

“If you’re avoiding conflict in order to stop fighting in your relationship, you definitely want to change that, because avoiding conflict is definitely not the path to a healthy relationship.”

– Paul McNiff, Relationship Counselor

“An eye for an eye will only make the whole world blind.”

– Mahatma Gandhi

“If this is what he wants, and this is what she wants, then why is there so much pain?”

– Blink 182



**Professor:** Dr. Brian Richardson  
**Office:** GAB 309C  
**Email:** [richardson@unt.edu](mailto:richardson@unt.edu)

**Student Drop-in Hours (Zoom):**  
MW 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. (and by appointment)

**Teaching Assistant:** Emily Maly  
**Email:** [EmilyMaly@unt.edu](mailto:EmilyMaly@unt.edu)

**Course communication:** We will use Canvas to communicate course-related messages. I also check my email regularly if you have question about non-course related items.

**Your instructor’s bio:** I am originally from Bridge City, Texas. My degrees are from Lamar University (B.S.), Louisiana Tech University (M.A.), and UT-Austin (Ph.D.). My research interests include organizational whistleblowing, disaster-related communication, and sport communication issues. You can find my research in journals such as *Management Communication Quarterly*, *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, the *Communication Studies*, and others. As a first-generation college student, I did not know many of the things other students took for granted, like “office hours” or “APA style” or “internships.” Further, I did not know about all of the resources available to assist and support me. I encourage you to ask me about any concerns or issues you are facing; I am happy to put you in touch with resources and departments on campus that can assist you. I am sure you have many of the same questions I had back when I was in college, so feel free to ask me anything.

**Prerequisites:** Communication Studies majors must complete COMM 3010 with a grade of C or better prior to enrolling; minors and other majors must complete COMM 2020.

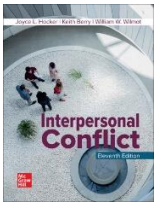
**Course Rationale:** From the small, interpersonal conflicts that impact our daily lives to the protests and political divisions dominating media coverage, conflict affects everyone on a routine basis. Conflict occurs within all levels of society: intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, organizational, intercultural, and international. If managed well, conflict can lead to innovation, positive change, and enhanced relationships. However, conflict managed poorly can lead to frustration, hurt feelings, stagnancy, damaged relationships, and even violence. The purpose of this course is to learn more about the nature

of conflict, particularly interpersonal conflict, and to enhance our understanding of how to effectively manage conflict. The role of *communication* in this endeavor is emphasized.

**Course Objectives\*:**

1. To enhance your understanding of what constitutes conflict, particularly from a communication perspective.
2. To enhance your understanding of how you and key others perceive your conflict style.
3. To be able to distinguish paths and patterns of destructive and constructive conflict.
4. To enhance understanding of significant factors which affect conflict management including power, emotion, styles, third-parties, and forgiveness.
5. To enhance understanding of effective negotiation skills.
6. To develop skills for understanding, analyzing, and reviewing an actual interpersonal conflict.

**Textbook and Readings:**



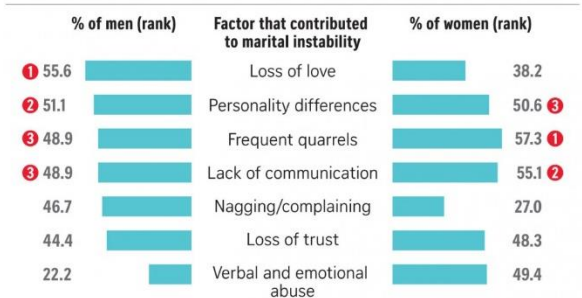
Hocker, J. L., Berry, K., & Wilmot, W. W. (2021). *Interpersonal Conflict (11<sup>th</sup> Ed.)*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Additional readings will be provided on Canvas. These are not “optional readings.” They are relevant to the lecture material, the course assignments, and to the exams. **You are responsible for ensuring that you read all assigned readings.**

Does conflict management matter? You bet; we will talk about many types of relationships this semester, one of which is marriage. See the graphic to the left for common causes of marital instability, several of which are related to poor conflict management.

