



Social Justice and Peace Studies 3365G (570)
CONFLICT RESOLUTION, DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS
Fall/ Winter 2025-2026

Instructor: J. Young
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Course Information

Calendar Description:

This course examines the major methods and theories used for resolving disputes by situating conflict resolution in its historical, social and legal context. It will provide a critical examination of conflict resolution techniques and processes through cases studies and role-playing.

Prerequisite(s): Social Justice and Peace Studies 1025F/G and Social Justice and Peace Studies 1026F/G, or permission of the Program Coordinator.

Extra Information: 3 hours.

Course Weight: 0.50

Breadth: Category A

Subject Code: SOCLJUST

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course (fulfilment of pre-requisites, no anti-requisite conflicts), or special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

SJPS 3365G (570) Conflict & Alternative Dispute Resolution

Fall/Winter 2025/2026

Instructor: Dr. J. Young, e: jyoungma@uwo.ca

Office Hours: Before/after class, or by appointment

Mode of instruction: In-person

Course Information

Calendar Description: This course examines the major methods and theories used for resolving disputes by situating Alternative Dispute Resolution [ADR] in its historical, social and legal context. It will provide a critical examination of ADR techniques and processes through cases studies and role-playing.

Prerequisite(s): Social Justice and Peace Studies 1025F/G and Social Justice and Peace Studies 1026F/G, or permission of the Program Coordinator.

Extra Information: 3 hours Course Weight: 0.50 Breadth: CATEGORY A Subject Code:

SOCLJUST Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course, or special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course, and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees if you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites. Students are expected to adhere to all COVID-19-related protocols as per King's policy

Course Description

Conflict is an inevitable aspect of human life. From our interpersonal and workplace relationships to our engagement in public discourse and debates about justice, conflict emerges in both personal and structural forms. How we conceptualize and engage with conflict—particularly within systems marked by inequity, privilege, and marginalization—profoundly shapes its outcomes.

Conflict has the capacity to escalate and reinforce harm when rooted in structural oppression; yet, when approached critically and compassionately, it can also become a site for transformation, mutual recognition, and social repair. The study of conflict thus offers a vital opportunity to uncover paths toward equity, justice, and sustainable peace.

This course offers an innovative and critical approach to the study of conflict resolution and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) by providing students with both a theoretical grounding and hands-on, interactive learning opportunities. Through case studies, skills practice, and key readings, major methods and theories for resolving disputes are explored—particularly mediation—through an anti-oppressive, culturally responsive, and trauma-informed lens. Students will learn foundational skills and communication techniques used by conflict resolution practitioners, with applications across community, family, workplace, and youth justice contexts.

“If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner.”

~ Nelson Mandela

Course Objectives

Knowledge and Theory

Upon successful completion of the course, students will:

- Understand the conflict resolution continuum and the relative strengths and weaknesses of various processes (e.g., formal legal proceedings, arbitration, negotiation, mediation, and informal facilitation).
- Analyze the sources and dynamics of conflict at both interpersonal and structural levels.
- Examine how social identity, power, and systems of oppression (e.g., racism, sexism, colonialism, classism, ableism) shape conflict and its resolution.
- Understand the role of culture and intersectionality in conflict resolution and peacebuilding.
- Assess how mediators and facilitators can adapt processes to address inequities and power imbalances.
- Explore the application of mediation in different contexts (e.g., family, restorative justice, community, workplace) with attention to justice, inclusion, and accountability.

Skills

Students will develop and practice:

- Foundational mediation and negotiation skills and techniques through an anti-oppressive and trauma-informed lens.
- Active listening and reframing skills that promote empathy, dignity, and inclusion.
- Intake and interviewing skills that center cultural humility, respect, and psychological safety.
- The ability to move discourse from positional or adversarial thinking to interest-based and transformative approaches.
- Reflective practice that recognizes the mediator's own social positioning and its influence on conflict processes.

Course Readings

The schedule of readings will be provided on OWL. Readings will include articles and other sources made available on OWL, texts made available at library reserve, or from required text.

Required Text:

Fisher, R., Ury, W., & Patton, B. (2011). *Getting to yes: Negotiating agreement without giving in*. New York, N.Y: Penguin Book. The cost of the paperback is \$18.00

Weekly Topics

Week	Date	Topic
1	Jan. 6	Introduction to Course: Conflict, Power, and Peace Overview of Conflict Resolution & ADR
2	Jan. 13	Theories of Conflict & Approaches to Conflict Resolution (Part 1) Understanding conflict as both interpersonal and structural
3	Jan. 20	Theories of Conflict (Part 2): Diagnosing Conflict & Structural Drivers Circle of Conflict Analysis; positions vs. interests
4	Jan. 27	Foundations of Mediation and Negotiation Processes, roles, and ethics of mediation
5	Feb. 3	Test 1 (20% — covers Weeks 1–4)
6	Feb. 10	Justice, Power, and Marginalization in Conflict Resolution Access to Justice; Culture and Communication; Power imbalances
	Feb. 17	Reading Week – No Class
7	Feb. 24	Community Leader Day
8	Mar. 3	Conflict Resolution through Indigenous Lenses Exploring relational worldviews and decolonial approaches
9	Mar. 10	Test 2 (20% — covers Weeks 5–8)
10	Mar. 17	Restorative and Community-Based Approaches to Conflict Relational accountability, harm repair, and community mediation
11	Mar. 24	Community Engagement Day Students participate in or observe a community-based conflict resolution or justice initiative
12	Mar. 31	Applications & Contexts: Family Mediation Screening for Power Imbalances, Intimate Partner Violence, and Child Protection
13	Apr. 7	Synthesis & Reflection: The Promise and Limits of Mediation Integrating theory, skill, and justice perspectives

