

**SKILLFUL GROUP DEVELOPMENT: FACILITATION AND CONFLICT
MANAGEMENT FOR HIGH PERFORMANCE
PPA 730-M008 Class # 33808
Winter Intercession 2009**

Monday through Friday, January 5-9, 9 am to 3:30 pm

Saturday, January 10, 9 am to 3:30 pm

Friday, January 23, 1-3 pm Final Check-In

Maxwell Hall, Room 110

Christina Sickles Merchant

Professor of Practice, Department of Public Administration

Faculty Associate, Program on the Analysis and Resolution of Conflicts (PARC)

Maxwell School of Citizenship & Public Affairs

400C Eggers Hall, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY 13244

Email: cmerchant@att.net

Phone: (315) 443-8739

Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Description:

Whether one is dealing with workforce groups, interdepartmental committees, or stakeholder collaboration, it is critical to understand how to manage group issues in a facilitative mode to achieve strong collaboration, creative and lasting agreements, and the greatest commitment to follow through for results.

This intensive course focuses on skillful group development, fostering an understanding of how conflict emerges in groups and how facilitative skills can foster group development and effectiveness in the face of such differences. The course uses experiential exercises, case studies, a small group project, and readings to demonstrate both the theories of group development and of facilitative interventions to reconcile differences. The special focus is on the facilitator as manager/leader rather than as an external consultant.

This course is primarily skills-oriented, and as such, students will be expected to apply the analytical framework and the techniques learned to “live” situations in the large and small groups formed within the class, always using the class itself as a laboratory for such learning. It is recognized as well that the degree to which there is ease with facilitation, conflict and the ability to master group interaction techniques for “in the moment” application may depend on an individual’s style, personal history, and culture. The expectation is that all course participants will engage fully with the course concepts and techniques and seek to move from their current level of awareness, control and mastery of group involvement and development to a new and higher performance level.

Required Readings:

Purchase and pick up Course Reader at the Copy Center in Marshall Square Mall, 315-472-0546

Additional materials may be distributed in class or posted to my website at:

<http://faculty.maxwell.syr.edu/csmercha/PPA%20730%20M008.htm>

Optional

Schwarz, Roger M. *The Skilled Facilitator*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2002.

Schein, Edward. *Process Consultation Revisited*. Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1999.

Grading and Course Assignments

This is an intensive one week course! Therefore, students need to be prepared for learning in a full immersion environment. All students are responsible for keeping up with class requirements, including readings, daily role selection and preparation for class functioning, small group project preparation and performance, and submission of assignments in a timely manner. Essentially, you will be devoting all of your waking hours during the week of January 5-10, 2009, to the skillful engagement, development, and reflection on stages of group functioning.

The readings and assignments are designed to help students: 1) build a foundation of knowledge and understanding of group development theory and practice, 2) assess group development stages, 3) acquire facilitative and conflict management practices that assist groups to develop, 4) grow their third-party (substantively detached) awareness and perspective, and 4) develop design capability to create appropriate interventions which address ongoing group challenges.

33% of Grade → Class Preparation and Participation: Critical assessment of the readings and full participation in class discussions and application sessions are major portions of class activity. Careful preparation is essential. You are expected to arrive on-time and participate fully in all class sessions. Attendance at all classes is mandatory.

Daily reflection sheets will be filled out each day, turned in to the Instructor, and then returned the following day so that feedback about the following can be accessed “in the moment” throughout the week:

- 1) **Your learning goals:** What skills and competencies do you want to acquire and for what purpose? Why are these important to you? How will you know that you have attained competency?
- 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? What more do you need to know?
- 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?
- 4) **Learning and Application Group Experiences:** In regard to the class-long project in your small group, it will be particularly important to reflect each day on what is happening in re: process, task performance, individual behavior, group behavior and overall communication/conflict management experimentation. Note the thoughts, feelings and reactions that you are having in your small group as you prepare for the presentation. Is it a group or interpersonal phenomenon? Why do you think you are having this reaction? What have you attempted to do to address it? It will be particularly important to reflect each day on what is happening in re: process, task performance, individual behavior, group behavior and overall communication/conflict management experimentation. You will rely on these observations to grade yourself and your colleagues in your group at task end on Friday.

33% of Grade → Learning and Application Group Project: You are required to become a member of a small (3-5 individuals) learning group within the class as a whole. The small groups will have time allocated to them during most classes and this time will be an opportunity to: 1) develop a group project which will be delivered in class; 2) discuss readings

and lectures to clarify understanding and share insights; and 3) establish a secondary group experience during the week – generating additional feedback on individual behavior in groups. It is expected that these groups may from time to time experience conflict themselves. At such times, it is always a choice for the group to ask for assistance from the professor to intervene to assist group functioning and to illustrate in a “here and now” fashion what can be done to resolve differences voluntarily.

