CHF 404 Conflict and Violence in Intimate Relationships, Fall 2017

Course Description
Conflict and disagreements occur in most social relationships. Violence does, too, but conflict and violence are separate issues. Conflict is nearly inevitable but can be solved peacefully. It does not automatically lead to violence. Some domestic violence occurs unrelated to conflict. The course reviews research on different aspects of conflict and violence in intimate relationships and families. The goal is to better understand how couples and families deal with conflict, and how violence and abuse influence families and relationships. A background in a social science field is helpful. The course is entirely online, offered through Blackboard.

Instructor
Renate Klein, Ph.D., Assoc. Prof. of Human Development & Family Studies, rklein@maine.edu.

Tech Support
techsupport@maine.edu or 1-800-696-4357
https://gojira.its.maine.edu/confluence/display/TS/Technology+Support+Home

Grading Policy

- Assessment of factual knowledge of the readings: 12 quizzes on Blackboard (50% of final grade; each quiz up to 10 points). The two worst quiz scores will be dropped at the end of the semester; missed quizzes cannot be made up.

- Assessment of ability to write thoughtful responses to the assignment questions: 12 postings on Blackboard (50% of final grade; each post up to 10 points). The two worst post scores will be dropped at the end of the semester.

Readings
Readings are available through electronic reserve at Fogler Library, as e-books, or in Blackboard. If you need help with library resources contact librarian Amber Gray, (207) 581-3612, amber.gray@maine.edu.
Week 1  Orientation

The readings for this course come from psychology, family studies, sociology, and anthropology. Units 1 and 2 address cultural factors and approach conflict as “interpretive activity”. This means the meaning of interpersonal events is not given but depends on how we interpret the situation. We actively assign meaning to our relationships. Unit 3 illustrates how diverse such meanings can be and how individual and cultural differences can make understanding difficult. Units 4 to 6 concern couple conflict. Units 7 and 8 address violence and abuse. Units 9 to 11 concern effects of marital conflict and domestic violence on children and issues related to social service systems. Unit 12 addresses informal responses and social change.

Learning Goals
• You understand the assignments and know when each assignment is due
• You can find your way around Blackboard
• You can access the readings (e-reserve, e-books, Blackboard, URSUS)

Required Reading
• Syllabus & Guidance for the postings (guidance is on Blackboard)

Assignment
• Intro: Post your introduction to the Intro forum in the Discussion Board on Blackboard. Include your name and the location from where you are taking the course. Explain why you are taking this course and how it fits in your program of study.

DUE 9/3
Unit 1  Cultural diversity

Key Concepts: Interdependence, autonomy, inviolability of the individual, cross-cultural variation of social practices

We tend to take social practices for granted. Yet, what seems natural or universal is often culturally specific. Different child-rearing practices are one example. How we think about families and relationships can also vary across cultures. When we look at how concepts and practices vary across place and time we see social constraints and opportunities for women and men in families and relationships.

Learning Goals
• You are aware of different ideas about interdependence and autonomy
• You can explain how such ideas relate to interaction among family members
• You can explain how such ideas may relate to conflict-management

Readings needed for quiz

Assignments          DUE 9/10
• Post 1: What did you find most remarkable about the evidence reported by Rogoff and Greenfeld (and perhaps Hochschild, Steinbugler)? What do you think this evidence can tell us about managing conflict? Post your response to Unit 1 forum on Blackboard.
• Quiz 1: Questions about the quiz readings. Take quiz on Blackboard.

Suggested additional reading
• Steinbugler, A. C. (2012). Beyond loving: Intimate racework in lesbian, gay, and straight interracial relationships. New York, NY: OUP. Hardcopy at Fogler, HQ 76.34.S74
Unit 2  Meaning-making

Key Concepts: Interpretive activity, construction of meaning

The meaning of our words and actions is not always clear. Much of what we say and do is open to interpretation. Three different listeners are likely to come up with three slightly different interpretations of what we said. When things seem clear it is often because all involved share similar assumptions. The readings for this unit illustrate the construction of meaning about closeness and separation.

Learning Goals
• You can recognize how interpersonal meaning is actively constructed
• You can explain how interpersonal conflict and arguments are related to interpretation and meaning making

Readings needed for quiz

Assignments  DUE 9/17
• Posting 2: Reflecting on Hopper and Frost (and perhaps Schütz), what do you think is particularly important in the construction of meaning about closeness and separation? Post your response to Unit 2 forum on Blackboard.
• Quiz 2: Questions about the quiz readings. Take quiz on Blackboard.

