

II. WRITTEN AND ORAL ASSIGNMENTS

A. REACTION PAPERS

At least two types of short papers can be assigned.

1. Respond to one or more of the questions at the end of a case.
2. Give students a prompt (perhaps based on a short article from a newspaper or magazine) to prepare for class. For instance, “Describe the class climate using a metaphor” or “Describe a conflict in which culture played a part and analyze its impact”.

REACTION PAPER ASSIGNMENT GRADE SHEET

All out-of-class written assignments must be (double-spaced) typed or word processed according to formats given in class. Work must be submitted on standard size paper (8 ½ X 1) and should appear on only one side of the paper, unless otherwise instructed.

All work must conform to standard grammar, punctuation and spelling practices. Assignments will be lowered one-half letter grade for each spelling error. Some grammar, fact, punctuation and style errors will be penalized as well.

Writer’s Name _____

The strengths and weaknesses of your paper are checked below.

Needs Work	Done Well	
_____	_____	1. The paper reflects substantial time spent thinking about this issue.
_____	_____	2. The purpose statement is clear and to the point.
_____	_____	3. The writing style is interesting and engaging.
_____	_____	4. The paper integrates class material effectively.
_____	_____	5. The writing has a clear focus.
_____	_____	6. The writing is not hindered by stylistic and grammatical errors.
_____	_____	7. The conclusion is satisfying.

I have circled or checked ways your paper reflected weak editing skills.

typing	spelling
unclear sentences	inappropriate word choice
run-on’s	verb tense
subject-verb agreement	indefinite pronoun reference (it/they)
homonyms (their/there)	incomplete sentences

B. GROUP ASSIGNMENT-LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the primary goals of this course is to have students improve their analysis and understating of the communicative conflict behaviors of themselves and others. This assignment is designed to fulfill this goal. Moreover, this assignment will allow you to fully explore a specific topic related to communication and conflict. The assignment has **three parts**: 1) a 20-30 page paper that surveys the relevant literature of your group's topic, 2) a 45-60 minute group presentation, and 3) a 10 page individual analysis of the group process, with an explicit focus on communication and conflict. All group members will receive the same grade for the paper and the presentation.

Part One: The Group Paper

Overview: The class will be divided into small groups of four or five members. Each group must select a topic related to communication and conflict. The topic must either be a topic that is not discussed in the textbook or a topic that received little attention. The group must thoroughly research the topic and write a 20-30 page paper (a minimum of 20 pages of text) that summarizes the literature in a coherent manner. At least 15 sources must be cited. You will not be conducting a study. You will not be writing an opinion or argument paper. You will be writing an extensive literature review.

Format: Papers will be typed, double-spaced and conform to APA guidelines.

Sources/Citations: Be sure you credit your sources. Plagiarism is not always deliberate; however, failure to properly cite sources will result in severe consequences that are outlined in your syllabus. Citations are required for quoting or paraphrasing others' work, statistics, examples or anecdotes, and any other form of evidence. You are required to cite at least 15 different sources in your paper.

Grading Criteria: Three general criteria will be used to evaluate the paper.

Organization

- * Was the literature organized in a coherent manner?
- * Was there an identifiable introduction and conclusion?
- * Did the introduction and conclusion serve their purpose?
- * Were headings used?
- * Were paragraphs fully developed?
- * Were transitions used?

Content

- * Were up-to-date sources used?
- * Were all the important and relevant sources used?
- * Were the sources reputable and academic?
- * Did you accurately summarize the material?

Grammar/Spelling/Style

- * Did the paper conform to APA format?
- * Was the paper free from grammatical errors?
- * Was the paper free from spelling errors?
- * Was the writing succinct? Were unnecessary words avoided?

- * Was the paper clear in the expression of ideas?
- * Did the paper avoid the use of sexist language?

Part Two: The Group Presentation-Literature Review

Overview: During the last three weeks of class, each group must teach its special topic to the class.

Format: The presentations will be 45-60 minutes in length. The group must prepare a detailed outline. Every group member must participate in the presentation. These are the only requirements. Part of your task as a group is to come up with a way to present your information in an interesting and meaningful manner.

Criteria: There are basic criteria by which any presentation can be evaluated:

Professionalism

- * Did you dress appropriately?
- * Did your visual aids reflect professional standards?

Organization

- * Was the presentation clearly organized?
- * Was there an identifiable introduction, body, and conclusion?
- * Were connectives and transitions proficiently used?

Delivery

- * Was the presentation delivered in a smooth, fluent, extemporaneous and polished manner?

