Spring 2021
6.S979 Multi-Stakeholder Negotiation for Technical Experts
Tuesdays 2:00-4:00 p.m.
Online over Zoom and Slack
[Version November 2020, to be updated in Jan 2021]

Instructors
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[May be updated at start of semester]

Teaching Assistants
(To be updated January 2021)

Overview
Engineering requires negotiating with many stakeholders: internally and externally. All technical innovators, leaders, and members of diverse teams, need to align efforts and overcome differences. Learn experientially the strategies and proven techniques that improve communications, relationships, and decision-making in groups - using simulations, role-plays, case studies and video analysis. Students who took 6.S978 in the Fall term will enhance their toolkit of intra and inter personal reflection and negotiation skills; expanding their knowledge to applications of multi-stakeholder negotiation. However, no prior experience in negotiation is required.

Technical experts don’t just negotiate one-on-one. Engineering team members and leaders are required to deal with their own team, other stakeholders within their organizations and many external parties. This is true of academic lab settings, and also of commercial technology development environments, government projects, certification and regulation. When the number of stakeholders increases, so do the complexities associated with communications, relationships, cultural differences and power dynamics. Effective professionals need to be able to map a multi-stakeholder situation and decide when and how to negotiate, facilitate, build winning coalitions, resolve conflicts and strive for consensus.

The course is designed primarily for graduate students in engineering and joint engineering-business programs (such as SDM, IDM, and LGO) with no (or some) prior education or experience in the fields of negotiation, and is open (with instructor permission) to all graduate students. This course is offered through the Gordon-MIT Engineering Leadership Program. Limited to 24 students.

Permission of instructor required (no prior experience in negotiation is required).

Students will be provided with a repertoire of proven negotiation strategies, practice-based approaches, and analytical frameworks that will enable them to develop their skills experientially and reflectively through simulations, role plays, case studies and video analysis. The course was first offered in 2020,
and received very high student evaluation feedback, with students successfully learning both in-person and on-line negotiation skills. Students will be required to be available on-line over video and agree to be video recorded for analysis and learning purposes.

Some of the most important work in the field of multi-party negotiation and dispute resolution is being done at the inter-university Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School (PON), which MIT is a part of. This course builds on the research at PON.

**Course Units:** 6 credits, 2-0-4

**Readings**

2. Additional reading materials provided by date via the Canvas Course Site.

**Learning Objectives**

Students completing this class will become more confident and capable in:

- Be able to describe the theory underlying multi-party negotiation situations
- Understanding dynamics of multi-stakeholder decision making and negotiation
- Helping to facilitate better group discussions and team meetings
- Supporting group leadership: when to follow, lead, postpone, or leverage an external facilitator
- Building skills for creating alignment of interests of multiple stakeholders and resolving conflict
- Developing a reflective model of their own personal theory of practice for multi-party relationship management

**Course Format**

Our class meets for 13, 2 hours sessions over the spring term of 2021. The first three sessions will include in-class exercises and class discussions. The remaining sessions will be of two types. In half of the sessions, students will participate in an experiential, complex, major multiparty role play simulation that will require the full time of the class (on-time attendance is key); The other half of the sessions will review the most recent simulation’s critical moments (as selected by negotiation observers), followed by an instructor led discussion of the class’s experiences, and presentation of additional material. Additional material will include shorter exercises, related case studies from current events, and linked aspects of multiparty negotiations. Examples of major learning activities include:

**Negotiation Exercises:** The course is built around a series of experiential negotiation simulations, exercises, and case studies. We will practice negotiating in groups during class sessions. The readings and discussions led by the instructors will provide additional knowledge for maximize your personal style and learning from these negotiation simulations. In these exercises, you should approach the role through the perspective of the designated person, even
if the role feels at odds with your own inclinations. After negotiation exercises, students will complete a reflection paper.

**Role Play Preparations:** The use of experiential learning exercises rests fully on students being prepared for each negotiation simulation, and on being fully present during the negotiation. For some exercises, you will be required to submit a negotiation planning document in class. In every situation, you will need to prepare in advance of the exercise.

**Negotiation Debriefs and Reflections:** These activities will follow each exercise in order to enhance your learning from the experiences. As part of the learning experience, the teaching team will engage with you via feedback on reflection papers you submit after certain negotiation simulations. Over the course, students will also take turns acting as a videographers to negotiation exercises. Videographers will record, review, and edit footage of their group’s negotiation process, enabling them to capture critical moments in very brief *video analysis* assignments which will be shared with the class during debrief sessions. Students will be required to be available on-line over video and agree to be video recorded for analysis and learning purposes.

**Personal Learning:** There is no “best way” to negotiate or exercise influence over group dynamics. This course aims to provide you with the tools, experience, and space to discover what works for you as an individual in various situations. This requires experimenting with new behaviors, expanding out of your comfort zone, and, occasionally, failing. The teaching team will do everything in their power to ensure the class environment lends itself to exploration and personal development and asks that you contribute to an environment of discovery and creativity. Be mindful of your personal strengths and weaknesses and try to monitor your opportunities for personal development, both in and out of class.