Suggested additional reading
Unit 3  (Mis)-Understanding

Key Concepts: Empathic accuracy, perspective-taking, talk versus understanding

Many people take pride in how well they understand their spouse or children. Yet, when put to the test, spouses often misread each other. What’s more, more talking does not automatically lead to better understanding. Communication is often thought to be the single most important ingredient to a good relationship. But what exactly is good communication?

Learning Goals
• You can explain the differences between similarity, perceived similarity, and accuracy
• You can explain why more talking does not necessarily mean better understanding
• You can describe the circumstances under which partners are more likely to understand each other

Readings needed for quiz

Assignments          DUE 9/24
• Posting 3: Reflecting on Sillars and Roggensack (and do take a look at Tavris, it’s a fun read), why do you think more talking does not automatically lead to better understanding? What kind of communication may lead to better understanding? Post to Unit 3 forum on Blackboard
• Quiz 3: Questions about the quiz readings. Take quiz on Blackboard

Suggested additional reading
Unit 4  Conflict in families

Key Concepts: Perceptions of conflict issues, relationship between empathic accuracy and conflict

This unit focuses on conflict in step-families and on conflict discussions among adults and children. The readings illustrate difficult circumstances step-family members may find themselves in and the challenges of taking another’s perspective.

Learning Goals
• You can discuss conflict issues in step-families
• You can discuss conflict and mis-understanding between parents and children

Readings needed for quiz

Assignments  DUE 10/1
• Posting 4: Considering the findings of Coleman et al and Sillars et al, where do you see challenges in communicating about family conflicts? How could they be overcome? Post your response to Unit 4 forum on Blackboard.
• Quiz 4: Questions about the quiz readings. Take quiz on Blackboard.

Suggested additional reading
Unit 5  Conflict structure

Key Concepts: Demand/withdraw pattern, conflict structure

While conflict is unavoidable in human interaction, some ways of dealing with it are less productive than others. One of them is the so-called “demand/withdraw” pattern through which couples get “stuck” in their conflicts. Analyzing this pattern illustrates how conflicts of interest and cultural gender roles can conspire to get couples mired in unproductive conflict management.

Learning Goals

• You can define the demand/withdraw pattern
• You know different explanations for the demand/withdraw pattern
• You can explain the role of demand/withdraw in conflict management

Readings needed for quiz


Assignments

• Posting 5: Considering the evidence presented in the readings, why do you think the demand/withdraw pattern occurs and why is it difficult to break? How could it be avoided? Post your response to Unit 5 forum on Blackboard.
• Quiz 5: Questions about the quiz readings. Take quiz on Blackboard.

Suggested additional reading

Unit 6 Third parties in couple conflict

Key Concepts: Social networks, informal third parties, Ho’oponopono

Social networks include a variety of people who are close to us or with whom we interact on a regular basis. Informal third parties could be members of the extended family, friends, neighbors, workmates, or colleagues. They can influence conflict resolution and abuse in relationships. They may generate more conflict or can be involved in negotiating solutions.

Learning Goals
• You can explain how informal third parties may influence couple conflict
• You can describe Ho’oponopono, explain its strengths in its native cultural setting and limits when exported to different cultural contexts

Readings needed for quiz

Assignments DUE 10/15
• Posting 6: Reflecting on the quiz readings, and perhaps also Gottman et al, how do you see the role of family and social networks in couple conflict? Post your response to Unit 6 forum on Blackboard.
• Quiz 6: Questions about the assigned readings. Take quiz on Blackboard.

Suggested additional reading
Unit 7  

Violence & abuse

Key Concepts: Patterns of abuse, coercive control

Abuse is more than physical violence. Abuse includes emotional and sexual abuse and different forms of coercive control. Abusers tend to use whatever strategy works to manipulate the victim. In same-sex relationships this may include the threat of outing. Any one abusive action can be part of different longer-term patterns. It is important to distinguish between such patterns. Not all physical violence is used to control; it may also be used in self-defense.

Learning Goals

• You can explain how women may become trapped in abusive relationships
• You can explain what coercive control is and how it may not include physical violence

Readings needed for quiz


Assignments   DUE 10/22

• Posting 7: Reflecting on the readings this week (preferably on all of them), how can victims get trapped in abusive relationships? How could we prevent such traps? Post your response to Unit 7 forum on Blackboard.
• Quiz 7: Questions about the quiz readings. Take quiz on Blackboard.

