

Teachers College, Columbia University
ORLJ 4819.001 Syllabus

Transforming Conflict From Within: Leadership Interventions in Long-term Conflicts

Instructor: Jennifer Goldman-Wetzler, Ph.D.
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Schedule: Friday (4-8 pm), Saturday (9-5 pm) & Sunday (9-5 pm)

Office Hours: by appointment

Credits: 1 credit

Course Description and Objectives

This course engages students as leaders in their own and others' difficult conflicts. Difficult conflicts are defined as those that are persistent and destructive despite repeated attempts at resolution (Kriesberg, 2005). This course treats difficult conflict as a complex phenomenon that requires a complex approach.

Students will be experientially introduced to the Optimal Outcomes Method, a set of practices designed to enable students to free themselves and others from even the most difficult conflicts. The practices include: mapping out complex conflict; accepting the Three Realities; harnessing challenging emotions; identifying ideal and shadow values; imagining Optimal Outcomes; choosing a Pattern Breaking Path; and testing your path.

Over the course of the weekend, students will: 1) explore the basic dynamics of long-term, difficult conflicts; 2) experience the Optimal Outcomes Method and apply it to difficult conflict; 3) design a Pattern Breaking Path; and 4) use the Optimal Outcomes Method and mindfulness to free themselves from difficult conflicts in their work and lives.

Students are strongly encouraged to envision themselves as leaders in their communities. These communities are defined very broadly. For example, a community may consist of members of one's extended family, a group of neighbors, co-workers in an organizational setting, or larger communities entrenched in difficult conflicts including international conflicts, racial conflicts, or labor-union conflicts. Students must be prepared to consider themselves leaders in a difficult conflict that is important to them, regardless of the actual proximity of the conflict to their current lives (i.e., students may choose to view themselves as leaders in the Middle East conflict, even if they don't live there, or as leaders in their own family conflict).

In addition to applying the Optimal Outcomes Method to difficult conflict, through mindfulness, we develop a clear and sustainable vision of what we seek for ourselves, our communities, and the world. This vision enables us as leaders to stay committed to the practices of the Optimal Outcomes Method even during periods of intense conflict, when we and others are at highest risk of being pulled into the cycle of conflict and distracted from our work.

In this course, mindfulness is developed and cultivated through diverse practices, including sitting, walking, guided meditation and yoga. Mindfulness practice enables students to examine the world around them *and* their own emotional landscape with greater honesty, clarity and acceptance, allowing both inner and outer transformation to take place.

Students will be introduced to the basics of mindfulness practice. Beginning and advanced mindfulness practitioners are welcome and encouraged.

References

Kreisberg, L. (2005). Nature, dynamics, and phases of intractability. In Crocker, C. A., Hampson, F. O. & Aall, P. (Eds.), *Grasping the nettle: Analyzing cases of intractable conflict*. Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press.

Course Grade Requirements:

1. **Journal** (35%): A 2-page journal entry in which you reflect on your learning from the course material and in-class exercises, focusing on areas of the course that: a) surprised you; b) enabled you to think about conflict, yourself and/or the world differently; c) were challenging for you; and d) were opportunities for growth for you (and possibly for the communities of which you are a part).

2. **Paper** (55%): A 5-page paper in which you apply course material to your chosen difficult conflict. The paper should contain: 1) **Background:** the history and current situation of the difficult conflict you have chosen; 2) **How the course material applies:** how the course material (i.e., the Optimal Outcomes Method practices; mindfulness) may be applied in the conflict situation; 3) **Pattern Breaking Path design:** a description of your planned Pattern Breaking Path; and 4) **Benefits and Challenges:** your view of the potential benefits and challenges of your Pattern Breaking Path.

3. **Class participation** (10%): Your active participation in this class is the key to its effectiveness. Therefore, a small percentage of your grade rests on both the quality and the quantity of your contributions in class. Your questions and comments in class should push the class conversation forward productively. You should also be courageously willing to speak, even if your idea seems unpopular or might be misunderstood. Thoughtful courage is valued here.

Required readings:

All readings are available for download on Canvas. There are only 4 required readings, each integral to the course. Please arrive each day having completed the required readings for that day. The optional readings are for those who would like to take a deeper dive into the material.

