SYLLABUS: Practices of Conflict Management and Peacebuilding

PROFESSOR: Dr. Linda M. Johnston

1. **Course Title:**

   Practices of Conflict Management and Peacebuilding

2. **Credits:**

   2 credits

3. **Prerequisites or Co-requisites:**

   None

4. **Course Description:**

   The course focuses on the development of practical and conceptual tools for the transformation of conflict from the macro- to the micro-level. Taking the perspective that all participants will be involved in both conflict and resolution of different sorts and in different capacities throughout their future professional lives, the aim of this course is to engage with these processes through various simulations, project development activities, and other activities. These situational learning exercises provide an opportunity for the practical development of 'skills,' but more importantly, of conceptual tools relating to negotiation, mediation, conflict analysis, program development, and peacebuilding. By creating situations and a classroom environment where students can put these concepts into use, the goal is to move from ideas to practices and back – that is, to close the dialectical loop between theory, research, and practice that is the necessary basis for reflective conflict transformation. The series of readings for the course are of two sorts: 1) guidelines and research on practice; and 2) in-depth essays that develop specific analytical concepts that deepen and enrich the understanding of practice. The course offers a chance to develop, synthesize, and reflect on ideas and skills learned throughout the year. It brings together material from various programs and courses in an active environment, and is a time for people to examine what those ideas mean for them as individuals in their future careers as peacemakers and builders.

5. **Course length:**

   This course has a length of six weeks

6. **Instructor:**

   Professor: Dr. Linda M. Johnston
7. **Course meeting times and place:**

This course meets entirely online.

8. **Participants:**

Students accepted in the Distance Education Programme.

9. **Methodology:**

The course is offered entirely online and will consist of a combination of online discussion sessions and activities on and off-line. Students will develop practical concepts and conceptually-rich practices for managing and transforming conflict, beginning at the macro-level but concentrating at the micro-level. Readings accompany a series of simulations, videos, and skill-building activities. Course presentations will be posted by Monday of the week and students must complete the required tasks by the following Sunday of each week. Students are required to attend the forum on Moodle. Each assignment will require between four and seven hours of work per week, including assigned readings, written assignments, postings online and other activities.

10. **Course Requirements:**

Students are expected to complete the assigned readings and written assignments on time, participate in class discussions, and participate in a variety of simulations and exercises online.

All students will be required to complete one final paper.

11. **Assessment:**

For-Credit Students:

20% Participation Online: Absences are only permitted with the approval of the professor.

20% Career Portfolio: due 20 September, to be uploaded on Moodle. Instructions will be provided.

60% Essay, 2000-2500 words, due 25 October, 2012. Extensions will only be granted in the case of a documented emergency and with the permission of the Program Director. Students can choose one of the following options; all should be discussed beforehand and approved by Dr. Johnston. Draw from class readings, class experiences, and your own experiences to support your argument. All papers should demonstrate an integration of theory, research, and practice. Your choice of option should be given to Dr. Johnston in writing by 1 October, 2012:
• OPTION 1: The essay could address a topic that is relevant to your final thesis and perhaps even be used as a component of it.

• OPTION 2: Critically assess the role of education in peacebuilding. Particularly discuss the impact and the ethics of education.

• OPTION 3: Critically assess a particular approach to peacebuilding: mediation, facilitation, problem solving workshop, etc. Be sure to carefully address both positive and negative dimensions of the approach. How could success by measured using this process?

Grades for the essays will be based in equal percentage on the following three criteria:
  * Is your discussion of the topic clear?
  * Is it well developed throughout the paper?
  * Is it supported by references to appropriate sources and course readings?

Non-Credit Students:
Non-credit students must participate in each weekly forum online. Their entire evaluation will be based on the quality of their online participation.

12. Intended Learning Outcomes:

1) The course will encourage the development of a variety of practices for engaging with conflict and peace processes including models of negotiation, facilitation, and mediation.

2) Participants will think critically about the different factors and dynamics that create the conditions for conflict and its resolution.