Suggested additional reading

Unit 8  

Stay/leave decisions

Key Concepts: Normalization of violence, emotional abuse, stay/leave decisions

Cultural narratives of love and violence often contribute to a normalization of violence in intimate relationships. Economic, social, and cultural pressures affect women differently from men and add to entrapment. The process of breaking free can be long and dangerous. Many abusers become more violent when the woman decides to leave. Nonetheless, most women who attempt to leave abusive relationships eventually are successful.

Learning Goals
- You can describe emotional control dynamics in abusive relationships
- You can explain which considerations go into stay/leave decisions

Readings needed for quiz

Assignments         DUE 10/29
- Posting 8: Considering the readings for this week, can you explain how social and cultural factors may contribute to different dynamics for women and men in abusive relationships? Post your response to Unit 8 forum on Blackboard.
- Quiz 8: Questions about the quiz readings. Take quiz on Blackboard.

Suggested additional reading
Unit 9  Effects on children

Key Concepts: Constructive versus destructive conflict, direct versus indirect effects on children

Children suffer from violence in the home in different ways. They may be the direct targets of violence, or they may observe their parent being victimized. Many batterers also commit child abuse. Children also suffer from hostile arguments among their parents. However, when they can observe how their parents resolve arguments constructively children have an opportunity to learn how to handle conflict well.

Learning Goals
• You can identify direct and indirect effects of couple conflict on children
• You can explain how constructive couple conflict can have a positive influence on children

Readings needed for quiz

Assignments  DUE 11/5
• Posting 9: Reflecting on the findings from Cummings/Wilson and Edleson et al, what is it about parental conflict that may be beneficial for children, and what is harmful? Post your response to Unit 9 forum on Blackboard.
• Quiz 9: Questions about the quiz readings. Take quiz on Blackboard.
Unit 10  Child custody & domestic violence

Key Concepts: Child custody in the context of domestic violence

Decisions about child custody (or parental rights) can be difficult. They become even more consequential in the context of domestic violence. Such cases require decisions about the role of abusive men as fathers. This touches on deep-seated assumptions about what is in the best interest of children. Mothers often get caught in the middle when they try to protect their children from abuse but are court-ordered to let them have contact with the abuser.

Learning Goals
• You can explain why evaluating child custody decisions in the context of domestic violence is particularly difficult
• You know that a prior record of domestic violence is sometimes not given sufficient weight in custody decisions

Readings needed for quiz

Assignments  
DUE 11/12
• Posting 10: Reflecting on the readings, what do you think could be done to ensure that domestic violence is taking seriously in custody hearings? Post your response to Unit 10 forum on Blackboard.
• Quiz 10: Questions about the quiz readings. Take quiz on Blackboard.

Suggested additional reading
Unit 11  Challenges for service provision

Key Concepts: Homelessness, mental health, social services

Many social services are in place that are intended to help low-income families take care of their daily needs. Domestic violence and sexual violence can complicate and challenge the delivery of such services. Many victims of domestic violence are driven into homelessness, while many homeless are particularly vulnerable to domestic and sexual violence. Mental health problems sometimes are the result of living with the stress of violence and abuse.

Learning Goals

• You can describe the challenges facing homeless families dealing with violence
• You can explain how social services sometimes fail to support victims of domestic violence

Readings needed for quiz


Assignments  DUE 11/19

• Posting 11: What could be done to improve social service responses to victims in cases like those described in the readings? Post your response to Unit 11 forum on Blackboard.
• Quiz 11: Questions about the quiz readings. Take quiz on Blackboard.
Unit 12  Social change

Key Concepts: Informal responses, social networks, social change

Most individuals who experience physical or sexual violence disclose their experiences to a friend or family member. In contrast, most instances of abuse are never reported to formal authorities. Thus, informal third parties in people’s social networks play an important role in providing support. At the same time, social networks often include and ally with the abuser. For these reasons, the actions of third parties are crucial to social change.

Learning Goals
• You are aware of the role of social networks in providing informal responses to violence
• You can explain how informal third parties play a role in social change

Readings needed for quiz

Assignments  DUE 12/3
• Posting 12: Considering the readings, what can family, friends, and society at large do to end domestic violence? Post your response to Unit 12 forum on Blackboard.
• Quiz 12: Questions about the quiz readings. Take quiz on Blackboard.

Suggested additional reading
Feedback and Evaluation

The last week is for feedback and evaluation. Reflect on what you’ve learned and share your informal feedback with the instructor on Blackboard. U Maine will contact you about the formal teaching evaluations.

