

**University of Massachusetts Boston  
Graduate Program in Dispute Resolution**

**Conflict, Organizations, and Systems**

DisRes 625, Fall 1997  
Monday, 7:00pm - 9:30pm

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**Course objectives**

Conflict is ubiquitous in organizations. The challenge is not to eliminate organizational conflict, but to recognize and manage it so that the energy it generates promotes positive organizational change. This course examines critical issues in organizational conflict and the diagnosis, design, implementation, and evaluation of dispute resolution systems in organizations. The course is designed to deepen students' understanding of open and hidden organizational conflict and the formal and informal dispute resolutions systems that address and obscure these conflicts. The course considers organizational conflicts that occur in a variety of settings, including formal, voluntary, and community organizations. Class sessions focus on the emergence, manifestation, and resolution of disputes, raising questions, refining definitions, surfacing assumptions, and proposing theory and integrative models. To enable students to utilize their knowledge in organizations, the course includes skill development in research, writing, collaborative work, and informal and formal presentations.

**Text** Ury, W., Brett, J.M., & Goldberg, S.B. (1993). Getting disputes resolved: Designing systems to cut the costs of conflict. Cambridge, MA: The Program on negotiation at Harvard Law School. ("UBG")

**Course requirements**

Class attendance is required.

Participation is an important part of this discussion-oriented course. Familiarly with the assigned readings will enable you to actively contribute to class discussions. Class participation includes a variety of course activities, including peer feedback and class presentations. (20%)

Written assignments. Type (no smaller than 12 characters/inch), double space, and use APA format style for headings, bibliography, and citations. The APA style guide is available in the reference section at most libraries, including UMB Healy Library:

*Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (4th ed.). (1994).  
Washington DC: American Psychological Association.

Your papers should have a clear organization and writing style, and they should integrate your own analyses and thinking with relevant work in the field. Midterm and final papers are graded on 5 elements: clarity, organization, scholarship, ideas/insight/creativity, and relevance to the course. Graded: A (excellent), B (adequate, competent, good), C (minimally passing), U (unsatisfactory), 0 (missing). Assigned written work includes occasional exercises (5%).

Conflict description. Bring a 1-2 page description of an organizational conflict to Class 2. Chose a conflict you know quite well as a disputant, as a 3<sup>rd</sup> party, or as an observer. This conflict can become part of your log. Your description should conceal the identity of the organization or individuals so that the case can be utilized in class without compromising privacy.

Reading log. The reading log records your thoughts, reactions, and experiences relevant to each week's readings. The log has a number of important functions: (1) it engages you in a "dialogue" with authors in the field; (2) it clarifies your thinking for class discussions; (3) it highlights elements you see as fundamental in effective dispute system design; (4) it maintains a running record of your perspectives and concerns that can help you identify to pursue in a Masters Project and in your professional work; (5) it is an opportunity to communicate with the instructor about specific interests, puzzles, and questions; and (6) it is an opportunity to write in a relatively unstructured and relaxed way, without any required style, in your own "voice." The reading log should be typed and double-spaced. Begin each entry with a complete citation (in APA format) of any material you discuss so that you can identify these sources later. I will collect and read your logs weekly. Your log should be one page and no longer than two. Graded: + (adequate, appropriate, ample), (perfunctory, paltry), L (late), and 0 (missing). (20%)

Midterm project: Research presentation and report (25%). Working with a classmate in teams of two, study an organizational dispute resolution system in any setting you choose. The organization can be a formal business organization, a community or voluntary organization, a religious organization, etc. You and a classmate will each conduct one interview to study the organizational dispute system. The interviews should be conducted with: (1) a dispute system designer or implementer and (2) a disputant who has utilized the system.

As a team, make an 10-minute class presentation in class. Use 8 x 11" transparencies and handouts to facilitate your presentation. Your report can describe the system, the purposes for which it was created, its design, how it is implemented and evaluated, and its strengths and drawbacks. Graded: +, , L, 0.

In a jointly-authored 5-page midterm paper, describe and critique the system. Use course readings as references where appropriate. Graded: A, B, C, U, 0.