Course Outline and Schedule

Friday	Difficult Conflict, Pattern Breaking Paths & Mindfulness Difficult Conflict Assessment Introduction to the Optimal Outcomes Method
Saturday	Overview of the Optimal Outcomes Method In-depth Experience of each of the Practices
Sunday	In-depth Experience of the Final Practice Designing Pattern Breaking Paths

The paper and journal are due by email to jsg2019@tc.columbia.edu approximately two weeks after class ends.

Reading List and Schedule

Friday **Difficult Conflict, Pattern Breaking Paths & Mindfulness**
Difficult Conflict Assessment
Introduction to the Optimal Outcomes Method

Required reading:

Difficult Conflict and Pattern Breaking Paths:

Lederach, J. P. (2005). *The moral imagination: The art and soul of building peace*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 10: On Web Watching (pp. 101-112).

Mindfulness:

Kabat-Zinn, J. (1999). What is mindfulness? *Wherever you go, there you are*. NY: Hyperion, 3-28.

Optional reading:

Fisher, R., Ury, W. & Patton, B. (1991). *Getting to yes: Negotiating agreement without giving in*. New York: Penguin. Chapters 3 & 4 (pp. 40-80).

Coleman, P. T. (2006). Conflict, Complexity, and Change: A Meta-Framework for Addressing Protracted, Intractable Conflicts—III. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 12, 4, 325-348.

Saturday **Overview of the Optimal Outcomes Method**
In-depth Experience of each of the Practices

Required reading:

Acceptance:

Hanh, T. N. (1996). *Being Peace*. Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press. Ch. 5: Working for Peace (pp. 61-80).

Harnessing Emotions:

Hanh, T. N. (1996). *Being Peace*. Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press. Ch. 3: Feelings and Perceptions (pp. 31-43).

Optional reading:

Fisher, R. & Shapiro, D. (2005). *Beyond reason: Using emotions as you negotiate*. New York: Penguin. Chapters 1 & 2 (pp. 3-24).

Sunday **In-depth Experience of the Final Practice**
Designing Pattern Breaking Paths

Optional reading:

Pattern Breaking Paths in Action:

Gold, L. (2003). Mediation and the Culture of Healing. In Bowling, D. & Hoffman, D. (Eds.), *Bringing peace into the room: How the personal qualities of the mediator impact the process of conflict resolution*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

College Policies

1. **Accommodations** – The College will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students are encouraged to contact the Office of Access and Services for Individuals with Disabilities (OASID) for information about registration. You can reach OASID by email at oasid@tc.columbia.edu, stop by 163 Thorndike Hall or call 212-678-3689. Services are available only to students who have registered and submit appropriate documentation. As your instructor, I am happy to discuss specific needs with you as well. Please report any access related concerns about instructional material to OASID and to me as your instructor.

2. **Incomplete Grades** – For the full text of the Incomplete Grade policy please refer to [http://www.tc.columbia.edu/policylibrary/Incomplete Grades](http://www.tc.columbia.edu/policylibrary/Incomplete%20Grades)

3. **Student Responsibility for Monitoring TC email account** – Students are expected to monitor their TC email accounts. For the full text of the Student Responsibility for Monitoring TC email account please refer to [http://www.tc.columbia.edu/policylibrary/Student Responsibility for Monitoring TC Email Account](http://www.tc.columbia.edu/policylibrary/Student%20Responsibility%20for%20Monitoring%20TC%20Email%20Account)

4. **Religious Observance** – For the full text of the Religious Observance policy, please refer to <http://www.tc.columbia.edu/policylibrary/provost/religious-observance/>

5. **Sexual Harassment and Violence Reporting** – Teachers College is committed to maintaining a safe environment for students. Because of this commitment and because of federal and state regulations, we must advise you that if you tell any of your instructors about sexual harassment or gender-based misconduct involving a member of the campus community, your instructor is required to report this information to the Title IX Coordinator, Janice Robinson. She will treat this information as private, but will need to follow up with you and possibly look into the matter. The Ombuds officer for Gender-Based Misconduct is a confidential resource available for students, staff and faculty. “Gender-based misconduct” includes sexual assault, stalking, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, sexual exploitation, and gender-based harassment. For more information, see <http://www.tc.columbia.edu/titleix>

6. **Academic Integrity** -- Students who intentionally submit work either not their own or without clear attribution to the original source, fabricate data or other information, engage in cheating, or misrepresentation of academic records may be subject to charges. Sanctions may include dismissal from the college for violation of the TC principles of academic and professional integrity fundamental to the purpose of the College.