

Negotiation and Conflict Resolution in Organizations

GBUS 873 Fall 2021
Updated July 26, 2021

Please note, this is an updated syllabus as of July 26th and is based on the best available information at this time. If the syllabus changes significantly between this date and the start of the course, a note to this effect will be posted on UR Courses along with the revised syllabus.

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Office hours: There are no in-person office hours for the foreseeable future. Please email to set a specific time to meet virtually if you would like to discuss your personal progress in the course; these discussions will be held on Zoom. Ample opportunities for discussion through Zoom and UR Courses are built into the course delivery as well.

Course description and objective

GBUS 873 will further develop students' understanding the nature, origins, and management of conflict commonly found within and between organizations. The course identifies the processes for effective management of conflict in both unionized and non-unionized environments. Sources and types of conflict will be examined using group and individual settings as well as business to business and employer-employee examples. Negotiation, facilitation and mediation skills will be emphasized through classroom practice and individual work outside of class. Students will develop skills in negotiation, arbitration and mediation, the design of conflict resolution systems, the analysis of conflict and the recommendation of appropriate mechanisms to resolve conflict in a wide range of organization settings.

At the end of the course students should be able to:

- Understand theories and dimensions of conflict in organizations at the individual and group levels
- Apply conceptual frameworks to the diagnosis and assessment of organizational conflict
- Identify and implement appropriate intervention programs and strategies for a variety of conflict scenarios in organization settings
- Recommend the design of elements of a conflict management systems for organizations

The prerequisite knowledge for success in the course includes a good understanding of micro and macro theory of organization behaviour, as well as knowledge of the range and scope of human resource management practices and the role of unions in the contemporary workplace. If

students have any concerns about their level of preparation for the course, they are encouraged to speak with the instructor before the course work begins.

The course incorporates the theoretical, the technical, and the personal aspects of learning. Participants will explore the advances and insights provided by well developed theory and relevant research; they will reflect on their own experiences and observations of contemporary organizations; and they will explore and apply established professional approaches to managing conflict in a range of situations. The course will provide a rich experience for students willing to put in significant effort to understand and to develop professionally as effective managers in an increasingly complex business environment.

Resources

The set text for the course is:

Choices in Approaching Conflict: Understanding the practice of alternative dispute resolution, 2nd edition

by Charles Ewert, Gordon Barnard, Jennifer Laffier & Michael Maynard and published in 2019 by Edmond Publications. This text provides a basic overview of negotiation and mediation.

A variety of additional readings and other material will be assigned for each section of the course, and these will be available on the course website in the URCourses platform. Class exercises will also be posted on the course website; occasionally assignments and exercises may be arise in the process of completing course work, without prior posting on the website. There may be a small charge for some materials, including cases; the Levene office handles charges for these materials.

Please note: The syllabus indicates specific chapters assigned for specific parts of the course; I strongly recommend that you read through the book, chapters 1-12, before the start of the course, if at all possible.

Optional texts students may wish to consider, but which you are not required to purchase include:

Getting To Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving In by Roger Fisher and William Ury originally published in 1981, 1991 (with Bruce Patton in 3rd edition 2011)

This is the negotiation classic and is likely already on many of your bookshelves. It is a Penguin paperback and multiple copies are available through the campus libraries. I highly recommend you read this short book.

Becoming a Conflict Competent Leader: How You and Your Organization Can Manage Conflict Effectively. By Craig E. Runde and Tim A. Flanagan; published in 2007 by Jossey-Bass (This title is available through the Archer library as an ebook.)

You may also wish to subscribe to the Negotiation Insider, an e-newsletter of the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School. Visit their website for more information: www.pon.harvard.edu

The Student Success Centre provides a number of workshops and support tools for students to assist with writing, study, and student life skills. Please be sure to take advantage of these assists if you feel the need. More information is available on the University website.

Students with any special need that may have an impact on their performance and participation in the course should contact the Centre for Student Accessibility to make arrangements according to the university policy on accessibility. The Instructor needs to receive any related communication from the Centre at the start of term. Please see the University website for more information.

