

**SPFM 7190 Spirituality and Conflict**  
North Park Theological Seminary  
Summer 2025  
Class meetings: June 5–6, 6-9pm; June 7, 9am–5pm  
1 credit hour

**INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION**

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

*WHY: Deep conflicts...create some of the most intense spiritual encounters we experience. Conflict opens a path, a holy path, toward revelation and reconciliation.*

John Paul Lederach, Reconcile p.10

Conflict has existed since the beginning of time and is an inevitable part of the human experience. However, most humans have not figured out how to deal productively with differing histories, opinions, resources, or values. Although the Bible offers guidelines and mandates for handling conflict between people, followers of Jesus may not know how to actually apply God's principles in situations of intense and seemingly irreconcilable disagreement? Beginning with an assessment of one's own spirituality and style of conflict, this course will introduce students to the dynamic interplay between Christian spirituality, the process of conflict, and methods for intervening in conflicts. With a goal of moving beyond management and resolution of conflict, this course will use readings, discussion, and students' experiences to facilitate transformation of students' personal and ministry conflicts.

**III. COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Upon completion of this course students will be able to

- (1) Identify how one's spirituality and conflict style can impact conflict.
- (2) Analyze interpersonal, organizational, institutional, and systemic conflicts.
- (3) Identify Biblical examples to prevent and intervene in conflict situations
- (4) Identify Christian spiritual practices and principles to manage, resolve, and ultimately transform conflict.
- (5 ) Adapt mediation as a tool for addressing conflict .

**IV. REQUIRED TEXTS and READINGS**

1.BIBLE (student's preferred version)

2. Lederach, John Paul. Reconcile : Conflict Transformation for Ordinary Christians. Harrisonburg, virginia: Herald Press, 2014.

3. Sande, Ken. *The Peacemaker : A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*. Third edition, revised and updated. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004. (pdf available online)

4. Journal

### **Recommended**

The Mediator's Handbook (Beer and Packard) or Mediator's Handbook (Beer and Stief)

Beer, Jennifer E, Caroline C Packard, and Eileen Stief. *The Mediator's Handbook*. Rev. and expanded 4th ed. Gabriola, B.C: New Society Pub., 2012.

When Church Conflict Happens- Michael Hare

Hare, Michael (S. Michael). *When Church Conflict Happens : A Proven Process for Resolving Unhealthy Disagreements and Embracing Healthy Ones*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2019.

WEBSITE: [spiritualityofconflict.com](http://spiritualityofconflict.com)

## **V. ASSESSMENTS AND GRADING SCALE**

**I .Define your spirituality and conflict style -(pre- class posting). 25pts- Due: May 19-June 1) Copy and bring to first class**

### **A. Spirituality**

- o What experiences or teachings inform your perspective on spirituality?
- o Cite scriptural bases or examples that support your spirituality?
- o What is your understanding of God/what does being human in a relationship with the Divine mean?
- o What practices are part of your spirituality?
- o How does spirituality affect your daily life?

### **B. Conflict style assessment**

**What is your predominant conflict style? Assessment link will be provided on Canvas. (USIP link has blocked as the organization has been dismantled by the govt)**

**2) Provide a brief description of a recent conflict. Use the following format- 25 pts. Due - June 5. 1-2 pages, with one paragraph devoted to each bullet point. Bring to class**

- o Parties involved.

- o History of relationship
- o Precipitating incident
- o Positions of each party and how communicated
- o Desired outcomes of both parties.
- o Hindrances to resolution.

### **3. Conflict Analysis Presentation 15 minutes- Due Saturday June 7 25points**

Issue(s) , emotions, relationships

- o People, process, power dynamics
- o conflict styles and mitigating factors.
- o desired outcomes, both all parties
- o potential resolution or reconciliation points
- o WWJS?WWJD?

### **4. The conflict of spirituality/The spirituality of conflict – 25 points by June 15**

- o 250-500 words in the form of a Daily Bread/Upper Room type devotional
- o Include title
- o scripture
- o Anecdote/illustration/example
- o prayer

## **Vi ADDITIONAL COURSE GUIDELINES**

Students are expected to attend each class and turn in assignments on the dates indicated. No late papers can be accepted. and other course policies. Please note the inclusive language policy in the [Student Writing Handbook](#), located in the Resource Room.

