

Hamline University School of Law • Dispute Resolution Institute

Theories of Conflict  
Syllabus, J-term 2012

*“There is nothing so practical as a good theory.” – Kurt Lewin*

<b>Professor</b>	Dr. Timothy Hedeem, tkhedeem@yahoo.com, 770-423-6879
<b>Class meetings</b>	January 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup> , and 6 <sup>th</sup> , 9:00am – 4:30pm
<b>Course description</b>	This interdisciplinary course introduces students to important theoretical perspectives on our understanding of conflict and conflict response. Specifically, students explore the biological/ physiological, psychodynamic, social psychological, communication and sociological/political perspectives on conflict by reading and discussing major theoretical works within each perspective. Emphasis is on comparing and distinguishing key dimensions of these theories, such as the nature and sources of conflict, conflict escalation, conflict response, and the nature of the third party role. Classes follow an interactive format. Using case studies, exercises, and group discussion to draw upon personal experiences, including those involving race and social identity, the course explores the usefulness of each perspective to understanding the experience of conflict.
<b>Course texts</b>	1. Pruitt and Kim (“PK”), <i>Social Conflict: Escalation, Stalemate, and Settlement</i> (3/e) 2. Course reader  <i>Please note that readings and class meetings are designed to be complementary. Readings will inform class presentations and discussions, in-class material and exercises will expand upon readings.</i>
<b>Grading, Basis of Evaluation</b>	The grade for this course will be based on participation (10%) and two papers (35% for the “memo to self,” 55% for advisory memo).
<b><u>Preparation, participation</u></b>	Preparation, attendance and participation are key to learning in any context, especially in courses designed around in-class exercises and discussion. Attendance is required at all class meetings.
<b><u>“Memo to self”</u></b>	This assignment requires you to revisit and critique a conflict in which you were a primary party (an interpersonal, “micro” level conflict). The memo will consist of three distinct portions, a “background brief,” an “analysis”, and “recommendations”. The brief will offer an overview of the dispute—identifying the parties, the issues, the broader context—in <i>no more than 400 words</i> . The analysis will employ relevant theories and concepts from class meetings and readings to comprehend the conflict through multiple ‘lenses’. You are encouraged to be thoughtful and judicious in your selection of “relevant theories and concepts”—include at least three and no more than five. The analysis should be <i>between 1,400 and 1,800 words</i> . The recommendations (to yourself) should be short and direct, intended to improve your handling of any similar conflicts in the future; this portion should be <i>no more than 250 words</i> . Thus the paper will be between <u>1,800 and 2,200 words</u> (show word count at end of each section) and should be presented double-spaced. Due: January 20 <sup>th</sup> .

### Advisory memo

In a paper of 2,500-3,000 words, assume the role of an advisor to a party in a prominent large-scale/“macro” dispute. Your paper will integrate course materials, research (at least eight sources exclusive of assigned readings), and counsel in a tone understandable to a high-school senior. Open with an overview of the conflict—identifying the parties, the issues, the broader context—in *no more than 400 words*. Identify three theories or concepts greatly relevant to the dispute, employing each as a heading for a distinct section of the paper. Close each section with a recommendation grounded in, or supported by, conflict theories. The goal is to demonstrate your command of conflict theories through application; that is, the paper will reflect your critical thinking through the selection of case, choice of theories, and presentation of relevant research (at least eight sources exclusive of assigned readings) concerning both the case and theories. Students may wish to consult with the professor to determine the ‘fit’ of their topic with the assignment, to ensure adequate treatment in terms of depth and breadth. Due: January 20<sup>th</sup>.

### Scary new rule

AR-105(B)(8): A student who does not take a scheduled examination will receive a grade of "F" for that examination, unless properly excused. In addition, any student who does not turn in a required paper on the scheduled date will receive a grade of "F" for that paper, unless properly excused. Failure to meet any course requirement can be the basis for a final grade of "F" in the class, unless properly excused.

### Course agenda

Read as many of the readings as you can, preferably in the order they appear here

#### Tuesday, Jan 3<sup>rd</sup>

##### **Course overview, conflict overview, strategy (five readings)**

PK, Ch.1: Overview

PK, Ch.2: Nature and Sources

PK, Ch.3: Strategic Choice

Deutsch, “Justice and Conflict,” pp.43-68 of *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution* (2/e), Jossey-Bass, 2006 (in reader)

Folger, Poole, and Stutman, “Theories of Conflict Interaction,” pp.64-103, Ch. 3 of *Working Through Conflict* (5/e), Addison Wesley Longman, 2005 (in reader)

#### Weds., Jan 4<sup>th</sup>

##### **Biology, power, contention (three readings)**

PK, Ch.4: Contentious Tactics

Opatow, “Aggression and Violence,” pp.509-532 of *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution* (2/e), Jossey-Bass, 2006 (in reader)

Wilmot and Hocker, “Power: The Structure of Conflict,” pp.95-128, Ch. 4 of *Interpersonal Conflict* (7/e), McGraw Hill, 2007 (in reader)

#### Thurs., Jan. 5<sup>th</sup>

##### **Escalation, culture (four readings)**

PK, Ch.5: Escalation

PK, Ch.6: Structural Change

PK, Ch.8: Persistence of Escalation

Kimmel, “Culture and Conflict,” pp.625-648 of *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution* (2/e), Jossey-Bass, 2006 (reader)

#### Fri., Jan. 6<sup>th</sup>

##### **Identity and groups, stalemate, de-escalation (four readings)**

PK, Ch.9: Stalemate and De-escalation

PK, Ch.10: Problem-solving

Petonito, “Racial Discourse and Enemy Construction,” pp.19-40, Ch. 2, *and*

Feminia, “Emotional Actor: Foreign Policy in the Falkland/Malvinas War,” pp.41-65, Ch.3 of *Social Conflicts and Collective Identities*, 2000 (reader)