**Common factors for marital instability**

Respondents were asked to select, from a list of 18 options, the factors that contributed to their marriages breaking down.



NOTE: Numbers in circles denote top three factors  
Source: SURVEY BY DR JESSICA LEONG ST GRAPHICS

## ASSIGNMENTS

I. Exams: There will be three online exams given during the term. Each exam is worth 50 points toward your course grade. Exams may consist of any combination of matching, multiple-choice, true-and-false, fill-in-the-blank, or short-answer questions. The purpose of these exams is to ascertain that you understand the concepts presented. If you are keeping up with the readings and participating actively in the class, it should not be difficult to do well on these exams. You will have a window of time for completing the exam and once you begin, you need to finish in one sitting. See Course Schedule for Exam dates.

**Note #1:** There are no makeup exams. If you miss an exam, you lose the points associated with it. The only exceptions are due to documented sickness, death in the family, or some other catastrophe. I am very unlikely to allow you to take an exam after the scheduled time if you do not contact me prior to the exam.

**Note #2:** I will only count your top two exam scores toward your grade.

II. Term paper: See Appendix for further details (150 points). See schedule for due date.

III. Homework/Discussion/Reading Quiz: For these assignments, you will have an opportunity to earn 15 points (150 points total) for successfully completing an assignment that will be introduced on Canvas. Such an assignment will most likely be a homework assignment or a Canvas discussion assignment. If you have thoroughly read and follow the instructions, you should excel. There will be NO make up opportunities for these assignments. I will give you 9 of these assignments, with eight worth 15 points each and one worth 30 points (the conflict styles assessment assignment).

### **Total points breakdown**

Two (of three) exams	150 pts.
Term Paper – Conflict Analysis	100 pts.
Homework/Discussion/Short Quiz (9)	<u>150 pts.</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>400 pts.</b>

## **Grade determination**

The points in this class are based on the assignments discussed above. Your final grade is based entirely on the sum of those points assigned in the class, and I will adhere rigidly to those points. The points correspond to the following university guidelines: an A is reserved for excellent work; a B is for above average performance; a C is awarded for average work; a D simply means passing, and an F indicates below average, nonpassing work. Points-wise the grades will be categorized as follows: 360-400 = A; 320 – 359.5 = B; 280 – 319.5 = C; 240 – 279.5 = D; 0 – 239.5 = F

## **Instructor Obligations**

As your instructor, you should expect me to:

1. Foster a positive communication environment in which students can share their ideas and experiences.
2. Approach the course prepared and organized.
3. Conduct the course in an engaging manner.
4. Relate material in the course to your everyday lives and relationships.
5. Evaluate student work based on the provided criteria.
6. Provide constructive feedback on evaluated work in a timely fashion.
7. Respond to Canvas messages within 24 hours on weekdays (usually sooner) but weekends are "hit or miss" and I will respond as I am available.

## **Student Obligations**

I expect you to:

1. Contribute positively to the course climate.
2. Read all reading assignments, as they are critical to course knowledge and success.
3. Complete readings and spend time thinking about them.
4. Complete and submit all assignments before the deadline.
5. Be open to other's perspectives even if they are different than your own.
6. Stay in contact with me throughout the semester. Communicate with me about the course. Let me help you when you have questions, problems, or concerns related to course objectives.
7. Keep in mind that online posts can be permanent, so think before you type.
8. Proofread all of your written work.

## **Course Format and Canvas:**

**A note about online courses and our involvement in the course:** An online course is radically different in terms of our interaction as a group since we will be using the benefits of technology to communicate. Since you do not get the benefit of in-person meetings, it is even more critical that you **keep up with the readings and projects. Do not wait until the day before the assignment is due to work on it as the nature of the course makes it impossible to cover more than a module's material in such circumstances.**

It is my objective to make this course enjoyable, and to get you familiarized with conflict management, from theoretical and applied perspectives. I pledge to provide quick and efficient communication as well as meaningful and timely feedback on work that you complete. For example, I will read all of your posts and participate in every discussion that I ask you to contribute. At the same time, it is your responsibility to raise issues when they occur-

not at the end of the course. I want you to have a positive learning experience but ultimately the course will give you back what you choose to put into it in terms of time and effort.