Time Constraints

- * Did the speech conform to the time limit?
- * More than a few minutes below or over the time limit will seriously affect your grade.

Part Three: Individual Analysis

Overview: After the group project is over you will analyze your group's conflict. The paper should clearly reflect your awareness and understanding of the material we are studying.

Format: The paper will be a minimum of ten pages of text, typed, double spaced, and conform to APA guidelines.

Collecting Data: You will not be able to write this paper unless you have collected data. This data can be in the form of observational notes, interviews with group members, audio or video recordings, and results from any questionnaires that have been distributed throughout the semester.

Keep notes on all the meetings you have attended. **DO NOT RELY ON YOUR MEMORY.** These field notes should be written immediately after each meeting or encounter with group members. Try to be as complete as possible. Provide a descriptive account of what happened. Be as detailed as possible.

You are encouraged to video tape some of your group's interaction. If you do not have a camcorder, the department will loan one to you. Consider audio recording, also. Of course, you have an ethical obligation to let all group members know when they are being recorded.

Writing the Paper: One of the axioms of communication and conflict is the notion of mutual influence. That is, what person A says influences what persons B, C, and D say, and so on. I cannot tell you exactly what aspects of communication and conflict you should discuss because every communication event is unique. There are several aspects you may want to discuss. Use your textbook and lecture notes as a guide and resource.

The paper should reflect your understanding of material learned in the textbook and lectures by applying concepts and theories to a real-life situation – your group experience. Do not merely summarize your group experience. Do not provide a chronological account. Be sure to provide evidence for any claims you make. You are expected to use the data you have collected.

Grading Criteria:

Organization

- * Was the paper organized in a coherent manner?
- * Was there an identifiable introduction and conclusion?
- * Did the introduction and conclusion serve their purpose?
- * Were headings used?
- * Were paragraphs fully developed?
- * Were transitions used?

Content

- * Was this paper an analysis rather than a chronological account?
- * Were theories and concepts from the textbook and lecture used?
- * Was the data presented to support any claims made or conclusions reached?

Grammar/Spelling/Style

- * Did the paper conform to APA format?
- * Was the paper free from any grammatical errors?
- * Was the writing succinct? Were unnecessary words avoided?
- * Was the paper clear in the expression of ideas?
- * Did the paper avoid the use of sexist language?

C. INDIVIDUAL PAPER ASSIGNMENT: CONFLICT CASE STUDY

In this project you will study a conflict using concepts developed in the course. The objective is to prepare a written analysis of the conflict that includes a description of the conflict, an explanation of what drives the conflict, and practical suggestions for turning the conflict in a positive direction or resolving it. You will present a brief summary of your paper and findings in the last week of class.

The Conflict

You may choose any type of conflict you wish, subject the following limitations:

1. You must be able to observe or reconstruct the interaction between parties in the conflict. Some of you may want to actually observe groups where there is a conflict or where conflict is likely to develop. In this case you would rely on your own eye-witness accounts and, perhaps, on interviews with group members. Alternatively, you may want to study a historical conflict or a conflict reported in newspapers. In this instance, you would want detailed eye-witness accounts, histories, journals, diaries, newspaper articles, anything that would allow you to reconstruct the situation.
2. The conflict must be in an interpersonal group, or organizational context, and it must involve some interpersonal interaction between parties.

I realize many of you do not have in-depth backgrounds in research and analysis. Do not let this deter you from studying a conflict you are interested in: I can help you figure out how to collect and evaluate evidence.

The Report

The finished paper should be around 5000 words and will consist of two parts. Part A is worth 150 points and Part B is worth 50 points.

A. *Description and Analysis* - In this section you should try to give some idea of the development and flavor of the conflict. The personal conflict analysis sheet attached to this assignment suggests some questions you might consider in trying to understand your conflict. Specific concerns in your report might include:

1. What are the issues in the conflict?
2. What Psychological, Social and Contextual factors operate in the conflict?
3. Describe the interaction between parties in the conflict. Why do parties interact as they do? What are consequences of their behavior patterns for the conflict?
4. How does the group manage the conflict? Is the conflict productive? Could the group do better?

Do *not* just list answers to these questions in your report. These are some of the issues you might address and I do not want a mechanical analysis. I want to be able to see that you understand the conflict.

Evidence or data supporting your description does not all have to be in the paper itself. You may attach an appendix containing a transcript of the interaction, results of interviews, newspaper articles, etc. and refer to it in your paper. You will, of course, want to make it clear what portions of the appendix you are referencing when you cite it in the paper.