33% of Grade → Research Paper:

The final research paper is an opportunity to select either:

- A process or tool for facilitation of skillful group development; OR
- An aspect of conflict management related to group development that you want to probe; OR
- A topic from group development that you want to understand more deeply and apply to your professional situation.

For example, you might want to explore the challenges of “contracting” for your paper.

Prepare a 15-page paper that references the course reader plus a minimum of five additional resources (articles are fine). The paper should discuss the process, aspect or topic itself, its importance, and a personal discussion/case study of how you have used the process effectively, could have used it, or might use it in the future. In regard to conflict management and group development topics, please develop the discussion beyond simply deeper knowledge to an assessment of how such information helps to “frame” what one is experiencing with suggestions for interventions or processes that would naturally follow the ability to name what a group seems to be experiencing. Please use EXPLICIT references and proofread the paper carefully. The paper will be graded on the quality of discussion, use of references to tie theory to application, and original thinking. The paper due date is January 30th, 2009. Assignments will be marked down one letter grade for each day late (i.e., one day late and your assignment goes from A- to a B+).

Course Policies

- ✓ ***Civility and Respect:*** Please treat everyone in this class with respect, sensitivity, and openness to new and different ideas. We are all different. Be tolerant and use these differences as learning opportunities. Distractive practices, such as tardy entrances, leaving

the room while class is in session, ringing cell phones, cell phone conversations, excessive conversation with other students, and conducting activities unrelated to class discussions are not acceptable and will be detrimental to your participation grade.

- ✓ **Academic Integrity:** The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments, as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. For more information and the complete policy, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>

I take this extremely seriously. Plagiarism, cheating, assisting others to cheat, and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will result in a grade of "F" for the course. The submission of any work by a student is taken as a guarantee that the thoughts and expressions in it are the student's own except when properly credited to another. It is your responsibility to understand what plagiarism is and how to correctly reference and cite documents and other peoples' arguments. Information about what constitutes plagiarism and how to make references and citations in papers can be found at <http://www.plagiarism.org/>. In addition, you may find assistance in any of the standard references on writing, such as *The Elements of Style*, as well as at the S.U. Writing Center (<http://wrt.syr.edu/>).

- ✓ **Academic Accommodations:** Students who may need academic accommodations due to a disability are encouraged to discuss their needs with the instructor at the beginning of the semester. In order to obtain authorized accommodations, students should be registered with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Avenue, Room 309, 315-443-4498 and have an updated accommodation letter for the instructor. Accommodations and related support services such as exam administration are not provided retroactively and must be requested in advance." For more information about services and policy, visit the Office of Disability Services (<http://disabilityservices.syr.edu/>).
- ✓ **Consultation and Assistance:** I am available to help you achieve the learning objectives for this course. When you need assistance or wish to discuss some element of the course or materials, or if other issues are interfering with your success in this course, please contact me immediately. Please do not wait until the last moment.

Course Schedule of Topics and Readings – Winter 2009

Day 1 (Monday, January 5, 2009)

Intro and expectations

Experiences with groups, positive and negative...and need for skillful group development

Some places to look for trouble in group functioning...Examine various models of group effectiveness

Defining facilitation roles, including leader as facilitator

Facilitator tasks, processes and “attitudes”

Formation of Learning and Application Groups

Reading: Day 1 and Day 2 Readings in Course Reader + handouts for preparation

Day 2 (Tuesday, January 6, 2009)

Communication skills and tools: Communication Wheel

Video: From No to Yes

Individual styles and differences

Strategies for assessing and managing differences

Reading: Day 3 and Day 4 Readings in Course Reader + handouts for preparation

Day 3 (Wednesday, January 7, 2009)

Process design and engagement

Looking at what drives you as a process designer: core values and “theories in action”

Establishing ground rules

Reading: Day 5 Readings in Course Reader+ handouts for preparation

Day 4 (Thursday, January 8, 2009)

Understanding and intervening in overt group behaviors

Cycle of Stages of Group Development

Typical Meeting process and structures: POAG

Tools that assist in managing conflict and managing data

“Contracting” with group leaders and participants as a facilitative leader

Reading: Day 6 readings in Course Reader + handouts for preparation

Day 5 (Friday, January 9, 2009)

Presentation and debriefing of major group exercise

Understanding and intervening in covert individual and group behaviors

Tools for group performance

Group problems: assessment and intervention tools

Reading: Day 7 readings in Course Reader

Day 6 (Saturday, January 10, 2009)

Strategic planning and visioning processes

Process improvement initiatives

Measurement of group effectiveness

Evaluation, closure and celebration

January 23rd, 2009: 1 pm – 3 pm, location to be announced

Application discussion:

Implementation of skillful group development principles and practices

January 30th, 2009: Research paper due by 5 pm via electronic submission to

cmerchant@att.net