

PPA 600 -1 (20231)

DISPUTE SYSTEMS DESIGN

Instructor: Christina Sickles Merchant

Professor of Practice in Collaborative Governance, Conflict Resolution, and Negotiation

2007 Meeting Times and Places:

Tuesday, August 28 (Maxwell 108) 8 am-10:45 am;

Tuesday, September 4 (Maxwell 108) 8 am -10:45 am;

Tuesday, September 11 (Shine Student Center) 8 am-1:45 pm; and

Tuesday, September 18 (Maxwell 108) 8 am-10:45 am

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Dispute Systems Design

Possession of frameworks for understanding and managing conflict in organizations is a critical advantage for managers. This course will introduce participants to a systemic view of conflict intervention strategies and will provide them with measurement techniques to assess the direct and indirect costs of current levels of conflict in any organizational system. Participants will audit a system of choice and design an appropriate strategy for lowering costs and increasing satisfaction by using diverse conflict management techniques. A final session will review the assessment and design experience and explore issues of implementation and achieving sustainable change in how conflict is handled within the organization.

Course Expectations:

- 1) To attend *all* in-class sessions;
- 2) To complete all assigned readings before *third* class session at Shine Student Center;
- 3) To share responsibility for course success through active involvement;
- 4) To complete assignments *by deadlines*; and
- 5) To be open to feedback and learning.

Required Reading:

Main text:

Costantino, Cathy A. and Merchant, Christina Sickles. *Designing Conflict Management Systems: A Guide to Creating Productive and Healthy Organizations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, Inc., 1996. Please complete reading of this text before our third class session at the Shine Student Center.

Powerpoint Slides will be reproduced for each session.

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Additional brief articles will be made available.

Requirements: (Each of the following counts as 1/3 of your grade for this course)

- A. **Regular attendance and active participation.** This class will run as an experiential workshop so that your active participation is essential. There is a great deal of material to cover and the knowledge and skills build upon one another. For all of these reasons, it is essential that you attend and actively participate in class. The details of the six-hour active audit and design session scheduled as the third class will be explained in class.
- B. **Practicum Project Journal.** This journal will capture your earliest thinking about systemic conflict management. It will have several sections and include the following:
- 1) **Your learning goals:** What skills and competencies do you want to acquire and for what purpose? Why are these important to you? At the end of the course, you will revisit these learning goals and comment on your progress to date, and your plans to continue moving forward.
 - 2) **Class reactions:.** Thoughts and feelings about material and exercises presented in class. What specifically enhanced your learning? What was a barrier to learning? What might you or the Instructor do differently to maximize learning? Make sure that you include **“most significant learnings”** for each class.
 - 3) **Reading Reactions:** Notes, thoughts, feelings about reading assignments. What excites you, frustrates you, confuses you, or confirms or goes against some class learnings or your personal experience? (Please include page numbers of specific ideas in the reading to which you are referring). Again, **“most significant learnings”** are needed in this section.
 - 4) **Practicum Application:** A written record of your inquiry into a system you are going to study in order to apply the material to for the Practicum on September 11th. Initial thoughts of
 - i. What captured your attention about the way that conflict is currently handled in this system;
 - ii. Who are the main stakeholders in the system and how might they be engaged to inquire into the need for change in how conflict is handled;
 - iii. What needs to be known in order to assess the current dispute resolution processes used in the system...and how will you find out what these processes require so that you can make that assessment;

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- iv. What ADR processes are you interested in introducing into the system and why; and
- v. What process will you follow to engage the system participants in conflict management design?

Your task in the journal is to be reflective and analytical. It is an opportunity for you to chart your own learning progress and to integrate some of the major concepts that are being presented. Journal entries should be concise and thoughtful rather than general in nature. Journals will be most helpful to you if they include ideas that are important to you, conclusions you have drawn, lessons to remember, questions that trouble you, and a synthesis of theory and practices. Your journal should help me evaluate the effectiveness of the material and presentation, as well as the depth, intensity and sincerity of your effort in the educational process. In order to receive an "A" for your journal, you will have to do outstanding work on each of the components of the journal.

Try to make journal entries promptly at the end of every class. Entries are best when they are fresh in your mind. *Journals will be turned in after the second class...and will be reviewed and turned around promptly with feedback. The final copy of your journal will be handed in a week after the last class.*

- A. **Final Assessment Paper.** This paper will provide a brief summary (no more than 5 double spaced pages) of your experience in examining dispute systems. It should answer such questions as:
- How did the Practicum Project advance your thinking about dispute systems design?
 - How has your thinking and awareness about conflict been affected by what you have learned?
 - What specific insights have you gained and what are your intentions regarding these insights?
 - What other applications have you made to issues of conflict costs and resolution performance in organizations that you are studying or a part of?
 - What do you need to know more about?
 - What have you found to be a struggle?