



Lakehead University

2026F

Conflict Transformation

Poli - 3519 – FA

Mon & Wed 08:30 – 10:00am

Room: RB-3026

Instructor: Benjamin Maiangwa

Office: RB 2041

Hours: by appointment or email

Email: bmaiangw@lakeheadu.ca

Course Description

This course invites students on a transformative journey into the heart of conflict and peace, not as distant, abstract concepts, but as deeply personal and profoundly communal experiences. Here, students will learn to see themselves not just as passive recipients of peacebuilding knowledge, but as active agents of change, capable of shaping the world around them through the power of their own stories.

We begin with the premise that your narrative matters. Your lived experience, your voice, and your perspective are essential tools in understanding and resolving conflict. Through reflective practice and critical inquiry, students will explore how personal narratives can illuminate pathways to peace, healing, and justice, both within themselves and in the communities they inhabit.

Learning Methods and Outcomes

The learning process will be delivered by way of lectures, readings, assignments/thought papers, group exercises, and role plays.

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Understand and differentiate between dialogue and everyday conversations, as well as constructive and destructive storytelling.
2. Understand and differentiate between conflict typologies, including interpersonal, intergroup, and intragroup conflicts, and how they play out in classrooms, workplaces, and other social settings.
3. Apply key concepts such as negative peace, positive peace, structural violence, and cultural violence to real-world case studies.
4. Design context-sensitive conflict transformation strategies that prioritize local voices and participatory methods.
5. Reflect on their individual strengths as group participants and articulate ways in which they can participate meaningfully in political spaces.

Course Schedule

Week/Class	Topic(s)	Literature/Activities
Week 1 & 2	Introduction What's your story?	● Introduction & Welcome ● Review course description/overview, materials, and assignments ● Review policies for classroom ● Overview of basic concept of Narrative Practices
	Storytelling	● Tree of Life ● Debriefing
Week 3 & 4	Typologies of Violence Direct, Structural, Cultural, and Racial Violence	● A holistic look at violence and identity: Johan Galtung and Chuck Egerton's article
Week 5 & 6	Understanding conflict	● Conflict Sheet ● Conflict Etymology ● Defining conflict ● Types and causes of conflict ● Conflict Analysis (Conflict Tree)
	Conflict in the workplace/Conflict Management Styles	● Constructive and Destructive conflict ● Sources of conflict ● Conflict Styles ● Anonymous Questionnaire on Sources of Satisfaction and Conflict in the workplace <i>Photosophia</i>

	(Seminar) Conflict Transformation	• John Paul Lederach's Little Book of Conflict Transformation
Week 7 & 8	Building Negotiation Skills (Getting to Yes)	• Preparing for Negotiation • Understanding negotiation and types of negotiations. Understanding relationships, positions and interests, creating options. • Strategies & techniques, BATNA, negotiation jujitsu's • Chairs of Power
Week 10 & 11	Mediating Difficult Conversations	Phases of Mediation • The mediator • Introduction • Storytelling • Impacts • Agreement • Listening Exercise
Week 12	Memory Practice in Transforming Conflict	• The Ghost of Rwanda • Memory/Remedy • In Praise of Forgetting • Debate • Conflict Transformation
Week 13	Role Play	• Community Land Dispute

		• University Protest • Peace Negotiation in a Divided Society
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Note: Instructor reserves the right to adjust the course schedule without prior notification to meet the changing needs of the class as a whole. It is the responsibility of the students to follow up in cases of missed classes.

Assigned Readings

- Maiangwa, Benjamin (ed.), 2023. *The Paradox(es) of Diasporic Identity, Race, and Belonging, Politics of Citizenship and Migration*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-38797-5_8 (Chapter 8).
- Chigbo, Anyaduba., Maiangwa, Benjamin. 2020. Against Memory as Remedy to the Traumatic Aftermaths of the Nigeria-Biafra War Past: Wither Justice? *Social Dynamics: A Journal of African Studies* Vol 46(2): 277-296.
- Galtung, Johan (1969). Violence, Peace, and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1969), pp. 167-191
- John Paul Lederach (2014). *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation*. New York: Good Books. <https://professorbellreadings.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/the-little-books-of-justice-peacebuilding-john-lederach-the-little-book-of-conflict-transformation-good-books-2014-1.pdf>
- Fisher, Roger., and Ury, William. 2011. *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving in*. New York: Penguin Books (Read Chapters I, II, & III).

Assignments

Considering the practical and experiential nature of the course, the participants will be expected to actively engage and participate in group and individual exercises as part of their assignments. For the most part, the assessments for this course will be based on role plays and active engagements in class. Participants will engage in role plays and participate actively in discussing class materials. Accordingly, they will write an essay and present two thought papers on their experience during the two terms of the semester. In addition, participants will be expected to keep a journal and submit a 5-page (double spacing) leadership development plan on how they intend to use the skills learnt during the course. Details of the assignments will be provided in class.