Assessments

Assessment	Value	Date
Test	20% (10 x 2)	Feb. 3; Mar. 10

Community Leader Interview	20%	Feb. 24
In Class Activities	35%	Ongoing
Community Engagement Day	25%	Mar. 24

Assessment Philosophy

Evaluation in this course is designed to balance theory, skill development, and critical reflection. Students will engage with conflict resolution not only as a set of techniques but as a practice shaped by culture, power, and systems of inequality. Assessments emphasize applied learning, collaboration, and self-awareness, encouraging students to connect classroom concepts to real-world contexts of justice, mediation, and peacebuilding.

Tests (2 × 10%)

Two short tests will assess students' comprehension of central theories, concepts, and models of conflict resolution. Test 1 (Week 5) will focus on foundational ideas, including theories of conflict, the conflict resolution continuum, and principles of negotiation. Test 2 (Week 9) will cover applied and critical perspectives, examining how power, culture, and marginalization shape conflict and influence mediation and restorative justice practices.

Community Leader Interview (20%)

This assignment provides an opportunity for students to connect with a community leader, mediator, or practitioner engaged in peacebuilding, restorative justice, or alternative dispute resolution. Students will conduct an interview exploring the leader's experiences, values, and approaches to conflict. The written analysis will link the interview to course themes, with particular attention to access, equity, and the role of systemic power in shaping both conflict and resolution processes.

In-Class Activities (35%)

In-class activities are central to the learning process and account for a significant portion of the grade. These activities include mediation simulations, small-group problem-solving, reflective dialogue, and skill-building exercises such as reframing, active listening, and conflict mapping. Students are evaluated on engagement, preparedness, collaboration, and the ability to apply theoretical knowledge to practice with cultural sensitivity and self-awareness.

Community Engagement Day (25%)

The Community Engagement Day offers a hands-on learning experience where students observe or participate in a community-based initiative related to conflict resolution, restorative justice, or peace education. Through this experiential component, students will connect theory to practice and critically reflect on how conflict is addressed within broader social systems. The accompanying reflection assignment will consider how community-driven approaches can address power imbalances, promote inclusion, and contribute to transformative peacebuilding.

KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
GENERAL COURSE POLICIES
2025-2026

1. Academic Accommodations, Consideration for Absences

Academic Accommodation (Accessibility)

Accessibility Services works to ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students, and supports students who may have a condition related to, but not limited to, vision, hearing, mobility, different ways of learning, mental health, chronic illnesses, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, ADD/ADHD, and temporary conditions (beyond short-term academic consideration). Accessibility Services provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive assessment. The accommodation policy can be found here [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate), they should follow the procedures below.

In some cases, where instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs.

Requests for academic consideration should be directed to the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration. Requests must be made as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration. For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate is available at https://www.kings.uwo.ca/kings/assets/File/currentStudents/courses_enrollment/exams_and_tests/SMC-Feb-2025.pdf.

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per course.

Instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring formal supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline for each course.

For further information, please see:

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

Absences from Final Examinations

If you miss the Final Exam, contact the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a “Multiple Exam Situation” (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, or more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details (under Special Examinations).

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and Academic Advising Office if a course requirement will be affected by a religious holiday/observance. Notice must be given as early as possible, and no later than two weeks prior to an examination, and one week prior to a midterm test date. It is the responsibility of such students to inform themselves concerning the work done in classes from which they are absent and to take appropriate action.

2. Support Services

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King's University College:
<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-services/>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King's University

College: <http://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/campus-services/student-supportservices/personal-counselling/>

Good2talk is a good online and phone 24/7 resource for students and is available in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

MentalHealth@Western provides a complete list of options about how to obtain help:
https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/

Academic Support Services at King's University College:
<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/academic-resources/>

GBSV Support:

King's is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at:
<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

You can reach someone supports at Kings by emailing Care@kings.uwo.ca or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a social worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western's Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by email or by calling 519-661-3568.

Further supports can be found on this website: <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safecampus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

See also https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html

University Students' Council offers many valuable support services for students, including the health insurance plan: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

3. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

Use of Electronic Devices: Unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations. Unauthorized possession of such a device during a test or examination constitutes an academic offence.

Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones in the Classroom: King's University College at Western University acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones can contribute to student engagement and effective learning. At the same time, King's recognizes that instructors and students share jointly the responsibility to establish and maintain a respectful classroom environment conducive to learning.

The use of electronic devices by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using electronic devices for purposes not directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct; see <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-affairs/code-of-student-conduct1/>

Inappropriate use of electronics (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., creates a significant disruption. As a consequence, instructors may choose to limit the use of electronic devices in these settings. In addition, in order to provide a safe classroom environment, students attending in-person class sessions are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

4. Statement on Academic Offences

King's is committed to academic integrity. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, is posted at

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. Check with you instructor on what tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammarchecking tools) are permitted in the course. Because a tool is permitted in one course, that does not mean it is permitted in other courses.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system; see <https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/Originality Reports - TurnItIn.html>.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

5. Copyright of Course Material

Lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a faculty member. Unauthorized sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member wishes to post a student's answers or papers on the course website, they should ask for the student's written permission.

6. Use of Recordings

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation and/or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

7. Policy on Attendance

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.