Students should be prepared every class period to discuss their insights about the assigned material.

### ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION

Another cornerstone of learning is active engagement. Thus, it is important that students come to class and be actively involved in class discussions – in other words, I expect each of you to contribute to our learning experience in COMM 371. In addition to taking notes (when needed), I expect each of you to contribute your understanding of the material as it relates to your academic, professional, and personal experiences. I also expect each of you to listen with an open mind and respect the opinions of others in class.

In the event you must miss class due to unavoidable circumstances, please contact a reliable classmate for notes, handouts and his/her insights about that day's discussion.

### ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION AND DEADLINES

Meeting deadlines is very important and is an expectation in this course. All assignments are due before the start of class on the assigned day. **All assignments should be submitted via the Canvas Learning Management System AND turned in via hard copy at the start of the class on which the assignment is due.** Late assignments will be docked 20% of the total point possible for every calendar day they are late, beginning the minute class begins on the date the assignment was due. Assignments will not be accepted more than four calendar days past the due date.

Exams and in-class point-bearing assignments missed due to an *excused* absence must be made up no later than 1 week following the excused absence, at the convenience of your instructor (in office hours, by appointment, etc). Failure to make assignments up within 1 week of the excused absence will result in a loss of the opportunity to make up the assignment and will result in a zero. Exams and assignments missed due to an *unexcused* absence cannot be made up.

### ACADEMIC HONESTY

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# COMM 371: Communication in Conflict and Negotiation

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## Course Syllabus Spring 2016

Academic honesty and integrity are expected in this course. Any student who is found to have engaged in an act of academic dishonesty (e.g., cheating, plagiarism, complicity, misrepresenting excuses for missing class for turning in late work) will automatically fail the assignment. Additionally, he or she may fail the course and/or be reported to his or her academic advisor and the Dean for further action.

Ignorance of the rules is not an excuse for academic dishonesty. Please read **Article 3, Section B-1 of the UNL Student Code of Conduct** (<http://stuafs.unl.edu/DeanofStudents/Student%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20May20Rev%22014%20a.pdf>) for definitions of what constitutes academic dishonesty. If you have questions, please come to talk with me before engaging in behavior that could be construed as academic dishonesty.

**Plagiarism:** Given the number of written assignments required for this course, it is very important that you understand what plagiarism is and do what is necessary to avoid engaging in it. *The use of any uncited sources, presenting someone else's words or ideas as your own, using falsified sources, or submitting someone else's work as your own and/or submitting work that is not original for this course this semester constitutes plagiarism. Further, improperly citing sources constitutes plagiarism.* Thus, for all written assignments, I expect you to cite your sources according to the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the American Psychological Association's (APA) Style Manual. More importantly, be very clear when you are quoting vs. paraphrasing sources. If you have questions please talk with me.

### TECHNOLOGY

Please turn off cell phones while present in class.

### PASS/NO PASS OPTION

If you have elected the pass/no pass option in this course, you must receive at least a grade of "C" in order to pass. A grade of "C" also is needed in order to count this course toward your major. If you are taking this course to fulfill the requirements for a Communication Studies major or minor, you must take the course for a grade.

### STATEMENT ON SPECIAL NEEDS ACCOMMODATION

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to participate fully in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, (402) 472-3787 voice or TTY.

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# COMM 371:

## Communication in Conflict and Negotiation

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### Course Syllabus Spring 2016

#### ASSIGNMENTS AND EXAMS:

Your final grade will be determined based on your performance on the following. You are expected to read all assignment descriptions, grade rubrics, and pay attention to your in-class instructions for all assignments. *Each assignment is an assessment of your mastery of and ability to connect key ideas and concepts presented in class via the textbook, other assigned readings, lectures, and in-class discussions as directed in the assignment description.* You are encouraged to work with me to clarify questions prior to completing your work. Full details for each assignment will be posted on Blackboard. You are expected to do your best work on each test and assignment.

#### **EXAM** (2 @ 100 points each)

One exam will be administered in this course. The exam will test your comprehension of the vocabulary of a communication approach to conflict as well as your ability to apply communication theory and concepts to conflict cases and interactions.

#### **CONFLICT JOURNAL PAPERS** (Journal 1=60, Journal 2=100, Total 160 points)

One objective of this course is to increase your self-awareness of your own approach to conflict and to be able to apply the theoretical approaches that you are learning in this class to improve that approach across personal, professional, and group conflict situations. Thus, you will be asked to write two conflict journal papers aimed at self-reflection and application of course concepts and theories to your own experiences with conflict. Details to follow.

#### **READY, SET, RESEARCH!** (100 points)

Another objective of this course is to familiarize you with communication theory and research centered on conflict interaction. To that end, in addition to the assigned articles, you will be asked to identify 2 research studies centered on conflict interaction in one key context that we are studying this semester and summarize them. This will include a summary of the primary argument(s) the author(s) are advancing, the theoretical orientation and research method used in the inquiry, the research questions explored, the findings, and the limitations of the research project. You will include an analysis of connections between key concepts and ideas from class and these articles as well as an articulation of the utility of each article in informing your final team project.

