

California State University, Sacramento
Public Policy and Administration

PPA 150
Collaborative Problem Solving Practicum
Fall 2006

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Meeting Time & Place
Monday, 6:00-8:50PM
Alpine Hall, Room 147
Office hours:
Before class & by appt.
Modoc Hall 2006

Prerequisites: Any one of the following or permission of the Instructor:
ANTH 101, ANTH 142, COMS 116, COMS 119, CRJ 164, ENVS 171, GOVT 170,
GOVT 180, ID 124 (or its equivalent), OBE 155, PPA 100, PSYC 135, PSYC 145, SOC
130, SOC 150, SOC 190, or SWRK 102.

Course Description

Builds skills in using collaboration for group problem solving. Topics include working with cultural diversity, principled negotiation, designing collaborative processes, and the role of collaboration in solving public problems. Approach is practical and interdisciplinary, using active learning exercises supplemented by discussion and lecture.

Course Overview

As society has become increasingly complex, uncertain, diverse, and fragmented collaboration has become more important as a method to find solutions for public problems. This is a practice oriented and highly participatory course to help students develop their understanding and skills in using collaboration to solve problems. The course will be managed to model collaborative processes, including student participation in directing the treatment of topics and evaluating achievement of learning objectives. Students will participate in many exercises and practice scenarios, supplemented by lectures and discussion, to explore the application of practical collaboration skills in situations where solutions to public problems depend on professionals working together in the presence of conflict to agree on future action. It is intended to assist students from many disciplines by providing practical experience in using collaborative methods to solve problems, but the focus will be on public issues such as those addressed by public policy.

Expected Learning Objectives

As a result of this course students will:

- Know how to learn together and do joint problem solving.
- Understand the application of collaboration tools and methods in addressing public problems.
- Understand the principles and practices for successful negotiation of public issues.
- Understand how to design collaborative processes that work.
- Be familiar with the challenges and opportunities of dealing with cultural diversity and differences and with strategies for working together across cultural differences.
- Be familiar with resources to draw upon in the future to continue building practical skills in collaborative problem solving.

Required Readings

David Straus, How to Make Collaboration Work. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2002.

Roger Fisher and William Ury, Getting to Yes. New York: Penguin Books, 1991.

Don Miguel Ruiz, The Four Agreements. San Rafael, CA.: Amber-Allen Publishing, 1997.

David Augsburger, Conflict Mediation Across Cultures. Louisville, KY.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992.

David E. Booher, "Collaborative Governance Practices and Democracy," National Civic Review, Vol. 93, No. 4, pp. 32-43. (Provided in class)

Class handouts with scenarios and roles

Course Requirements

This course will require active student participation in class practice exercises and discussion. It will take place in weekly three hour sessions. Students must read the required assignments before each class and come prepared to engage in the practical exercises and discussions. Students will be responsible for making up missed sessions by seeking assistance from one or more students to review the content of the missed sessions. Students will frequently have responsibility to act out roles in class practice sessions. These exercises depend upon all roles being portrayed. In the event students find they must miss one of these sessions, they are responsible for notifying the Instructor in advance and helping to find a replacement for their role. (There will be a small charge for the costs of these materials). In addition, students will sometimes take turns assisting

the Instructor in leading discussions. Because of the participatory oriented content of this course, absences will encumber learning objectives and result in a lower grade.

In addition students will keep a weekly journal of one to two pages in which they reflect on the course concepts that they find to be applicable, describe how they are applying the concepts in their lives, and discuss challenges and insights they experience with the course material. Journals will be returned to the Instructor for review after the fifth, tenth, and final sessions.

Students will follow current events during the course and reflect on the application of collaborative methods to those events in class discussions and their journals.

Students must also attend one public meeting and report on their reflections about collaboration or the absence of collaboration in this meeting in one of their journal entries.

Students will complete a final examination of the course concepts during the final session.

Students will be evaluated based upon the following:

- Attendance, participation and quality of contribution to class discussion and practice exercises: **50%**. Criteria: Attendance, preparation, effort, willingness to experiment and/or take risks; demonstration of application of course concepts and readings; demonstration of self-reflection and awareness of his or her impact upon the group; demonstration of ability to learn from experience.
- Completion and quality of written journal assignments: **30%**. Criteria: Journal assignments are complete, on time, and on topic; style and clarity of writing; demonstration of ability to self-reflect on assumptions and inferences; demonstration of ability to reflect on and apply course concepts.
- Completion of final examination: **20%**. Criteria: Demonstration of grasp of course concepts and methods; demonstration of achievement of learning objectives.

Outline of Topics

September 11th: Introductions, orientation, course overview and requirements; collaboration in society today.

September 18th: Models of human problem solving and shared learning.

How to Make Collaboration Work. (pp. 1-34)

Class Handouts

In class exercise: Listening and reflection during group discussion.

September 25th: Methods and tools for collaborative group discussion and decision making.

The Four Agreements (All)

Class handouts

In class exercise: Setting priorities for topics and schedule for remaining sessions.

October 2nd: Intensive practice in using methods and tools for collaborative group discussion and decision making.

Class handouts

In class exercises

October 9th: Designing collaborative problem solving processes.

Making Collaboration Work. (pp. 35-142)

Class handouts

Part one of journals due

October 16th: Principled negotiation for mutual gain.

Getting to Yes. (Introduction and pp. 1-94)

In class exercise: Basic negotiation

October 23rd: Challenges to principled negotiation.

Getting to Yes. (pp. 95-187)

In class exercise: Basic negotiation

In class exercise: Evaluating the course midway and changes for the final half.

October 30th: Working with cultural diversity and difference in collaborative processes.

Conflict Mediation Across Cultures. (pp. 1-112)

November 6th: Working with cultural diversity and difference in collaborative processes.

Conflict Mediation Across Cultures. (pp. 113-186)

November 13th: Intensive practice with negotiation and problem solving involving cultural differences.

Conflict Mediation Across Cultures. (pp. 187-288)

In class exercise: Negotiation in conflict with cultural differences

Part two of journals due

November 20th & 27th: Intensive practice with negotiation and group problem solving.

Class handouts for scenarios and student roles

December 4th: The role of collaborative problem solving in dealing with public issues in our governments, organizations, and communities.

How to Make Collaboration Work. (pp. 143-205)

“Collaborative Governance Practices and Democracy”. (pp. 32-43)

December 11th: Course review and discussion of the future of collaborative problem solving.

In class exercise: Evaluation of the course

December 18th: Final Examination and Part three of journals due.