## **ACADEMIC HONESTY**

In keeping with our Christian heritage and commitment, North Park University is committed to the highest possible ethical and moral standards. Just as we will constantly strive to live up to these high standards, we expect our students to do the same. To that end, cheating of any sort will not be tolerated. Students who are discovered cheating will receive a failing grade on the assignment

and are subject to discipline up to and including failure of a course and expulsion. Our definition of cheating includes but is not limited to:

1. Plagiarism – the use of another’s work as one’s own without giving credit to the individual. This includes using materials from the internet.
2. Copying another’s answers on an examination.
3. Deliberately allowing another to copy one’s answers or work.
4. Signing an attendance roster for another who is not present.

For additional information, see the Seminary Academic Catalog (located in the Resource Room), pp. 25–26.

## **ACCOMMODATIONS**

Your experience in this class is important to me. North Park is committed to creating inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law. If you have already established your accommodations, please share your accommodation letter with me so we can discuss how your accommodations will be implemented in this course. If you have not yet established services and have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations, please email the Disability Access Specialist or contact by phone (773-244-5737). Student Engagement facilitates the interactive process that establishes reasonable accommodations.

## **TITLE IX**

Students who believe they may have experienced sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking should contact Emily Wagner, Director of Student Life and Formation, or review the full Title IX policy available in the Resource Room to more about reporting options, resources, and support services.

As members of the North Park faculty, we are concerned about the well-being and development of our students and are available to discuss any concerns. Faculty members are private resources meaning we are legally obligated to share information about the behavior reported above with the University’s Title IX coordinator. If you are unsure whether you want your concerns disclosed to the Title IX Coordinator, we encourage you to contact Emily Wagner directly through a sealed envelope.

Please refer to North Park’s policy, available in the Resource Room, for reporting, contact information, and further details.

## **INCOMPLETE GRADES**

If, due to extenuating circumstances (specifically, illness, personal and family issues), as well as other issues beyond your control, (lockdowns, movement restrictions, inability to get coursework to instructor, etc.), a student anticipates they will be unable to complete course work within the allotted time, that student may request a grade of incomplete from the course instructor before the last week of class clearly stating the reason(s) for this request. Overscheduling and/or lack of self-discipline are not considered extenuating circumstances. If the request is timely and meets the criteria, student and instructor will submit the incomplete grade form and the grade for that class will be listed as “I” until the last day of the following semester. If coursework is not submitted by the last day of the following semester the listing of “I” will automatically be changed to “F.” For the full policy, see page 15 of the Seminary Academic Catalog (located in Resource Room).

## **SCHEDULE**

Thursday June 5 6-9pm

Welcome and Overview of class

Prayer

I.Introductions -

**Agreements/ Ground rules** (to establish trust and relational expectations, to identify common needs and boundaries)

II. Your name, and one word that you would use to define conflict

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What one thing do you wish someone had taught you about conflict before you became a leader?

Class learning needs and goals

III. .Theoretical definition of conflict (Hocker & Wilmot, Stella Ting -Toomey re intercultural conflict

Role of communication, culture, and miscommunication . What is communication? Role of culture in conflict ?

What/how do people fight about exercise  
children,  
adults,  
nations

#### **IV. Spirituality defined**

God

Jesus

Holy Spirit

Spirituality Examples

Ewert Cousins, Spirituality is “that inner dimension of the person called by certain traditions ‘the spirit.’ This spiritual core is the deepest center of the person. It is here that the person is open to the transcendent dimension; it is here that the person experiences ultimate reality.”

Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams speaks of “each believer making his or her own that engagement with the questioning at the heart of faith.” *Or biblically, each of us is to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12)*

**V.** What is spirituality?(students read the papers they posted online

VI. .WHAT DO CHURCHES FIGHT ABOUT

#### **Doctrinal Conflict**

Doctrinal conflicts are those that involve varying or contradicting interpretations of the Bible, the church's confessional statements, or the church's theological tradition.