Grading Criteria for Part A:

1. Insight/Depth: A demonstration that you have a clear understanding of the nature of the conflict process in the group under observation.
2. Clarity: Could someone who intended to work in the group reach your report and understand the nature of the conflicts the group encounters?
3. Evidence: Do you provide evidence for your claims? You should draw on your observations to make your points and back them up with data and examples.

B. *Diagnosis* - Here you would develop suggestions to help the group deal with the conflict more effectively. This section will consist of general goals or objectives for improving the group and specific, concrete suggestions for achieving your objectives. You must substantiate why your measures would work and are appropriate for the group.

Grading Criteria for Part B:

1. Insight: Have you identified important objectives and made recommendations that show a thorough understanding of the conflict? Are your recommendations adapted to the unique characteristics of the group?
2. Utility: Can the group actually implement the recommendations you have made?
3. Clarity: Is the section well-organized and clearly written?

General Considerations

In selecting your conflict use your imagination. You can study any dyad, group, or organization with from 2 to 1,000,000 members. The group may handle its conflict successfully, and you may want to study the reasons why it is a success. Check with me before you choose a conflict, or rule, of one that seems promising.

If possible, you should use several different data sources in compiling your reports; most good reports incorporate several points of view on the conflict. For example, if you observe an actual group, you might combine your own observations with interviews of group members. If you study a historical group, combine historical-biographical data with newspaper reports.

D. CONFLICT ANALYSIS PAPER

Applying Cognitive and Interactional Theories of Conflict

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to develop your ability to analyze conflict from different theoretical perspectives. In class we have compared two major perspectives on conflict: the cognitive perspective and the interactional perspective. Each of these perspectives include different theories that help analyze conflict. These theories help us to understand how conflict develops and to explain the choices people make when they communicate in conflict situations. This assignment asks you to draw on your understanding of two different theories and demonstrate that you can use these theories to gain insight into a conflict you have observed.

The Task

Think of an interpersonal conflict that you have been involved or you have seen firsthand. It could be a conflict in a family, work, friendship or community setting. Choose the conflict based on two criteria: a) you know a considerable amount about how the conflict unfolded and b) you are interested in analyzing the conflict in more detail. Choose **ONE** of the cognitive theories **and** **ONE** of the interactional theories and analyze the conflict using the two theories.

Cognitive Theories: Verbal aggressiveness
 Psychodynamic Theory
 Attribution theory
 Arousal/Deficit Theory

Interactional Theories: Coordinated Management of Meaning
 Confrontation Episodes Theory
 Reciprocity Theory

Your paper should:

1. Give a short (1-2) page overview of the conflict itself. Without giving the actual names of the disputing parties, provide a general description of who is involved and what the conflict is about. (Note: You do not have to give a great deal of detail in the overview because you will be giving additional information about the conflict as you do your theoretical analysis. Just provide enough background to establish a basis for understanding your application of the two theories you have chosen.)
2. Apply one **Cognitive Theory** to your conflict (2 pages). How does the theory help to explain what happened? What insights does it provide about why people acted/communicated the way they did in the conflict? How does it help explain the outcomes of the conflict? Be sure to use the theory in detail, drawing from the specific insights the theory offers.

3. Apply one **Interactional** Theory to the same conflict (2 pages). How does this theory help to explain how the conflict unfolded? What insights does it offer about why people acted/communicated the way they did in the conflict? How does it help to explain the outcomes of the conflict? Again, be sure to draw from specific details and points in the theory.

4. Conclude with a brief comparison of the insights that the contrasting theories offered. Which was most useful? Why? Explain why one theory from a cognitive perspective and one from an interactional perspective. (2 pages)

Requirements

The paper should be typed (double-spaced with 1 inch margins.) Please do not put your papers in a folder or binder, just staple the pages. The paper is due in class on ... Late papers will receive a 5 point deduction.

Evaluation Criteria

The paper is worth a total of 50 points, and is evaluated according to the following criteria:

Understanding of the Theories: How well do you understand the theories you have chosen? How well do you understand why one is within a cognitive perspective and one is within an interactional perspective?

Insight/Application: How well do you apply the two theories to a real-life conflict? Do you provide appropriate insights that stem from the theory itself? Do you show how you see the conflict differently as a result of applying the theories?

Clarity: How clearly is the paper written? Is it well organized, grammatical and easy to follow? Could someone who is unfamiliar with the theories easily learn something from your analysis? Do you use the words "affect" and "effect" correctly?