**Major Course Activities and Grading**

**TO UPDATE FOR SPRING 2021:**

- **30%** Class Participation
- **30%** Post-Negotiation Reflections
- **20%** Video Analysis (Clip creation)
- **20%** Personal Theory of Practice

**Class Participation**

Participation grades are based on preparation and participation in negotiation simulations and contributions to classroom discussions.

The negotiation simulations are carefully curated and constitute the central learning experiences in this course. You will need to be fully prepared for each day to ensure you are able to capitalize on the time
we share. **Your participation is critical for the learning experience of your peers.** We trust that, as a member of the class, you are committed to come to class prepared to provide your negotiation partner with the best possible learning opportunity. If you are unprepared, your negotiation partner’s learning will suffer. Your, and your peers, learning experiences in the class are of paramount importance to the teaching team - disregard for your peers will affect your participation grade.

In addition to negotiation simulations, this course has a large debrief and discussion element. Participation in these discussions is required, and is evaluated on **quality over quantity.** The teaching team does not track the number of hand raises, but rather that you intend to make insightful contributions to class learning. We recognize that everyone may have different styles of thoughtful reflection, and look forward to hearing your perspective.

The teaching team will be devoting considerable time to curating your learning experience. Missing classes, tardiness, and lack of preparation will mean not only that your learning experience is diminished but also that your peers’ learning opportunities will be reduced. Students will be required to be available on-line over video and agree to be video recorded for analysis and learning purposes. A tardiness to class of more than 10 minutes will result in half the attendance grade for that session.

**If for any reason you cannot meet the expectations noted above, please contact the teaching team as early as possible.**

**Post-Negotiation Reflections**

These one-page (maximum) papers are a crucial tool for developing your ability as a negotiator and their importance is reflected in the percentage of your overall grade. Reflection papers should address some of the key issues noted below. These papers will be treated as confidential among participants and the teaching team.

Reflection papers should not be detailed chronologies of the negotiation process. Instead, they should focus on analysis and insights. Discuss how the concepts and assigned readings informed your reflections on the negotiation.

**Other issues that can be addressed include:**

1. How did the negotiation process and outcome compare to your plans and/or expectations? What were the critical strategies or turns of events?
2. What surprised you most about your behaviors and/or emotions? About those of the other parties in the negotiation?
3. Who exercised the greatest influence and control over the negotiation process? How and why?
4. What are the main takeaway lessons from the negotiation?
5. How was this negotiation unique from those in past exercises or experiences?
6. If you had an opportunity to do this over again, with the same people, what would you do differently?
These reflection papers will be evaluated on:

1. Your ability to synthesize and integrate information from the readings (incorporating a minimum of 3 concepts or citations per page).
2. The quality of your answers to selected questions, such as the ones noted above.
3. The quality and usefulness of the feedback pertaining to others.
4. Overall evidence of insight and personal learning.

Papers should be submitted via Canvas each week following a simulation on Friday by 11:59AM (that is just before Noon).

Video Assessment Assignments
Each student will act as a videographer to one or two of the major negotiation exercises. The videographer will record, review, and edit footage of their group's negotiation process, enabling them to capture critical moments in very brief video analysis assignments which will be shared with the class during debrief sessions.

For example, a short 3-minute video may include:
- a statement made early in the negotiation agreeing to a ground rule for discussion,
- then an exchange later in the negotiation that contradicted that agreement,
- and the ensuing escalation and loss of trust that ensued.

Video Assessment Assignments will be due each week following a simulation on Friday by 11:59AM (that is just before Noon).

Personal Theory of Practice
A key element of being an effective negotiator and leader is the ability to incorporate skills, strategies, and techniques developed over the course of the semester with a nuanced understanding of your bias, preferences, and negotiating style. The final assignment for this class will be to review your journey - via your reflections and the feedback you received - to construct a document outlining your personal theory of practice in the field of multiparty negotiation and facilitation.

This document should be no longer than two pages (double spaced) and should explore your personal style of engagement with key aspects of the course, which have been uncovered in reflections and through peer-feedback on your reflections. Examples of core competencies include, but are not limited to: engaging in distributive bargaining; your ability to creatively collaborate to solve problems; being able to build and manage coalition dynamics; claiming value created at the negotiating table; identifying your values and ethics; understanding and engaging with your emotions efficiently; and balancing power imbalances while influencing others.
Development of the personal Theory of Practice will occur over the semester in two steps: The first will be developing a draft based on personal reflection and lessons-learned during the first few weeks of the semester (two strengths I will build on, two areas/skills I want to improve). After providing feedback to colleagues on their draft, and likewise receiving feedback on your draft, you will be asked to provide an updated personal Theory of Practice that incorporates peers’ feedback and additional lessons that were learned during the course (three strengths I will build on, three areas/skills I want to improve).

An impactful personal theory of practice should build on your experiences in the class and also be oriented to help you meet future challenges. Use this as an opportunity to discuss what near future opportunities and obstacles you anticipate encountering - and how your personal theory of practice will inform your strategy for success.