These conflicts can arise due to cultural and generational differences, or from an influx of congregants who hail from different theological backgrounds.

These conflicts can be difficult to mediate, as they tend to involve deeply and intensely-held beliefs. What's more, many theological traditions prioritize certainty, making it challenging for congregants to acknowledge varying perspectives.

### **Leadership Conflicts**

Another type of conflict to be aware of involves church leadership. Leadership conflicts can involve disputes between different leaders, or disputes between members and leaders.

Leadership conflicts can emerge from a number of factors, including:

- Differences in vision
- Personality clashes
- Lack of clarity regarding church polity

Because these conflicts can breed distrust toward church leadership, they can be especially damaging to the life and vitality of the congregation.

### **Resource Allocation**

A third type of congregational conflict is what's known as a *resource conflict*.

Resource conflicts tend to involve disputes about how best to allocate church resources, which can involve finances or facilities. Often, resource conflicts simply involve different goals or priorities for the church. For example, one member may wish to emphasize global missions, while another may prefer to invest more robustly in local ministries to the homeless.

Having a broader decision-making body, like a finance committee, can be helpful in mediating these issues.

## **Personal Conflicts**

Finally, some conflicts involve simply clashes in personality. These conflicts often stem from misunderstandings, miscommunication, or hurt feelings.

When left unaddressed, personal conflicts can spill over and adversely affect the life of the entire congregation. These conflicts can often be resolved through mediation from a pastor or elder, or from some other kind of peacemaking ministry within the church.

- III. Values exercise- values/beliefs/needs/ resources/attitudes
- IV. Scriptures- Genesis 3, Matthew 18, 2Corr 5, Proverbs, Psalms, etc
- V. Biblical Principles and practices, - prayer, love, discernment, forgiveness, community, vulnerability, managing anger, seek help to resolve disputes, Holy Spirit /fruits of the Spirit
- VI. Conflict style snapshots
- VII. Closing prayer

## **FRIDAY, June 6**

*Romans 12:18: So far as it is possible, live peaceably with all*

### **Opening Prayer**

1. Identify your conflict “triggers” and how you typically respond to conflict  
In the moment (storm)



After you've had time to think (Calm)

## **II Jesus' Response to Conflict Using the TKI model**

occasions and examples from Jesus' ministry when he used each of the five TKI types to respond to a conflict?

### **Competing:**

*"Assertive and uncooperative, a power-oriented mode"*

### **Collaborating:**

*"Assertive and cooperative"*

### **Compromising:**

*"Intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness"*

### **Avoiding:**

*"Unassertive and uncooperative"*

### **Accommodation:**

*"Unassertive and cooperative---the opposite of competing"*

## **III Listening as a spiritual dimension of conflict– skill building in pairs. (mediated discourse exercise)**

- What did you learn about yourself as a listener- what skills need to be increased?
- What did you notice happening in your body?
- Written reflection/takeaways and areas for continued growth?

## **IV. Lecture: Conflict analysis methodology (lecture)**

- Conflict Analysis- separating issue, relationship, emotion work
- Issue, emotion, relationship.
- Power, people, process.
- Refer to assignment 3

- Questions and sharing

## VI. Chapt 5 Lederach

Psalm 85 drama p. 163

Explore role of truth, justice, mercy, peace in resolution/management/transformation. Give examples of pros and cons in each conflict style

Where does spirituality emerge?

## **YOUR SPIRIT, YOUR RESPONSIBILITY**

**Jesus teaches us that it is our responsibility to tend to our own hearts. The crux of The**

**Sermon on the Mount is about getting your heart right. We can't fix or control others or make them change.**

## VII-Church vs Non- Church contexts

**Saturday - June 7, 9 -5**

***Matthew 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.***

Approaching conflict mediation as Jesus would

Case study chosen from student conflicts.

I.Premediation issues:

II. mediator's opening statement

III. Uninterrupted storytelling by each party.

IV Discussion

V.Caucuses

VI.Negotiation

VII Closure (Memorandum of Understanding)

Lunch 12-1

**VII. When reconciliation isn't possible**

**IX. What needs to be in your tool kit**

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