Class routine

Access to Zoom and UR Courses will be required for the schedule class sessions, including a camera and microphone. Students will also need access to Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat in order to prepare and submit assignments.

Students are expected to log in to the course website regularly and to stay up to date with readings and assignments as the course progresses. It is to your distinct advantage to do as much reading as possible before the course meeting dates, as we will move very quickly through a lot of material. The course is an evenly balanced theoretical/practical undertaking, and most of the practice takes place in class. If you have not prepared the readings and taken time to reflect on what you are learning in terms of the theory, you will find the class exercise difficult and of little value.

Every class requires students' active, engaged participation. Your diligent application of skills and knowledge gathered from your preparation (including your own experiences where these are relevant) to the topics at hand will result in success on each of the components of the course. Your professional conduct in the class will enhance not only your own learning experience but the experience of everyone sharing the space. A portion of your overall grade may reflect participation; effective participation may also factor into individual assignments throughout the course.

It is not possible to receive credit for activities and submissions held in classes you have missed. Likewise, given the compressed nature of the course and the need to provide timely feedback to students on assignments, late submissions will not be accepted. Uncompleted work will receive a grade of 0.

Academic integrity is a cornerstone of the course. Please familiarize yourself with the University Regulations on Academic Integrity and Academic Misconduct in the University Calendar. I take these regulations and the Faculty of Business Administration procedures surrounding lapses in academic integrity very seriously and rigorously follow up on all cases.

Course components:

Please note, all written course work is submitted online, through UR Courses

Assignment 1 due before class sessions – see UR Courses	10%
Assignment 2 due before class sessions – see UR Courses	15%
Conflict management Exercises and assignments	25%
Analysis of case and leading class discussion (group)	25%
Final Exam	25%

The first two assignments: Information is posted on UR Courses under the section “Preparation before course begins”

Assignment 1- submit on UR Courses

Please read chapters 1 and 2 of the text. Please check the UR Courses website for the supplemental course material and review the materials on conflict style posted there. Write no more than 1000 words responding to the assignment instructions on UR Courses.

Assignment 2– submit on UR Courses

Please read one of the readings as described on the course website under the section “Assignment 2” and write up to 1000 words to respond to the assignment instructions on UR Courses:

At the end of your paper you will pose one question based on the assignment, which we can use to generate discussion in class.

Conflict management exercises and assignments

Class exercises, which require preparation beforehand and which will require reflection and sometimes writing after class, form an important part of the course. There are several different exercises in the course which will permit each student to experience a variety of roles in conflict management; some of these will be graded. Your preparation, execution, and evaluation of each exercise will contribute to your learning. We will need to be patient with each other as the remote delivery format may be new to many of you, and each assignment is structured slightly differently for student participation and interaction. Students will be asked to prepare a brief written reflection on some of the exercises. Sometimes students will be given time in class to prepare these reflections. These reflections may be part of your preparation for the exercise or used as an assessment of the exercise after it is complete. Point values for these assignments will vary slightly, but in general each is worth approximately 12% of your grade. Some flexibility is necessary in planning due to the unusual circumstances we currently face.

The following are broad guidelines to keep in mind when preparing for and analyzing these experiential exercises; please be sure to check specific assignment instructions carefully when these are posted on the course website:

1. Can you explain the situation from your role’s point of view (observer, invested party)?
2. Can you explain any investigation/research/reading necessary to expand your understanding of the conflict?

3. Have you provided comment on the specific area of the course we are exploring at the moment and how it applies to the conflict in question?
4. Did you discuss how the outcome of this experience/exercise prepares you to face similar challenges, consolidates your knowledge, or poses new questions for you as a learner as well as a manager?

Case analysis and presentation in group

Students will be assigned to groups when class begins. Your group will be assigned one case to read, analyse, and prepare for class. In class you will lead a discussion of your analysis and engage with different points of view presented by other students. You are expected to read all the cases assigned for the course, and come prepared to contribute to discussion when your colleagues are leading the case analysis.

As a group, you will analyze the dimensions of the conflict in the case (i.e., type, sources and contributing factors of the conflict) and develop a conflict management approach and strategy to resolve the situation and to manage similar issues going forward in the organization i.e., recommend a durable solution.