Class Participation - 10%

2 Thought papers (15 marks each) –	30%
Leadership Development Plan (LDP) –	5%
Seminar	- 10%
Fall Term Essay	- 25
Case Study/Role Play/Presentation	— 20%

COURSE REQUIREMENTS/ASSIGNMENTS

Class Participation 10%

Please note that **attendance is mandatory**. Success in this class requires that you do all the reading and that you come regularly to class. More than 3 absences will lead to a 0 grade for class participation. Students will be expected to have completed the reading assignments for each week **prior** to seminar sessions. The readings will serve as vehicles for lectures and classroom activities. Class participation should provide some evidence that you are keeping up with the readings/role plays and continuing to think about the issues raised in the course.

Evaluation of your class participation will be based on the following criteria:

- 1). Raising and answering questions related to the assigned readings.
- 2). Sharing ideas and insights.
- 3). Sharing personal experiences and observation related to the course.
- 4). Participating in ongoing role plays.

Thought Papers: 30%

You will write **two Thought Papers**, one at the end of each term.

Each Thought Paper is worth **15%**

The Thought Papers allow you to integrate the **central themes** of Conflict Transformation with the **readings, role-plays, and class activities** from each term. These papers are not summaries. They are critical reflections that demonstrate how course concepts have shaped, challenged, or expanded your understanding of conflict transformation.

Each Thought Paper must:

- Be **1,500 words**.
- Focus on **one central theme** from the term (for example: relationality, structural violence, moral imagination, storytelling, identity, power, transformation).
- Engage directly with **assigned readings, class lectures, role-plays**, and other course activities.
- Offer **critical reflection and experience**, not description or summary.

- Show how course concepts influenced your thinking about conflict transformation.
- Be submitted on **MyCourseLink** under **Thought Paper 1** and **Thought Paper 2**.

Guiding Questions

- What idea or theme from the term most changed how you understand conflict?
- How did a specific reading deepen or complicate your thinking about that theme?
- Which role-play or classroom activity helped you experience the theme in practice?
- How did your own assumptions, emotions, or reactions shift as a result?
- What does this theme reveal about the challenges and possibilities of conflict transformation?

Your paper will be assessed on:

- Depth of reflection
- Clarity and coherence of the central theme
- Integration of readings and activities
- Critical engagement with course concepts
- Organization and writing quality

Research Paper: 25%

One **10-15-page** research paper on a topic of your choice is **due December 1**. The research paper is a detailed analysis of a particular case and the application of theory and practice to that case. Part I will thoroughly describe a particular form of conflict (e.g., ethnic, environment, North-South, gender, civil war, interpersonal, terrorism etc.) and review appropriate conflict transformation approach that might be able to respond to this conflict. In discussing approaches to the intervention, you may use a combination of peace theories, including theories not discussed in class. You should begin to think about the topic of your paper at the beginning of the semester. Possible topics include, but are certainly not limited to, the following:

1. Compare how these two approaches differ today and why the distinction matters in contemporary peace practice.
2. Examine how identity and narrative shape protracted social conflicts in modern societies.
3. Analyze how unequal power relations influence justice and long-term transformation.
4. Evaluate the ethical dilemmas faced by external actors intervening in conflicts today.
5. Explore how social media and digital tools create new opportunities and risks for peacebuilding.
6. Investigate how environmental stressors generate new conflicts and require innovative transformation strategies.
7. Assess how art, music, and drama are used as tools for healing and conflict transformation.

8. Study global trends and local realities of youth participation in peacebuilding.
9. Consider how emerging AI technologies may shape the future of conflict transformation.
10. Critically evaluate the UN's successes and limitations in transforming conflicts.
11. Explore how truth commissions, reparations, and legal processes support long-term transformation.
12. Examine community-led reconciliation efforts in post-genocide Rwanda through a conflict transformation lens.
13. Identify lessons from the Good Friday Agreement for contemporary conflict transformation.
14. Investigate how Indigenous mechanisms like Mato Oput in Uganda contribute to conflict transformation.
15. Analyze how conflict transformation unfolds in divided urban spaces such as Israel-Palestine.
16. Explore the roles women have played in transforming conflicts in Liberia, Colombia, and other contexts.

Please Note:

- Students can come up with their essay topics based on their individual interests. Such topics should first be cleared with the instructor.
- All essays should have a title page indicating the title of the essay, the name of the student, the course number, the name of the instructor, and the department.
- In terms of formatting, all essays should be doubled-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point fonts, 1 inch margin and should be submitted on D2L on or before the due date.
- For citation and referencing, please use the APA referencing style 7th edition for all written work.
- The essays will be evaluated based on grasp of the topic, quality of argument, depth of analysis, originality of approach, familiarity with the issues and literature, as well as structure, organisation, grammar, referencing and formatting.