Also, please keep in mind that due to the nature of the conflicts that will be covered and analyzed in the course **you may feel a personal connection to some of them**; please feel free to speak with me if you have any concerns regarding the examples or case studies in use.

**Technical difficulties with Canvas are the responsibility of the student.** For this course, you will need a computer, reliable internet access, and knowledge of how to use Canvas. In the event of a major (and documentable) loss of power, I will work with you to adjust expectations. If you encounter technical difficulties during the semester, you need to contact the Canvas Technical Support Desk:

**UIT Help Desk:** [UIT Student Help Desk site \(http://www.unt.edu/helpdesk/index.htm\)](http://www.unt.edu/helpdesk/index.htm)

**Email:** [helpdesk@unt.edu](mailto:helpdesk@unt.edu)

**Phone:** 940-565-2324

**In Person:** Sage Hall, Room 130

**Walk-In Availability:** 8am-9pm

**Telephone Availability:**

- Sunday: noon-midnight
  - Monday-Thursday: 8am-midnight
- Friday: 8am-8pm  
Saturday: 9am-5pm

**Laptop Checkout:** 8am-7pm

For additional support, visit [Canvas Technical Help \(https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10554-4212710328\)](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10554-4212710328)

### Course policies

#### **ADA Policy:**

UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the [ODA website \(https://disability.unt.edu/\)](https://disability.unt.edu/).

**Late work.** Except under the most extreme circumstances (and documentation of those circumstances is required), no late homework assignments will be accepted. If you encounter an emergency situation, it is best to communicate with me about it earlier rather than later. It is not fair to others who met the deadlines if I accept yours late. Also, no longer are technology problems reasonable excuses for late papers. **I suggest knowing technology well enough and allowing ample time in case of problems.** Before attempting any written assignment, please see the course packet for instructions and grading criteria. All assignments must be turned in by the due date or they will be considered late. **For the styles assignment and term paper only, late papers** will be graded for half credit. This is a severe penalty, but is better than zero points (plus, you get feedback on the assignment). It is not fair to others who met the deadlines if I accept your assignments late. I will not accept either of these assignments more than one week late.

**Academic Dishonesty.** According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University. Of particular concern

in a course with written and oral assignments is the issue of plagiarism. Plagiarism is defined by Webster's (1989) as "the appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work" (p. 1100). In other words, plagiarism is stealing. You must cite your sources accurately and consistently in both your oral and written assignments. Penalties for plagiarism will vary according to severity and will range from a failing grade to prosecution through the University System. Please note: Your term paper will be uploaded to turnitin.com.

**Acceptable Student Behavior:** This course is designed to foster and maintain a positive learning environment. Importantly, all comments and responses should be respectful of the other students in the class. At the same time, diversity of perspectives is critical to a liberal arts education so you are free to share viewpoints which may differ from others in the class. Again, please do so in a respectful way and support your responses with evidence and data.

**Writing quality assumptions.** Every assignment you turn in must be of quality, both in content and style. I will not accept papers with significant grammatical and typographical errors. I expect you to take advantage of the programs that guard against such errors; however, there is no substitute for good proofreading. Papers, particularly on the essay assignments must conform to APA standards. I will provide models of exemplary papers from past classes as resources.

**Completing the Course.** Students are expected to complete all assignments for this course during the semester. Assigning a grade of "incomplete" is rare, and in order to request an "I," the student must meet these requirements: a) The student must have completed at least 75% of the course assignments; b) The student must be passing the course; c) There must be an unforeseen and compelling reason why the course cannot be completed on time (usually a medical or military reason); and d) The student must present a plan for completing the assignments within the time period specified in the catalog.

