



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

Building Bridges through Intergroup Dialogue

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9:30 am – 4:30 pm

Draft (subject to modifications)

Facilitator:

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Course Description:

Peacebuilding practitioners and others working in conflict-affected countries often face the challenge of working with groups that are experiencing divisions rooted in identity. Practitioners have the opportunity to bring such groups together in order to increase understanding of the “other” and eventually explore common action. Building these bridges serves to strengthen communities by allowing alienated groups to come together as allies.

While identity-based differences may or may not be the source of conflict, they can be contributing factors which can continue to hinder peacebuilding processes well after violent hostilities have abated. Intergroup Dialogue (ID) is a tool practitioners can use to engage alienated groups in conversation about their identities in a safe, trusting environment. Dialogue around differences takes both time and careful facilitation. It involves skills that cannot be gained by reading theory alone.

This course is designed to help prepare participants to engage people from one or more identity groups in dialogue about the similarities and differences of experience that exist within and between groups, in order to increase understanding and dismantle the perceptions of the “other” that can contribute to conflict. The goal of the dialogue process is for participants to emerge with a better understanding of and relationship with those from a different identity group. While there

are many goals for dialogue processes, this course will focus primarily on addressing identity-based differences through dialogue.

Objectives:

- Participants will explore the process of dialogue by engaging in an identity-based dialogue.
- Participants will learn about the application of ID in various contexts including Track II peace processes.
- Participants will understand and apply the theory of ID.
- Participants will develop facilitation skills, which will help prepare them to facilitate dialogues on their own.

Teaching Methodology:

The primary learning approach in this course is experiential learning, through which participants will engage in the thinking, sharing, experimenting, trusting, and learning that they will engage others in when they facilitate dialogues. Experiential learning enables students to acquire and apply knowledge and skills as well as process feelings in an immediate setting. It involves a direct encounter with a phenomenon rather than thinking about an encounter. Reflection is a key component of experiential learning and will be a part of the dialogue program.

Course Requirements:

Participation: The nature of dialogue is cumulative; understanding concepts and experiences discussed in later dialogues is, to some degree, contingent upon having attended and participated in earlier sessions. Therefore, it is essential that participants attend the entire course.

Readings: Readings provided include ones that are necessary in preparation for the conversations and presentations each day. The facilitator will indicate each day which readings should be reviewed for the next day's sessions. All readings, including those that supplement your understanding of the theory, process, and cases of intergroup dialogue, can be accessed online by following the steps below:

- Log on to Moodle by clicking at: <https://academyonline.usip.org/login/index.php>
- Your user name is your first initial followed by your last name, for example, Adam Smith would use: asmith
- Your initial password is Usip!123 – this password is case sensitive. You may change your password after your first log-in.

Reflections: Dialogue is a process involving extensive self-reflection, both during the dialogue and after. We will ask participants to write about their experience each day – what they noticed, what they felt, what they thought, etc. – and will ask volunteers to share a sentence or two from their reflections.

Micro-Facilitation: On the last day of the course, each participant will practice their dialogue facilitation skills by co-facilitating a 20-minute dialogue for their peers. Course facilitators and invited guest coaches, as well as peers, will provide feedback after each practice dialogue.

Course Outline:

Day 1

Morning

1) Dialogue Beginnings

Introductions to each other and the course; expectations; group norms

2) What Is Dialogue and Why Do We Need It?

Roots and conceptualizations of dialogue; key questions and assumptions

Required Readings:

- Bettye Pruitt and Philip Thomas, “Chapter 1: Introduction, Chapter 1.2: The Need for Dialogue and Chapter 1.3: Defining Dialogue” in *Democratic Dialogue – A Handbook for Practitioners*, GS/OAS, International IDEA, UNDP (2007)
- Schoem, Hurtado, Sevig, Chesler, and Sumida, “Intergroup Dialogue: Democracy at Work in Theory and Practice” in *Intergroup Dialogue: Deliberative Democracy in School, College, Community and Workplace*. David Schoem and Sylvia Hurtado (eds.) (1999)
- Harold Saunders, “Chapter 5: The Dialogue Process” in *A Public Peace Process: Sustained Dialogue to Transform Racial and Ethnic Conflicts*, PALGRAVE (1999)

Recommended reading:

- Biren A. Nagda, Amelia Serahia Derr, “Intergroup Dialogue: Embracing Difference and Conflict, Engendering Community” in “learning together: Intergroup relations programs. New York: Teachers College Press.

3) Building Skills: Communication in Dialogue

Dialogue vs. debate; listening to understand; suspending judgment; communication exercise

Recommended readings:

- William Isaacs, *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together*, Chapter 1: "A conversation with a Center not Sides" (1999)
- Deborah Tannen, *The Argument Culture: Stopping America's War of Words*

Afternoon

- 4) **Experiencing Dialogue: Setting the Container**
Beginning the process of dialogue; dialogue expectations

Day 2

Morning

- 1) **Plenary Discussion of Day One**
Reflections on content (including readings) and the dialogue process
- 2) **Common Traits of Identity-based Conflict**
Dr. Peter Weinberger, Senior Program Officer, USIP

Reading:

- Atran, S. and R. Axelrod. In Theory: Reframing Sacred Values

- 3) **Intergroup Dialogue in Track II Peace Processes: The Case of the Inter-Tajik Dialogue**
Ambassador Harold Saunders¹

Readings:

- Saunders, H. Chapter 9: The First Test Tajikistan. In A Public Process: Sustained Dialogue to Transform Racial and Ethnic Conflicts
- Saunders, H. Chapter 12: Mini-Dialogues and Hybrids in Tajikistan. In A Public Process: Sustained Dialogue to Transform Racial and Ethnic Conflicts

Afternoon

- 4) **Experiencing Dialogue: Exploring Commonalities and Differences**
Begin exploring and mapping our experiences around identity, power, and privilege

Day 3

Morning

- 1) **Plenary Discussion of Day 2**
Reflections on content (including readings) and the dialogue process.
- 2) **Building Skills: Elements of Facilitation**
Qualities and skills of a facilitator; use of exercises in ID.

¹ Tentative.

Recommended Readings:

- Joellen P. Killion and Lynn A. Simmons. The Zen of Facilitation

3) Interfaith Dialogue (IFD) and Spiritual Dimensions of ID

Ms. Susan Hayward, Senior Program Officer, Religion and Peacemaking, USIP

Case Presentation and Discussion (Susan and Maria): USIP Ecumenical Dialogue Project in Colombia

Readings: TBD

Afternoon

4) Experiencing Dialogue: Probing Differences / Exploring Controversial Issues

Day 4

Morning

1) Plenary Discussion of Day 3

Reflections on content (including readings) and the dialogue process; managing group dynamics

2) Building Skills: The Art of Asking Questions

3) Building Skills: Designing a Dialogue Process

Readings:

- Bettye Pruitt and Philip Thomas, “Chapters 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 in Democratic Dialogue – A Handbook for Practitioners, GS/OAS, International IDEA, UNDP (2007)

Afternoon

4) Experiencing Dialogue: Deciding What It All Means Now and Going Forward

Day 5

Morning

1) Plenary Discussion of Day 4

Reflections on content (including readings) and the dialogue process.

2) Building Skills: Structuring a Dialogue Session

- Facilitation pairs exercise in designing a dialogue session

3) Facilitation Practice

Afternoon

4) Facilitation Practice

5) Closing Reflections and Course Evaluation