Learning Goals
- You can give informative feedback about your class experience

Readings needed for quiz
- No reading for this class!

Assignment
- Informal feedback: Please, share what you liked or did not like, what was particularly interesting or boring, and how useful the course was overall. Plus, any other feedback you may have. Post your response to Feedback forum on Blackboard.

THERE IS NO FINAL EXAM.

Formal feedback: U Maine will send you a link to the formal course evaluation online.

Thank you for taking this class!

Happy Holidays!
Practical resources

This is not a self-help course. If you are concerned about abuse in your own life or want to support somebody else, please call a rape crisis center or domestic violence project! Help is available! You can get **specialized and confidential** support and information about sexual or domestic violence from Rape Response Services and Spruce Run in the Bangor area and similar organizations in the state and nationally.

The University of Maine unfortunately no longer supports the Safe Campus Project, which used to provide specialized and confidential services directly on campus.

General confidential services on campus are available through the Counseling Center (581-1392), Cutler Health Center (581-4000) and possibly through the faith organizations. Student Affairs has a support person for issues related to sexual and domestic violence but this service is not confidential (581-1406). Campus police can be reached at 518-4040 or 911. Anonymous reporting is possible through campus eyes (581-9255).

**SEXUAL ASSAULT**
Rape Response Services, Bangor, [http://www.rrsonline.org/](http://www.rrsonline.org/)

### 24-Hour Sexual Assault Hotlines in Maine

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual Assault Center, Town</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rape Response Services, Bangor</td>
<td>1-800-310-0000 or 989-5678</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual Trauma and Recovery Services, Presque Isle</td>
<td>1-800-550-3304</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rape Education and Crisis Hotline, Norway</td>
<td>1-800-871-7741</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual Assault Victim’s Emergency Services, Farmington</td>
<td>1-800-871-7741</td>
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<tr>
<td>Downeast Sexual Assault Services, Ellsworth</td>
<td>1-800-228-2470</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual Assault Crisis &amp; Support Center, Augusta</td>
<td>1-800-871-7741 or 626-0660</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual Assault Crisis Center, Lewiston-Auburn</td>
<td>1-800-871-7741 or 795-2211</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rape Crisis Assistance &amp; Prevention, Waterville</td>
<td>1-800-525-4441</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual Assault Support services of Midcoast Maine, Bath-Brunswick</td>
<td>1-800-822-5999</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine, Portland</td>
<td>1-800-313-9900 or 774-3613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine Sexual Assault Support Hotline</td>
<td>1-800-871-7741; TTY 1-888-458-5599</td>
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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Spruce Run, Bangor, [http://www.sprucerun.net/](http://www.sprucerun.net/)

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<tr>
<td>Battered Women’s Project, Presque Isle</td>
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<td>Peaceful Choices, Milbridge</td>
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<td>Womancare, Dover-Foxcroft</td>
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<td>The Next Step, Ellsworth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Violence Project, Augusta</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Hope For Women, Rockland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abused Women’s Advocacy Project, Auburn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Crisis Shelter, Portland</td>
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<td>Caring Unlimited, Sanford</td>
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U.S. National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233; TTY 1-800-787-3224
The College’s Conceptual Framework and Course Expectations:
The conceptual framework of the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Maine has four themes: Research, Innovation, Collaboration, and Engagement. Through its commitment to these themes, the College intends that its degree candidates will engage in a thoughtful and evaluative analysis of the many forces and factors that affect learning and application of knowledge. Faculty in the College believe that civic engagement, collaboration and leadership require thoughtful and evaluative analysis of the many forces and factors that affect contemporary life, including learning, teaching and participation in society. Developing your capacity for reflective thought and action is a core outcome of this course.

Student Accessibility Services
If you have a disability for which you may be requesting an accommodation, please contact Student Accessibility Services, 121 East Annex, 581-2319, as early as possible in the term.

Academic honesty
Academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism and all forms of misrepresentation in academic work) is unacceptable at the University of Maine. Plagiarism (the submission of another’s work without appropriate attribution) and cheating are violations of the University of Maine Student Conduct Code. An instructor who has probable cause or reason to believe a student has cheated or plagiarized may act upon such evidence and report the case to an Associate Dean.

Confidentiality statement
All academic records of students are maintained in the highest of confidence as directed by FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act). For more information on the University of Maine FERPA Policy go to http://catalog.umaine.edu/content.php?catoid=50&navoid=1001.