



# Interpersonal Communication and Conflict Management

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## Programmed Syllabus

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INSTITUTE OF  
**THEOLOGICAL**  
STUDIES



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# Syllabus

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## Course Description

Organizational communication is a powerful tool of construction or destruction. In this course learners discover Biblical principles of interpersonal communication and conflict management in human relationships. The course gives attention to communication models, self-concept, non-verbal messages, stress, and other strategies that assist Christian leaders in developing interpersonal communication skills. In addition, the course focuses on the nature of conflict, how to identify common styles of conflict management, and how to manage conflict acceptably and productively.

## Course Objectives

*Upon completion of this course:*

1. You should understand the nature of communication and how it works in both interpersonal and organizational context.
2. You should improve your listening skills with respect to both superiors and subordinates.
3. You should be able to describe and explain self-concept and how it relates to various aspects of the communication process.
4. You should be able to implement effective communication in such leadership functions as recruitment, training and supervision.
5. You should have a clearer understanding of the nature of conflict.
6. You should have a better understanding of the biblical teaching on conflict and its management.
7. You should be able to identify common styles individuals employ in managing conflict.
8. You should be able to recognize and utilize acceptable conflict management strategies.

## Course Texts

### 1. Required Reading

Griffin, Em. *Making Friends (And Making Them Count)*. Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1987.

Sande, Ken. *The Peace Maker—A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (revised and updated). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2004.



# Syllabus

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## 2. Collateral Reading

Two additional books from the Bibliography, one dealing with **communication** and one with **conflict management**, should be read.

A **two-page** review should be sufficient for each of the books you choose to read (500-600 words for each review). Provide an evaluation of your reading, not just a report of the facts.

### COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Whether you sit in a traditional classroom or study from a distance, you will benefit from interaction, collaboration, and spiritual formation (ATS schools, note Standards 3.2.1.3; 10.3.3.3; 10.3.4.3). In order to meet this need in distance theological education, ITS is developing structures and resources to encourage spiritual formation and community interaction in our courses. In this course, we have included three collaborative learning features:

1. [ITS Online Interactivity Forum](#) (see course requirements) - fosters peer-to-peer interaction in a global, threaded discussion (required for all students)
2. [Spiritual Formation Project](#) (see course requirements) - fosters mentor-to-learner interaction in a mentor-guided reflection, discussion and application (required for all students)
3. [Learning Community Assignments](#) (see end of syllabus) - fosters peer-to-peer collaboration in a group approach to assignments (optional but recommended where possible)

Go to [www.ITScourses.org/interactivity/](http://www.ITScourses.org/interactivity/) for the most up-to-date ITS resources.

## Course Requirements

1. In order to receive two semester (or three quarter) hours credit for the course, the student must complete the course requirements within a one-year period unless the particular institution requires the completion of all the work within the framework of its semester or quarter. During this time, the student is expected to devote a minimum of **100 hours** to the completion of the course including listening to the 24 recorded lectures, doing the assigned readings mentioned above, answering all questions in the Programmed Syllabus as well as those in the Study Guide which accompanies the lectures, completing the Examinations, Research Paper and the Diagnostic Case Study.
2. The student should do the required reading in the Programmed Syllabus **before** listening to the lecture.



# Syllabus

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3. The student must complete **all** of the required readings.
4. The student must complete at least **800 pages** of reading outside of the assigned required and recommended textbooks and collateral reading. The student then can report these on a separate sheet of paper indicating the title of the book, author, publisher, date of publication and pages read.

## 5. Study Guide Questions

Each taped lecture is accompanied by five study questions to be answered in writing (see ITS Study Guide). Brief one or two sentence answers are preferred. These should be completed study by study as you listen to the tape and any resources may be used in compiling your answers.

## 6. Programmed Syllabus Questions

At the end of this syllabus there are questions based on the reading required for each lecture that must be answered in writing.

## 7. Research Paper

This study should focus on one of the 24 topics presented in the recorded series. The extended bibliographies in both interpersonal relations and conflict management should serve as resources for this research. This assignment should be designed so that **15 to 20 pages** could adequately reflect your work.

## 8. A Diagnostic Case Study

The student shall report an analysis of an interpersonal encounter in which the principles taught in this course can be used as tools to probe what was and what was not effective communication in this situation. This will be an opportunity to re-live what you might have done differently since you have completed this course. This assignment should be completed **after** listening to all twenty-four tapes.

## 9. ITS Online Interactivity Forum

Participate with other students worldwide in an ongoing asynchronous threaded discussion of two major course topics. Go to [www.ITScourses.org/interactivity/](http://www.ITScourses.org/interactivity/) to register for and enter the ITS On-Line Forum. In order to get the fullest benefit from the Forum, complete the assignment **after** you have listened to *all* the lectures. Be



# Syllabus

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sure to return to the forum after finishing the course to see how others respond. Follow these steps to complete the assignment:

- ◆ Post an original answer to each question for your course (75 word min.).
- ◆ Post your response to any previous answer given to each question (75 word min.).
- ◆ Submit a document to your proctor that contains the original questions, your postings, and the postings to which you responded.

**NOTE: Please read the “Assignment Instructions” in the Forum for details.**

Objective: to develop critical thinking skills through personal interaction with the content of the course and the responses of others within a diverse community of learners.