#### **CONFLICT CASE ANALYSIS PAPER** (100 points)

Working in small project groups you will be asked to produce an in-depth analysis of a conflict case that is of interest to you. This will involve identifying a conflict in the news and analyzing it using a synthesis of key course concepts to demonstrate your developing expertise in conflict interaction. Details to follow.

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# COMM 371: Communication in Conflict and Negotiation

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## Course Syllabus Spring 2016

### Grading Criteria for all Written Assignments

There are a variety of writing assignments in this course, but they all generally involve applying the ideas you are learning about to an actual conflict; either a conflict you have been involved in or observed, or a larger scale conflict of interest to you. All of these assignments provide practice working with the language of communication and conflict as you connect the ideas being learned in class to real life. Your work on these assignments also lets me know how well you are understanding the course materials. In addition to assessing how well a written assignment meets key requirements, when grading written assignments, I generally look for four things in addition to the criteria specified in the assignment description:

1. Does the paper illustrate a good understanding of key concepts and ideas?
2. Does the paper demonstrate an ability to synthesize key ideas and concepts in ways that enable an in depth, nuanced understanding of the content area?
3. Does the paper demonstrate a developing expertise in the content area?
4. Is the paper reasonably well written? Are ideas clearly presented? Is the paper relatively free of typos and grammatical errors?

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### Total Points and Final Grades

It is possible to earn a total of 480 points in this class. You can use the following to keep track of your points:

Exam 1	_____	(100 points)
Exam 2	_____	(100 points)
Ready, Set, Research!	_____	(100)
Conflict Case Analysis-Team Paper	_____	(100)
Conflict Journal Entry 1	_____	(60)
Conflict Journal Entry 2	_____	(100)
<b>TOTAL</b>	_____	<b>(560)</b>

Here is the grading scale for the course:

<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Minimum Points</u>	<u>Grade</u>
98-100%	549	A+
93-97	521	A
90-92	504	A-
87-89	488	B+

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**COMM 371:**  
**Communication in Conflict and Negotiation**

---



Course Syllabus Spring 2016

83-86	465	B
80-82	448	B-
77-79	432	C+
73-76	409	C
70-72	392	C-
67-69	376	D+
63-66	353	D
60-62	336	D-
less than 60	335 or less	F

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

Date	Course Content	Assignments/Readings Due
Tuesday 1/12	Orientation to Course	<b>Student Self-Assessment</b>
Thursday 1/14	Defining Communication	Introduction pp. 1-13
Tuesday 1/19	Communication and Conflict	Chapter 1 pp. 13-23
Thursday 1/21	Communication and Conflict	Chapter 1 pp. 23-39 <b>Conflict Journal 1 Due</b>
Tuesday 1/26	Inner Experience of Conflict	Chapter 2 pp. 40-52
Thursday 1/28	Inner Experience of Conflict	Chapter 2 pp. 53-73
Tuesday 2/2	Conflict Interaction	Chapter 3 pp. 74-88
Thursday 2/4	Conflict Interaction	Chapter 3 pp. 89-107
Tuesday 2/9	Conflict Styles and Strategic Interaction	Chapter 4 pp. 108-122
Thursday 2/11	Conflict Styles and Strategic Interaction	Chapter 4 pp. 123-138
Tuesday 2/16	Power and Conflict	Chapter 5 pp. 139-154
Thursday 2/18	Power and Conflict	Chapter 5 pp. 154-175
Tuesday 2/23	Exam 1 Review	
Thursday 2/25	<b>EXAM 1</b>	
Tuesday 3/1	Face Saving	Chapter 6 pp. 176-190

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**COMM 371:**  
**Communication in Conflict and Negotiation**

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Course Syllabus Spring 2016

Thursday 3/3	Face Saving	Chapter 6 pp. 190-206
Tuesday 3/8	Context of Conflict Interaction	Chapter 7 pp. 207-228
Thursday 3/10	Research in Action: Interpersonal Conflict	Readings will be posted
Tuesday 3/15	Research in Action: Family Conflict	Reading will be posted
Thursday 3/17	Research in Action: Organizational Conflict	Readings will be posted <b>Conflict Journal 2 Due</b>
Tuesday 3/22	<i>Spring Break!</i>	
Thursday 3/24	<i>Spring Break!</i>	
Tuesday 3/29	Research in Action: Intergroup Conflict	Readings will be posted
Thursday 3/31	Managing Conflict	Chapter 8 p. 229-241
Tuesday 4/5	Managing Conflict	Chapter 8 pp. 241-252 <b>Ready, Set, Research! Due</b>
Thursday 4/7	Third Party Intervention	Chapter 9 pp. 253-276
Tuesday 4/12	Third Party Intervention	Chapter 9 pp. 276-287
Thursday 4/14	<i>NO CLASS- Kentucky Health Conference</i>	
Tuesday 4/19	Exam 2 Review	<b>Student Self-Assessment</b>
Thursday 4/21	<b>EXAM 2</b>	
Tuesday 4/26	<b>Final Paper Presentations</b>	<b>Final Papers Due</b>
Thursday 4/28	<b>Final Paper Presentations</b>	
Wednesday 5/4 (Finals Week)		

*Note: Schedule is tentative and subject to change as determined by the instructor.*