3) Participants will develop project planning techniques and concrete tools for use in fieldwork.

4) Students will develop concepts that help to understand and frame the challenges of peace processes and long and short-term peacebuilding.

5) The course will contribute to students’ continuing professional career development.

13. Readings and Activities:

Week #1:
Lesson Objective and Description of Weeks’ Activities: Introduction to the class assignments and materials and expectations of the course.

• Be able to differentiate the benefits of education and practice
• Understand the theory, research, and practice loop of the conflict resolution field
• Recognize the core competencies needed for work in the field
Question for the Week: What is the relationship between education and practice? Are the two compatible?

Assignments Due by the End of the Week: Two substantive online postings, responding to the question of the week.

Week #2:
Lesson Objective and Description of Weeks’ Activities: Understanding practice and tools for analysis

- Recognize that the connection between the practice and the tool for analysis of the conflict
- Note the specific methods utilized is practice
- Understand that the technique are open to change and adaptation

Question for the Week: Can conflict resolution practice change conflict dynamics?

Assignments Due by the End of the Week: Career Portfolios due 20 Sept: copy of current resume, a sample cover letter for a position you are interested in (include a copy of the job ad), and a two page career vision statement (where you see yourself in one, five, and ten years). Two substantive online postings, responding to the question of the week.

Week #3:
Lesson Objective and Description of Weeks’ Activities: Culturally Sensitive Practice; Ethics

- Appreciate that practice must be sensitive to culture and gender
- Appreciate that ethical practice is the foundation of all conflict resolution work
- Grasp the challenges associated with sensitive and ethical practice

Question for the Week: Is the field of conflict resolution in danger of being labeled the “modern missionaries?”

Assignments Due by the End of the Week: Two substantive online postings, responding to the question of the week.

Week #4:
Lesson Objective and Description of Weeks’ Activities: Designing Group Processes and Mediation

- Appreciate that group processes must be designed with the parties
- Understand how the choice of the process may affect the outcome
- Recognize that there are many tools which can be used in series or conjunction with each other to encourage success
Question for the Week: What are the important components of any conflict resolution process?

Assignments Due by the End of the Week: Two substantive online postings, responding to the question of the week.

Week #5:
Lesson Objective and Description of Weeks’ Activities: Facilitation and Dialogue

- Appreciate that the needs of the parties determine the process
- Grasp the importance and significance of problem solving
- Understand basic elements of facilitation and dialogue processes

Question for the Week: How do we choose the appropriate approach?

Assignments Due by the End of the Week: Two substantive online postings, responding to the question of the week.

Week #6:
Lesson Objective and Description of Weeks’ Activities: Group Processes and Evaluation of our Work

- Realize that failure in a process gives insight to success the next time
- Appreciate the value of evaluation processes
- Be aware of the evidence and data which critique conflict resolution work

Question for the Week: Who can evaluate the success of our work?

Assignments Due by the End of the Week: Final essay, 2000-2500 words. Two substantive online postings, responding to the question of the week.

Instructor’s Bio
Dr. Linda M. Johnston is the Executive Director of the Siegel Institute for Leadership, Ethics & Character and an Associate Professor of Conflict Management at Kennesaw State University in the US. Her research interests include racial and ethnic conflict, ethics, bullying, sports-related violence, health-related conflict, narrative and discourse theory, and world view theory. She is a trained mediator, negotiator, ombuds, and facilitator. She works both domestically and internationally. She has received a grant from the Southern Poverty Law Center to do workshops on Teaching Tolerance. She has had a Fellowship to begin a dialogue between Egyptians and Americans. She has also done conflict resolution work in Ukraine, Republic of Georgia, Barbados, Nigeria, Egypt, and in the US. Dr. Johnston is the President of the International Peace Research Association Foundation, serves on the Small Research Grants Committee, and administers the International Senesh Fellowship Program. She is also on the Board of Hands Along the Nile, is an adjunct for the UN School