

M-722 Conflict and Reconciliation
Spring 2010
Classroom 161
Instructor: K. Brynolf Lyon (and, surreptitiously, Dan Moseley)

Purpose:

Conflict is a normal, expectable aspect of life and ministry. Despite what we sometimes feel and think, it is not inherently a negative thing. The issue is not **that** we have conflicts, but rather how we respond to the conflict we have. Unfortunately, we are often profoundly unprepared to deal with conflict, whether in our families, our friendships, our work life, or our churches. Learning how to interpret, contain, and influence the conflict process in useful ways is an essential practical theological dimension of ministry. The purpose of this class is to introduce students to (1) various systemic and psychodynamic ways of interpreting the expressions of group conflict, (2) resources within the Christian tradition for understanding conflict and various practices and meanings of reconciliation, and (3) helping students develop their own practical theological perspective on conflict and reconciliation in the life of ministry. While we will pay special attention to congregational conflict, we will also look at conflict in other settings.

Course requirements:

- (1) reading of assigned texts and articles
- (2) two presentations on readings for the class, each counts 25% of course grade
- (3) a “thick description” of a conflicted situation you would like to work on throughout the class, 25% of course grade, 8 pages
- (4) a practical theological analysis of the conflict situation, 15 pages, 25% of course grade

Required reading:

Joseph Folger, Marshall Poole, and Randall Stutman, Working through Conflict, 6th Ed.
David Sawyer, Hope in Conflict
Marjorie Suchocki, The Fall to Violence
Robert Schreiter, The Ministry of Reconciliation
Vamik Volkan, The Need to Have Enemies and Allies (selections, on reserve)
Bridget Moix, “Matters of Faith: Religion, Conflict, and Conflict Resolution” (on reserve)
Roy Lewicki, “Trust, Trust Development, and Trust Repair” (on reserve)
Kenneth Kressel, “Mediation Revisited” (on reserve)
Lyon, “Getting Askew: Some Psychological Dynamics of Conflict” (on reserve)
Lyon, “”On Failing to Find What We Didn’t Know We Needed: Three Case Studies” (on reserve)
Lyon, “Scapegoating in Congregational and Group Life: Practical Theological Perspectives on the Unbearable”
Dan Moseley, “Theology of Congregational Conflict: Knowing the Other in the other” (on reserve)

Course Schedule

January 20—Introductions

January 27—Dimensions of Conflict

Reading: Lyon, "On Failing to Find What We Didn't Know We Needed"
Folger, et. al., Introduction
Moix, "Matters of Faith"
Sawyer, Chapter 1

February 3—Dynamics of Conflict

Presentation of Your Case Study
Reading: Folger, et. al., Chapters 2-7

February 10—Dynamics of Conflict

Reading: Folger, et. al, Chapter 2-7

February 17—Dynamics of Conflict: Systems Perspectives

Reading: Sawyer, Chapters 2-6

February 24—No Class

March 3—Dynamics of Conflict: Psychoanalytic Perspectives

Reading: Lyon, "Getting Askew: Some Psychological Dynamics of Conflict"
Volkan

March 10—Theological Perspectives on Conflict

Reading: Schreier
Moseley, "Theology of Congregational Conflict"

March 17—Theological Perspectives

Rerading: Suchocki

March 24—Strategies of Reconciliation

Reading: Folger, Chapters 8

March 31—Easter Break, No Class

April 7—Strategies of Reconciliation

Reading: Folger, Chapter 9
Kressel

April 14—Strategies of Reconciliation

Reading: Sawyer, Chapters 6-Conclusion
Lewicki

April 21—Strategies of Reconciliation

Reading: Scheiter

April 28—Presentation of Cases

May 5—Papers Due