The expectation of the instructor is that you will employ a full library search strategy to uncover materials for your paper.

Case Study 20%

Role Play Assignment Brief

This group project invites students to explore real-world scenarios in conflict transformation. Each group will select one of three case studies and develop a 30-minute classroom presentation. The project emphasizes the application of theoretical frameworks to practical conflict transformation contexts.

Objectives

- Apply conflict transformation theories to real-world cases.
- Develop collaborative and creative problem-solving skills.
- Engage critically with academic and non-academic sources.
- Demonstrate understanding through role adaptation and performance.

Group Structure

Students will be divided into three groups. Each group will select one case scenario to analyze and present. Groups are encouraged to assign roles and responsibilities to ensure balanced participation.

Case Options

1. The Bridge at East Bank
2. The Clinic at Riverbend
3. Stories of the Riverbank

Expectations

Groups should draw upon a variety of sources including academic literature, news articles, expert interviews, and documentaries. Presentations should incorporate critical perspectives and may include audiovisual elements. The focus should be on the group's adaptation and performance of roles within the selected case.

Evaluation Criteria

- Depth of theoretical application
- Creativity and clarity of role adaptation
- Use of diverse and credible sources
- Team collaboration and participation
- Engagement and delivery during presentation

Seminar (10%)

Students will write **one Seminar paper** (maximum **1.5 pages**) on any two chapters from *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation* by John Paul Lederach. The response paper should offer a thoughtful reflection on how the chapters contributes to our understanding of Conflict Transformation in theory and practice. Students are encouraged to focus on one or two key ideas rather than attempting to cover the entire chapter.

The response should demonstrate critical engagement with the text, showing how the chapter connects to broader course themes such as conflict resolution, structural violence, global power hierarchies, dependency, resistance, or the lived experiences of marginalized communities. The seminar paper must also include **two discussion questions** that could be used to guide class conversation.

Notes on The Leadership Development Plan (LDP) 10%

The LDP is a tool to support your professional growth throughout your student and work experience. You'll start writing your LDP during the course and you're expected to share with any of the instructors or your adviser for feedback. The first step in completing your Leadership Development Plan is to think of an Essential Question. This question will help you to frame your

experience throughout the course and help apply what you have learned in your community or even the classroom. Essentially, your LDP is a *living* document. As you build your experience and networks, you can add these new experiences, networks, contacts, and learnings into your LDP. The LDP will also allow you to reflect on your growth and the contributions that you have made to your society, community, region, and country.

Here are some of the themes that should be highlighted in your LDP:

Cover page

Vision statement (your dream for the future) (1marks)

Core values (your identity as a leader) (1marks)

Short term goals (1-2 years) (1marks)

Long term goals (5-10 years) (1marks)

Conclusion (1marks)

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Late assignments are **not acceptable** because I have found that late assignments disrupt the learning process. Late assignments will be marked down if the student fails to notify the instructor in advance of the circumstances surrounding the reason for turning in the paper late. This course is envisioned as a kind of simulated classroom where students learn in interaction with each other and the instructor. If you are not caught up with assignments and readings, you are unable to participate effectively in class discussions, and this affects the quality of the whole course, as learning is an interdependent process. Also, it is rarely possible to build up a store of knowledge without a measure of consistency and continuity. But things happen! I will accept one late assignment during the semester. All subsequent late assignments will be marked down a grade if they are submitted one week after the due-date, and two grades if they are submitted more than two weeks after the due-date.

LAKEHEAD RESOURCES

If you find yourself having difficulty with the course material or any other difficulties in your student life, don't hesitate to ask for help! If it is about an issue beyond this class, please contact your academic advisors, or get help from any number of other support services on campus, including:

The Student Success Centre has many programs and support services in place to help you achieve your academic and personal goals while studying at Lakehead University. They provide academic support through tutoring services, career exploration, co-operative opportunities and leadership development. More information is available here <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/current-students/student-success-centre>.

The Lakehead Library provides access to resources, study rooms, and research support both online via chat and in person with more details available here <https://library.lakeheadu.ca/>.

Public Computer Labs are available on campus where you may write and/or print out your work. For more details go to <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/departments/services/helpdesk/computer-labs>.

Student Life and Services offers health and wellness resources both on and off campus, as well as opportunities for involvement in health and wellness activities. More information is available here <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/current-students/student-services/or>.

Office of Human Rights and Equity. You have the right to an education that is free from any form of discrimination. A wide variety of resources are available here
<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/departments/services/human-rights-and-equity/resources>.