



UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE
ACADEMY FOR INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND PEACEBUILDING

CULTURAL ADAPTABILITY: ADVANCED APPLICATIONS

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Course Facilitator:
Peter Weinberger, Ph.D.

Phone: 202 429 4761
Email: pweinberger@usip.org

This advanced course draws on the core lessons of the course "Cultural Adaptability in Complex Operations" and provides tools to better grasp and respond to cultural differences across the board. Participants work in exercises and advanced simulations to learn to size up a situation, interpret a group's emotional state and power relationships, and plan appropriate responses. In addition, there is a focus on building up abilities in empathy and emotional intelligence for different cultural settings—sensing other's feelings and perspectives as well as taking an interest in their concerns.

Objectives: By the end of this course, participants will gain:

- Skills to recognize how “conflict entrepreneurs” operate—and how to successfully respond to them
- Guidelines how religion affects conflict dynamics and related guidance for consultations with religious communities
- Understanding and practical steps to counter violent extremists
- Insights to utilize indigenous or traditional governance and reconciliation measures
- Guidance for ongoing consultations with communities, impact assessment of programs

Teaching Methodology and Structure:

The course takes a two-fold approach to teaching. It is largely *elicitive* in nature, meant to draw out and utilize each participant's professional experience. The class also has a *prescriptive* component: new concepts and analytical tools are introduced, but with the aim for each student to identify and articulate how these ideas can be *directly applied* to his or her work.

A number of *interactive exercises* will be used as learning tools: case studies, role-playing, simulations, guided discussions, etc.

Course Requirements:

Students are asked to attend every session and to participate in all activities and discussions/debriefs.

Course Schedule:

June 4: Empathy and Emotional Intelligence

1) Discussion and Exercise: *When you don't know what you don't know*

Participants learn about empathy and “emotional intelligence,” how these concepts can help them to do their jobs better, especially when under pressure.

2) Guided Discussion and Exercise: *The Element of Trauma*

Frameworks are presented to understand traumas, particularly on a large-scale level. These ideas form the basis of skill sets needed to address the problem of “conflict entrepreneurs,” or demagogues who enflame ethnic and religious identities as means to advance complex political and financial agendas.

3) Exercise: *Identifying and Dealing with “Conflict Entrepreneurs”*

Course participants will analyze and address “conflict entrepreneurs” in a fictional case. Teams will present recommendations how to better deal with similar occurrences in the future, as 1) general preventative measures, and 2) crisis management techniques.

June 5: Operating successfully when Culture and Religion Merge (and are very different from your own)

1) Exercise and Small-Group Discussion: *When their Religion is Different, When their Secularism is Different*

Participants use a perception-building activity to explore the issue of how their own personal values or religious faith shapes their conception of conflict management peacebuilding. The aim is to demonstrate that outreach or overtures may be unsuccessful unless they actively resonate with local parties' worldview.

2) Guided Discussion and Exercise: *Religion and Politics: Differences in Practice*

Religious traditions underpin and guide politics, even within the largely secular West. The discussion focuses on drawing out these often implicit influences and it is noted how some taken-for-granted principles of peacebuilding are more specifically Western than universal in nature.

3) Guided Discussion and Exercise: *Apology, Honor, and Ritual Transformation*

Rituals are crucial tools of peacemaking when there are symbolic dimensions of conflict and parties cannot or will not articulate their true feelings through the use of words in dialogue. Techniques are relayed to recognize nonverbal cues for gestures of apology or honor and how to utilize ritual and symbol to bring about tangible, lived experiences of change. Participants will role-play groups in divided societies, and must agree upon the design of either 1) joint mourning rituals or 2) a monument to the deceased (of both groups) as part of a peace process.

June 6: Engaging Populations, Countering Violent Extremism

1) Discussion and Exercises: *Working with the “Mainstream,” Countering Violent Extremists*

The focus of the exercise is developing new partnerships. It addresses how to counter extremists, especially when the “mainstream” of a society is made up of traditional and conservative religious actors.

2) Discussion and Exercises: *Democracy, Development and Religious Actors*

There are increasing numbers of religious and democratic movements, particularly after the Arab Spring. The discussion gives guidance on how to size up these groups, and offers new means of approaching democratic and religious movements.

3) Guided Discussion and Exercise: *Using Ex-Combatants as Change Agents*

Militias commonly form along ethnic and sectarian lines and often constitute prominent sub-groups within the life of a conflict. They in turn can be important resources for peace. Participants will be asked to make recommendations how to give ex-combatants a more active role in peacebuilding efforts, but in a way that does not undermine disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) measures enacted at the end of armed conflict.

4) Discussion and Exercises: *Impact Assessment of Programs: Reproducing Best Practices*

Participants will learn how to gauge which programs are most valuable, how to realistically measure and reproduce successes. There is also a focus on avoiding issues of dependency funding.

June 7: Reframing vs. Rebranding

1) Guided Discussion and Exercise: *Reframing the In-Group*

Many cultures and peoples in conflict have traditional reconciliation practices that are overlooked or underutilized by third party mediators and other advisors. Participants will be asked to analyze the potential advantages and pitfalls of using such resources to try to enhance the legitimacy of outside peacebuilding efforts.

2) Discussion and Exercise: *Human Rights: What is your Role?*

There is often a tension between the desire to respect indigenous identity norms and a commitment to human rights in peacebuilding. Participants will respond to scenarios dealing with issues such as honor killings and child marriage.

3) Discussion and Exercise: *Empowering Women in Post-Conflict Environments*

It is important to involve women in peacebuilding, but the challenge lies in navigating the patriarchal cultures of many developing countries. Participants will be asked to devise strategies to empower women in the “opportunity space” often provided by post-conflict situations.

4) Guided Discussion and Role-playing Exercise: *The Role of Education*

Course participants will participate in an exercise on contested histories that could potentially be used to stimulate both the process of educational reform as well as general healing strategies for divided societies.

June 8: Remembering under Pressure

1) Guided Discussion and Exercise: *Different Levels of Trust*

Deeply divided societies tend to remain segregated even in a successful peace process. Participants will reflect upon the ability of local leaders in these communities to build trust, and how outside advisors can shepherd this process in moments of crisis.

2) Capstone Exercise: *Peacebuilding in Ashland*

Course participants will be given a scenario for the fictional divided society of Ashland, in which they must address a peacekeeping mission gone awry.