CROSS-CULTURAL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: NEGOTIATIONS & MULTI-CULTURAL TEAMS

PADM-GP.4105 - Fall 2017

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Course description:

Beyond the basics of conflict management and negotiation lie areas of greater complexity. One such area is the realm of culture. Though culture includes etiquette and behavior, at a deeper level it is about deeply ingrained attitudes and assumptions. Culture impacts how people regard and approach situations – it affects what someone considers to be “conflict” and how it should be handled, and if affects how people think about and engage in negotiation. And, of great importance to people contemplating a career in multi-cultural organizations, it affects how people relate to organizational superiors and subordinates and how they behave in teams. This course will explore these differences and consider the various models scholars have been developing to help us cope with cultural challenges.

The course will take up the following themes:
- The challenges of doing cultural analysis;
- Understanding one’s own cultural biases;
- Basic differences in how various cultures deal with individuals’ “core concerns”;
- Ways in which cultural variables affect how people negotiate and otherwise deal with conflict;
- Best practices for becoming an effective inter-cultural negotiator;
- The challenges of working on multicultural teams and some guidelines for working through the challenges;
- The interplay of culture and today’s media and technologies;
- Culture and mediation.

The course will utilize two major simulations – one about inter-cultural human resource management and the other about working on multi-cultural teams. Two other exercises will have the students think through how to deal with challenging inter-cultural situations, and a third activity will involve working in small groups to grapple with the intellectually challenging problem of comparing and synthesizing two models for understanding the relationship between culture and negotiation.

In addition to several assignments to write short memos about specific questions during the course, the final paper assignment will ask students to apply the lessons of the course and some assignment-specific literature to propose a strategy for holding community reconciliation workshops in a disputed area on the border between Sudan and South Sudan – a very real and current problem.

Components of final grades:

1. Active class participation and contributions (note that class attendance is mandatory) – 10%
2. A memo describing how you should adapt to the other characters in the EmLog Worldwide scenario (maximum three pages) – 25%
3. A memo describing how you would prepare for a negotiation with a Sudanese army garrison commander in a town in the region of Abyei - contested by Sudan and South Sudan – the goal of which is obtaining permission for a relief convoy to pass through the town (maximum two pages) – 20%
4. Final paper (maximum five pages) - 45%
   Develop a concept for community reconciliation workshops in Abyei, using, at a minimum the bibliographical literature provided. See “Final Assignment” on NYU Classes for details.
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Course materials:

Purchase at the Professional Bookstore:

All articles are posted in alphabetical order (by author) on the NYU Classes course site, under Resources.

Session 1 - Wednesday, October 25: (6:45 – 8:25 pm)
Approaches to Understanding Culture
American cultural assumptions and some alternatives found elsewhere

Readings:

The role of culture in negotiation and conflict management


Session 2 - Wednesday, November 1: (6:45 – 8:25 pm)
Culture and Negotiation – Addressing Core Concerns

Assignment: Prepare “Firing Jane” case

Readings:

Cultural variables and negotiation - general


Session 3 - Wednesday, November 8: (6:45 – 8:25 pm)
Models: Culture and Teams; Culture and Negotiation
Latin American and German cultures, as examples

Readings:

Gesteland, Cross-Cultural Business Behavior, (CBB), Copenhagen Business School Press, 2005. on Latin American culture (pp. 221-228) and Germany (pp. 315-318)


Session 4 - Wednesday, November 16: (6:45 – 8:25 pm)
Models: Culture and Negotiation (continued)

Assignments:

Using material in the readings (Gesteland, Hofstede, Salacuse and Brett) consider how negotiation is approached by Germans, so as to prepare yourself for an exercise in class.

Readings:


(No class November 22)

Session 5 - Wednesday, November 29: (6:45 – 8:25 pm)
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Working on multi-cultural teams; developing intercultural effectiveness

Assignments:
Prepare EmLog Worldwide case material

Readings:

*Culture in organizations and teams*

Brett, J.M., *op. cit.*, pp. 117-130

*Developing intercultural effectiveness*
Harris & Moran, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-105


Session 6 - Wednesday, December 6: (6:45 – 8:25 pm)
Media and Technology

Assignment:
Written assignment – memo addressing how you should adapt to the other characters in the EmLog Worldwide scenario (maximum three pages)

Readings


Session 7 - Wednesday, December 13: (6:45 – 8:25 pm)
Cross-Cultural Mediation
An Intercultural Negotiation Problem

Assignment:
Imagine that you are a project leader for an international NGO providing relief and other services to displaced persons camps in Abyei, one of the so-called Three Areas sectors disputed by Sudan and South Sudan. Most of the displaced persons are from non-Muslim black African tribes. A particular town is strategically located on a road along which your next convoy must pass because of recent widespread and severe flooding, which has closed all other roads in the region. Your next convoy, carrying vital food,
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medicines and other urgent relief supplies, is being organized, and it is scheduled to pass through the town in two weeks’ time. You are going to have to negotiate with the Sudanese Armed Forces garrison commander in the town to secure safe passage for the convoy. You have not previously dealt with him, but you know he is a Sudanese Arab and a Sunni Muslim. (For the purposes of the discussion, assume that the cultural factors that would apply to Sunni Muslim Arabs in the Middle East and the North African Maghreb are also typical of Sudanese Arabs.) Your assignment is to plan your negotiation using (and citing!) the pertinent materials in the readings (above under the “Arabic culture and negotiation” subheading) and to write no more than two pages to be handed in at class describing your plans, including but not limited to providing answers to the following:

a. Before meeting with the garrison commander, what would you want to know; what would you do?
b. What principles would guide you in your meeting? What factors should you take into account? What approaches should you employ?
c. To the extent that you already have pertinent information and knowledge about this culture, what can you say about your strategy for the negotiation?

For more information about this region and the history of the conflict there, please see:

http://transition.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan_africa/abyei/

Posts from UN News Center, on NYU Classes course site

HSBA-Abyei-July 2015, on NYU Classes course site

Readings:

Cross-Cultural Mediation
Gelfand & Brett, op. cit., Chapter 11


Arabic culture and negotiation:


Final writing assignment:

Develop a concept for community reconciliation workshops in Abyei, considering cultural factors, fundamental logistical constraints, and using, at a minimum, the bibliographical literature provided below. See “Final Assignment” on NYU Classes for details.

General instructions:

**Maximum** five double-spaced pages (not counting any cover page and the bibliography). Use 10-point Times New Roman or similar font, 1” margins, Word (no PDF’s, please), and *indented* paragraphs (so that no extra lines are needed between paragraphs). Submit electronically by December 16 (or as may be otherwise agreed upon). The evaluation of the paper will be primarily based on your ability to demonstrate that you have studied the course readings as well as reflected on the class discussions and can apply the lessons from them. *You should therefore cite course readings and class discussions whenever possible* – put citations in parentheses in the text (author, title only if there is more than one title by the author in the readings, page number). Add a bibliography page at the end. Though content is paramount, grammar, punctuation, spelling, clarity and professional presentation all matter, and no paper with more than occasional errors can receive a grade better than B+, regardless of content.

Readings:

**Sub-Saharan African culture and negotiation**


**Inter-group conflict resolution – theory and practice**

Montville, J., “The healing function in political conflict resolution,” Chapter 8, in Sandole and van der Merwe, eds., *op. cit.*; 1993