## 10. Spiritual Formation Project

**RATIONALE:** Ministry preparation and the Christian life require more than academic exercises. Learners also need personal, spiritual formation, which involves theological reflection and critical thinking on their current practices and assumptions. This process occurs as learners engage in self-reflection and interaction in a community of learning. **With this in mind**, ITS includes in all courses a capstone project addressing these issues and facilitating interaction beyond the formal learning environment (ATS schools, note Standards 3.2.1.3; 4.1.1; 10.3.3.3).

Write a **five-to-six page reflective essay** and **interview a mentor**, discussing the spiritual impact of this course on your life. *Identify your mentor early in the course*, and submit the essay to your grader when you take the final exam. This last project should not be a summary of course content, but an application of course principles. Complete the following:

- 1. Personal Reflection and Evaluation: *Reflect on the course*** – To integrate your academic studies with your walk of faith, reflect on the content of the course and evaluate your life in light of what you learned.
  - a. Follow these steps in your reflection:
    - Step 1: What **one** theme, principle, or concept in the course is the most significant to you personally? Why is it significant?
    - Step 2: What portion(s) of the course brought this theme/principle/concept to light?



# Syllabus

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Step 3: Think about your past. Why is it vital now for you to deal with and apply this theme/principle/concept?

Step 4: How should this affect your thoughts and actions, and what *specific steps* should you take to *concretely* apply what you have learned?

- b. Write your answers to the above questions in full paragraph form. (Recommended length for this reflection: **approximately three pages**)
- c. Give a copy of this reflection to your mentor (see #2).

**2. Community Reflection and Interaction: *Interview a mentor*** – Since the Holy Spirit uses the input of others to guide and form His people, interview a mentor according to the following guidelines:

a. Who should you interview? (1-3 are required; 4-6 are recommended)

1. Someone with whom you have a reasonably close relationship.
2. Someone who is a mature Christian ministry leader (i.e. a pastor).
3. Someone who is **not** your grader or a family member.
4. Someone who values the spiritual formation process.
5. Someone who is familiar with and values the subject of the course.
6. Someone who has experience using the content of the course in ministry.

NOTE: ***Identify your mentor early in the course***, and give him/her the page entitled “Guidelines for Mentors.”

b. Focus of the interview – Your interview should focus on the issues and questions you raise in your essay. For example:

- ◆ What feedback can your mentor give in response to your essay?
- ◆ In light of the course content, are the conclusions you made appropriate? Why or why not?
- ◆ What additional advice, deeper insights or broader applications might he/she suggest from his/her own life and ministry?

NOTE: Conduct this interview either in person (preferred) or over the phone. Do **not** use electronic communication (i.e. email, instant messenger, etc). Suggested length: 45 minutes.

**3. Synthesis and Application: *Draw your final conclusions*** – Having reflected on the course and the discussion with your mentor, synthesize what you have learned in these three sections:



# Syllabus

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- a. Section 1: Begin your essay with the personal reflection from #1 above. This should be exactly what you gave your mentor for the interview.
- b. Section 2: Comment on your interview, explaining what you discussed and the insights you gained from your mentor. Include the following:
  - ◆ What were the mentor's comments regarding your essay?
  - ◆ What advice did he/she give?
  - ◆ How did his/her comments expand or correct your application of the course?
  - ◆ Include the person's name, occupation, and the length of the interview.
- c. Section 3: Conclude with a synthesis of what you have learned. Answer the following:
  - ◆ If your mentor corrected any thoughts in your "Personal Reflection and Evaluation", how do you feel about these corrections? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
  - ◆ Synthesizing your thoughts from section one and your mentor's insight in section two, what final conclusions have you reached? How is this different from section one?
  - ◆ In light of the interview and further reflection, what additional, *specific* changes need to occur in your life and what *concrete* steps will you take to implement them?

**NOTE TO STUDENTS:** Your effort in this assignment will determine its benefit. If by the end of this course you have not yet reflected critically on your life in light of what you have studied, allow this assignment to guide you in that process. The instructor for this course will not score your essay based on the amount of spiritual fruit you describe; so do not exaggerate (or trivialize) what you have learned. **The primary grading criteria is that you have thoughtfully considered the principles of the course and realistically sought to apply them to your life.** If you have done this and met the minimal requirements (as noted above), you will earn the full points for this assignment.

Note on confidentiality: Perhaps the Holy Spirit is dealing with you in some very personal areas of your life. Because of this, your grader will keep your essay entirely confidential and either return or discard it.

Objective: to stimulate reflection and interaction on course principles in order to enhance personal spiritual formation.

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# Syllabus

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## 11. Examination

One final examination will feature 100 short answer questions. Each of the taped studies will be represented. Any resources such as book, tapes, or your own notes may be used in compiling your answers.

### Course Evaluation

1. Books reviewed .....	20%
2. Research Paper .....	25%
3. Diagnostic Study .....	15%
4. ITS Online Interactivity Forum .....	5%
5. Spiritual Formation Project.....	10%
6. Examination .....	25%



# Syllabus

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## Notes Regarding This Downloaded Syllabus

This downloadable syllabus is not exhaustive. It is designed to provide learners with a picture of the course, not a full outline of the course. Grader Guidelines, Appendixes, Bibliographies, Lecture Outlines, and Review Questions have been removed. The complete course syllabus is included with purchase of the course in either a digital or hard-copy format.

Likewise, individuals taking the class for credit are responsible for the syllabus requirements of the specific institution through which the course is offered. Each individual institution has reserved the right to alter or change the syllabus as deemed necessary.