Students will have 20 minutes on your assigned day of the class to present their analysis and recommendations. You should include in your presentation, as a minimum, a clear statement of the problem, a concise summary of the situation and relevant circumstances, a very focussed review of relevant literature, and a sound explanation of your recommendations for resolution and for ongoing conflict management in the organization. Please also pay attention to any implications that might arise out of your recommendations.

You are free to use any tools and devices you can imagine in order to create a meaningful learning experience in your presentation. You are not limited to a PowerPoint presentation – you can use video, even pre-record portions of the presentation ahead of time. You may also use live interactive technology in the class time and also make use of UR Courses to post and present material. An assignment submission space will be opened in UR Courses for you to post your material ahead of your scheduled presentation time.

There is a short written submission for this assignment, following the presentation in class. The written submission is worth 5 marks and the in class presentation and leading of the discussion is worth 20 marks.

Final Exam

A final exam will take the form of an essay and details will be posted on UR Courses after the last day of the course. This is an individual exam, and students are not allowed to discuss their work or the essay topic with any other students or other individuals. The exam will be due two weeks after it is posted online. More information about the format and content of the exam will be provided in the last class and will be available on UR Courses as well. Excellent essays will be considered for publication.

A note about course participation

Class participation is based on the degree to which your comments and insights enrich the learning experience of the class. Contribution marks for comments and insights are earned by:

- Making observations that integrate concepts and discussions.
- Citing relevant personal examples.
- Asking key questions that lead to revealing discussions.
- Engaging in devil's advocacy: disagreeing with the instructor and other students when the difference of opinion serves as both counterpoint and a way of exploring all sides of a concept, issue, or practice.
- Working with others to come to a common understanding of the topics –in and out of the classroom.
- Participating enthusiastically in classroom group activities and group discussions.
- Listening open-mindedly and responding to what others say.

To the extent that is possible, given the unusual circumstances we face this semester due to COVID-19, participation impact will be considered at the end of the course, based on the five days of classes. Participation can help a student's grade on a specific assignment to improve, however there is no stand-alone mark for participation, due to the unique nature of the course format this semester. The following is the guideline I use to assess participation:

Exceeds Expectations - may improve a grade in a piece of work where participation was required.

Students in this category provide leadership in and out of the classroom and work toward enhancing the interpersonal dynamics of the class. Rather than dominating the setting, they act as facilitators, bringing others into the discussion.

Meets Expectations - may help to ensure a pass in an assignment where participation was required.

Students show an active interest in class activities and participate actively in classroom discussions; regularly make insightful comments which help others to understand the course material; act as positive group role models, etc.

Does not Meet Expectations – no consideration for grade improvement

Students attend class regularly (log in) but only occasionally contribute to the classroom experience.

OR

Students fail to contribute in any of the ways noted above.

Writing expectations

Written submissions must be double spaced and use Times New Roman 12 point font. Generally speaking, 20% of all assignment grades will be based on quality of writing (structure, grammar,

logical flow, completeness of arguments, appropriate references and citations) and 80% will be based on the content, analysis and application of course concepts. Please indicate your student number on all submissions.

Draft timetable (Update July 26th, 2021 – please see UR Courses for final version of course sessions)

	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Session 5
8:30 – 10:00	Introduction Recognizing conflict Groups and current event	Stakeholder theory and Power Applying the ADR continuum	Mediation overview and exercise preparation	Arbitration, And exercise preparation	Course synthesis and review
10:00 – 10:15	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
10:15 – 11:45	Theories of conflict The ADR continuum Exercise	Negotiation exercise	Mediation exercise	Arbitration exercise	Case discussions
11:45 – 12:45	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
12:45 – 14:15	Diagnosing conflict Exercise	Exercise debrief 2 nd exercise	Exercise debrief Discussion of local conflict	Debrief, Cross cultural issues in conflict management	Case discussions
14:15- 14:30	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
14:30 – 16:30	Reading discussion Group project work	Microskills discussion Group project work	Reading discussion Group project work	Ombuds & system design Group project work	Exam preparation