Final project: Model of an organizational dispute resolution system paper and report (30%). Your final project proposes a model of dispute system. Your model will identify key factors and their interrelationships in successful of dispute resolution systems. You can design a specific kind of dispute system or focus on a specific organizational context. Your model will evolve from elements you identify as important as the result of your readings and observations throughout the course (including both course and outside readings), class discussions, your reading log, and your midterm project.. Maximum length: 7 pages, exclusive of bibliography, tables, figures, appendices. Due in duplicate Week 12 (12/1). Graded: A, B., C, U, 0. Your paper will serve as the basis of a brief presentation to the class. Graded: +, , L, O.

## **Topics and Readings**

### **1) 9/8 Introduction**

### **2) 9/15 Organizational conflict**

Kolb, D. M., & Putnam, L. L. (1992). The multiple faces of conflict in organizations. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 13, 311-324.

Pondy, L. R. (1992). Reflections on organizational conflict. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 13, 257-262.

Pondy, L. R. (1967). Organizational conflict: Concepts and models. Administrative Science Quarterly, 12(2), 296-320.

### **3) 9/22 Hidden conflict**

Donnellon, A., & Kolb, D. M. (1994). Constructive for whom? The fate of diversity disputes in organizations. Journal of Social Issues, 50(1), 139-155.

D. M. Kolb & J. M. Bartunek (Eds.). (1992). Hidden conflict in organizations. Newbury Park: CA: Sage Publications.

4) 9/29 **Organizational images and conflict**

Morgan, G. (1996). Images of organization (2nd ed.). Newbury Park: CA: Sage Publications.

UBG, Chap. 1

5) 10/6 **Diagnosing existing dispute resolution systems**

UBG, Ch. 2 (Chap. 5, optional)

Sander F. E. A., & Goldberg, S. B. (1994). Fitting the forum to the fuss: A user-friendly guide to selecting an ADR procedure. Negotiation Journal, 10(1), 49-68.

[Columbus Day, October 13, 1997]

6) 10/20 **Designing effective dispute resolution systems**

UBG, Ch. 3 (Chap. 6, optional)

Murray, J.S. (1989). Designing a disputing system for Central City and its schools. Negotiation Journal, 5(4), 365-372.

Ury, W. L. (1995). Conflict resolution among the bushmen: Lessons in dispute systems design. Negotiation Journal, 11(4), 379-389.

7) 10/27 **Making dispute resolution systems work**

UBG: Ch. 4, (Ch. 7, optional)

Rowe, M. (1995). Options, functions, skills: What an organizational ombudsman might want to know. Negotiation Journal, 11(2), 103-114.

8) 11/3 **Models of organizational conflict**

Thomas, K. W. (1992). Conflict and conflict management: Reflections and update. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 13, 265-274.

Thomas, K. W., (1993). Conflict and processes in organizations. In M. D. Dunnette (Ed.). Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology. New York: Wiley. *Chapter 10*

9) 11/10 **Organizational culture and context**

Schein, E. (1992). Organizational culture and leadership, 2nd ed., San Francisco: Jossey Bass. (Chaps. 1-3)

10) 11/17 **Power arrangements and dispute resolution systems**

Murray, J. S. (1990). Dispute systems design, power, and prevention. Negotiation Journal, 6(2), 105-108.

Goldberg, S., & Brett, J.M. (1991). Getting, spending--and losing--power in dispute systems design. Negotiation Journal, 7(2), 119-129.

11) 11/24 **Organizational justice**

Sheppard, B. H., Lewicki, R. J., & Minton, J. W. (1992). Organizational justice: The search for fairness in the workplace. New York: Lexington Books. *Chapter 5: Employee voice systems: An illustrative example of procedural justice, pp. 139-163.*

12) 12/1 **Private vs. public spheres**

Rowe, M. P. (1990). Helping people help themselves: An ADR option for interpersonal conflict. Negotiation Journal, 6, 239-247.

Schneider, A. K. (1994). Effective responses to offensive comments. Negotiation Journal, 10, 107-115.

13) 12/8 **Intervention and change**

Kanter, R. M., Stein, B.A., and Jick, T.,D, (1992). The challenge of organizational change: How companies experience it and leaders guide it. New York: The Free Press. *Chapter 10: The challenges of execution: Roles and tasks in the change process.*