- A draft of your personal theory of practice will be due on March 16th, 2021.
- Peer feedback for personal theory of practice is due on April 13th, 2021
- Your final personal theory of practice is due on May 6th, 2020 (Noon)

General Course Expectations

**Preparation**  
Come to class with assigned materials reviewed and ready to contribute to class discussions.

**Proactivity**  
Be proactive in both planning and working. If you are experiencing - or anticipate experiencing - any problems, difficulties, or uncertainties, let the teaching team know as soon as possible, our goal is to promote your and your peers’ learning experience.

**Punctuality**  
Plan to start class and complete all assignments on time.

**Personal Responsibility**  
We expect all students to take responsibility for their learning and all course obligations, especially those aligned with MIT’s Academic Integrity. If you have questions about MIT’s Academic Policy visit [https://integrity.mit.edu/](https://integrity.mit.edu/). In addition, this course thrives on debate and discussion, which requires respect and civility for your peers and the teaching team.
Confidentiality
This course hinges on experiential learning which requires trust and experimentation with your personal boundaries - this can lead to emotional conversations about your experiences in and out of the classroom. Participants are expected to respect and care for the feelings of their peers - content of the simulations, personal reflections, and discussions of the class should remain private to the class. To help with future iterations of the class please do not share any of the materials, exercises, or video footage with folks outside of the class.

Students with Disabilities
If you need disability-related accommodations, please let us know early in the semester. If you have not yet been approved for accommodations, contact the Student Disability Services at sds-all@mit.edu for more information. We look forward to working with you to assist with approved accommodations.

Inclusive Learning
MIT and GEL values an inclusive learning environment. We aim to create a sense of community in our class; a place where everyone will be treated with respect and where everyone feels safe to share their ideas and perspectives. We welcome individuals of all backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, national origins, gender identities, sexual orientations, religious and political affiliations – and other visible and nonvisible differences. Participants are expected to contribute to an open and inclusive environment for every other participant. If you feel this standard is violated or moving in this negative direction, please let us know (Adapted from guidelines recommended by the MIT Teaching and Learning Lab at http://tll.mit.edu/).
Schedule, Topics, and Activities

Syllabus may change to accommodate unplanned opportunities or circumstances

February 2 - Introduction to Negotiation of Two and More Stakeholders - Session 1

*Introduction to Negotiation Skills for Future Technical Experts and Leaders*

**Readings for class**


**Assignments after class**

Student Survey

February 9 - Multi-stakeholder Decision Making - Session 2

*Introduction to Multi Party Negotiation*

**Readings for class**


Assignments after class
Reflection
Video Analysis (everyone watch negotiation, pick out critical moment (1-2 minutes))

(no session Feb 16th due to Presidents Day Monday Schedule)

Feb 23 - Multi-stakeholder Decision Making - Session 3

Navigating Criteria and Process in Multiparty Discussions, Negotiations, and Decision Making

Readings for class


Assignments after class
Prepare Role for Upcoming Simulation

Mar 2 - Multiparty Negotiations - Session 4

Backtables and Internal Stakeholders (Part 1)

Readings for class


Assignments after class
Reflection
Video Analysis (selected individuals, instead of written reflection)

Mar 9 - Multiparty Negotiations - Session 5

Backtables and Internal Stakeholders (Part 2)

Readings for class


Assignments after class
Personal Theory of Practice - First Draft (due by next week, Mar 16th)
Prepare Role for Upcoming Simulation

Mar 16 - Multiparty Negotiations - Session 6

Multiparty Negotiation (Part 1)
Readings for class


Assignments after class

Reflection
Video Analysis (selected individuals, instead of written reflection)

(no session Mar 23 due to Spring Vacation)

Mar 30 - Multiparty Negotiations - Session 7

Multiparty Negotiation (Part 2)

Readings for class


Assignments after class

Prepare Role for Upcoming Simulation
Apr 6 - Multiparty Negotiations - Session 8

*Multiparty Facilitated Negotiation (Part 1)*

**Readings for class**


**Assignments after class**

**Reflection**

Video Analysis (selected individuals, instead of written reflection)

Personal Theory of Practice - Peer Reviews (due April 13th)

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Apr 13 - Building Consensus - Session 9

*Multiparty Facilitated Negotiation (Part 2)*

**Readings for class**


**Assignments after class**

Prepare Role for Upcoming Simulation of session 10

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Apr 20 - Building Consensus - Session 10
Multi-stakeholder Consensus and Spoilers (Part 1)

Readings for class


Assignments after class
Reflection
Video Analysis (selected individuals, instead of written reflection)

Apr 27 - Building Consensus - Session 11

Multi-stakeholder Consensus and Spoilers (Part 2)

Readings for class
To be announced.

Assignments after class
Prepare Role for Upcoming Simulation

May 4 - Stakeholder Conflicts - Session 12

Dispute Resolution and Mediation
Readings for class


Assignments after class
Personal Theory of Practice (due May 6th)

May 11 - Stakeholder Conflicts - Session 13

Dispute Resolution and Mediation (Part 2)

Readings for class
To be announced

Assignments after class
None