**Class Recordings & Student Likenesses.** Class recordings are the intellectual property of the university or instructor and are reserved for use only by students in this class and only for educational purposes. Students may not post or otherwise share the recordings outside the class, or outside the Canvas Learning Management System, in any form. Failing to follow this restriction is a violation of the UNT Code of Student Conduct and could lead to disciplinary action.

**First week drops:** The instructor reserves the right to drop students who do not participate in first week activities if other students are attempting to add the course.



One thing we will emphasize this semester is the role of communication in constructively or destructively managing conflict.

## Tentative Course Schedule & Key Dates

We will generally follow the order of the book, and I will keep you abreast of what to read prior to each week through Canvas postings.

The Nature of Conflict (*Wilmot & Hocker*, Ch. 1)

Perspectives on Conflict (*Wilmot & Hocker*, Ch. 2)

Interests and Goals (*Wilmot & Hocker*, Ch. 3)

Power: The Structure of Conflict (*Wilmot & Hocker*, Ch. 4)

Discuss final paper assignment

Conflict Styles (*Wilmot & Hocker*, Ch. 5)

Emotions in Conflict (*Wilmot & Hocker*, Ch. 6; news article: *7 myths about anger that most people still believe*)

Analyzing Conflict (*Wilmot & Hocker*, Ch. 7)

Bullying (*Wilmot & Hocker*, Ch. 8)

Interpersonal Negotiation (*Wilmot & Hocker*, Ch. 9; read article: *The One Career Mistake that'll Set You Back \$500,000*)

Third-party intervention (Read *Wilmot & Hocker*, Ch. 9)

Reconciliation and Forgiveness (*Wilmot & Hocker*, Ch. 10)

### Key Dates:

July 7 – Exam I

July 22 – Exam II

July 25 – Term papers due

July 28 – Exam III

## Appendix

### ANALYSIS OF FILM

#### Directions

You will view a film that dramatizes conflict and communication issues. You will prepare an analysis (6-7 page report) that labels the dynamics depicted in the presentation using terminology and concepts from the course.

View the film/program taking notes on the conflict and dynamics that you recognize from the course. You may want to view the film/program more than once to make sure that you are labeling ideas correctly. Then, construct a paper that conveys to the reader an understanding of what was represented in the film/program concerning conflict and communication dynamics. You should not spend a lot of time describing plots and characters, but rather get to the issues that are representative of the course concepts.

It is probably best to focus on three or four major topics that are best illustrated in the film. For example, you might choose to focus on conflict styles, verbal aggressiveness, and communication climate. Discuss how the film/program illustrates what you have learned about these dynamics. You should be citing the relevant authors and using the relevant terms and theories as you discuss the film/program. Imagine that you were trying to use this film/program to teach students about the course concepts. Use the paper to explain how the film illustrates the theories/course ideas in action.

The more insightful your observations, the more you will be rewarded with points. That is, surface observations (e.g., "every group member went along with the leader") will not be rewarded as much as will more in depth and subtle observations (e.g., "the group demonstrated at least four characteristics of ethnocentrism, including ..."). In addition to labeling things correctly, you should further describe what is known (e.g., we know that the halo effect can lead to an individual or group making subjective rather than objective judgments ...).

The paper should be 6-7 content pages in length (12 pt. font, 1 inch margins) and be spell-checked, proof-read, and grammatically correct. A cover sheet should be included and a reference page should be attached; your paper **MUST** include at least six academic references (journal articles from library or book chapters). Website references, e.g. *wikipedia.com*, and popular books/magazines, e.g. *Women are from Venus, Men are from Mars*, do **not** count toward your six academic sources.

#### **Grading Criteria**

Criteria for Written Activities will be followed in assessing this assignment (See separate sheet in this packet). Additionally, the paper will be judged on how well the film/program reviewed is used to teach course concepts to the reader.

#### **What Do I Need To Turn In?**

Turn in the 6-7 page paper (plus cover and reference pages).



## Grading criteria for term paper

### Is the paper well organized and well written?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Topic clear right at the beginning.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Main points to be made in paper are previewed in the first paragraph.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Topic headings used to mark major issues/concerns.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Transitional sentences make clear linkages between paragraphs and sections.
- \_\_\_\_\_ All main points in preview are addressed
- \_\_\_\_\_ It is easy to follow the organization pattern (logical, sequential)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sentences are well crafted, grammatically correct, clear and concise.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Word choice should enhance not inhibit the accessibility of your ideas (i.e., write what you mean as directly as you possibly can).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Writing is in author's own words (e.g., avoiding excessive quotation).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Does the paper adhere to APA guidelines?

### Does the content demonstrate the author's mastery of the subject matter?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Terminology and jargon are used correctly and defined clearly and concisely.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Use of course concepts/theories reflects a clear understanding of their content.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Comparisons between course concepts and case study are reasonable, useful and insightful.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Literature is used in thoughtful ways rather than merely added in to meet assignment requirements.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Appropriate examples and literature are used to as evidence to support claims.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Conclusions of the author are clear and concisely presented.

### Does the content demonstrate insight on the part of the student author?

- \_\_\_\_\_ It is clear that the student has achieved new insight into the subject.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The student is able to teach the subject matter through his/her writing
- \_\_\_\_\_ The student shows a depth of reflection on the topic in his/her writing.

#### Generally speaking:

**D papers** – are challenging to read because they contain so many grammatical and sentence structure errors. The main topics, and how those topics are being addressed, are not clear.

**C papers** – meet all of the requirements, adequately and accurately explore the topic and are clearly written, well organized, and at least minimally interesting to read.

**B papers** – exceed basic requirements in several areas, and are very well written. Draws from more challenging literature/material, insightful and creative in presentation and/or analysis, teaches the course material to the reader in its application and use of terminology and theory.

**A papers** – are exceptionally well written, exceeding requirements in many areas. Translates complex ideas with uncommon clarity, and provokes the reader to think about the topic in new ways. Draws from very challenging literature/material; provides appropriate references to authors and theorist names; teaches the course material to the reader in such a way as to enhance understanding of it.

## 12 Other Writing Errors to Avoid To Improve Your Writing

1. “A” is a word and “lot” is a word, but you should avoid using “alot,” which is not even a word, and “a lot,” which may be two words, but is trite. Try “a great deal” or some other word phrase.
2. Sexist language will not be tolerated in any form. Also, avoid getting caught in the “he or she” redundancy. Rather than saying “A manager must respond quickly to a crisis because he or she needs to ...,” instead say “Managers must respond quickly to a crisis because they need to ...”
3. Use the word “which” only in a prepositional phrase or when set off with a comma, which is the correct way to use the word. Use “that” in all other cases.
4. “Effect” and “affect” are not the same word. Effect the noun is the result of some cause (anxiety causes several effects). Effect the verb indicates the causation of some outcome (The presence of anxiety effects a climate of silence). Affect the noun is a synonym for emotion (many communication majors display a great deal of affect). Affect the verb means about the same as influence (lack of confidence affects people differently).
5. Contractions have no place in formal written communication. Please do not use them in your papers (unless you are using a direct quote from someone).
6. Know the difference between to, two, and too.
7. Do not end sentences with prepositions. This is a mistake with which I care not to deal.
8. The past tense of lead (as in she leads her people) is led. Don’t be led astray by typing lead.
9. A good paragraph is indented and should have a minimum of three sentences. However, it should not ramble on for more than one page. Each time you begin a new idea, start a new paragraph. Thus, each section in your papers will likely have several (not one) paragraphs.
10. Use a colon when listing items such as the following: names, theories, etc. A semicolon is usually used to separate related sentences; however, it may also be used to separate items in a list when commas would be unclear.
11. One more common spelling error: You “lose” a game, and carry “loose” change with you.
12. Becca asked “Where does the quote go?” I told her, “It goes outside the punctuation mark.” So, “this would be incorrect”. While, “this would be correct.” Even with a question, “Why is this the rule?”