
BUSMHR 7236 – Crucial Conversations Syllabus

Autumn, 2017 Course #7236 – 020 (Section 35809)

**Fisher College of Business
The Ohio State University**

Professor Information

Dr. Mark Sullivan
Phone: 614.292.8401
313 Fisher Hall

Course information

Days: Tue. 10:15-11:45am
Thur. 10:15-11:45am
Gerlach Hall - 355

Office Hours

Monday 4:30-6pm
Tuesday: 12-1:30pm
Or by appointment

Email: sullivan.956@osu.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION: CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS

Handling Tough Conversations for Accountability, Commitment and Performance

Creating value and making a difference in a fast, high-change environment often involves addressing contrasting opinion and performance differences in a skilled, constructive and, sometimes courageous manner. Research indicates that almost 85% of all leaders derail due to an inability to recognize or successfully address conflict in a timely, well-practiced manner. Conversely, high performing leaders who consistently deliver superior results, do so with a capacity to collaboratively access and transform prickly, challenging issues into common areas of agreement and commitment. Further they are able to deliver tough messages, dramatically change expectations and challenge dysfunctional behavior in a constructive manner.

This fast-moving, research-grounded, experiential-based course focuses on further building relational (people-to-people) engagement muscles to conduct “straight talk,” in big and small ways, when it really counts. The underlying principles further builds a capacity to hold people accountable, while increasing commitment and performance. It drives and sustains impact and competitive advantage at the leader, team and organizational level.

The primary thrust of the work is based on the award-winning *New York Times Best-Seller* “*Crucial Conversations*” -- a perennial favorite found in signature Fortune 500 executive education programs. Included in this FCOB (Fisher College of Business) three credit course will be strategically-crafted applied research that further reinforces high performing practices and models in a series of real-world circumstances. That is, video shorts, role plays, audio case analysis, in-class exercises, discussion debriefs, and team projects will provide opportunities to further enrich knowledge and capability to facilitate accountable, high performing work environments.

Content will also be drawn from the companion book *Crucial Accountability*. The diagnostic framework which helps to identify performance gaps is further leveraged with the varied *Crucial*

Conversation (engagement) approaches. Finally, Amy Cuddy's work on *Presence* is considered as an intentional set of tools and tips for personally supporting oneself within tough environments.

As a special note, this is the first course of its kind in an American Business School. This class offers a premier leadership development experience that may further provide a transformative experience for its participants. Specifically, this course offers ways to deepen and leverage wisdom, judgment, knowledge, reflection and action to more skillfully engage in tough conversations for meaningful and sustainable results.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS: Two sources (third party/Amazon and Commercial Book Store/Barnes & Nobles) to purchase your required supplies

Purchase the following two books below through third party for lower pricing: Amazon, Used Book Outlets, etc.

- Patterson, K. & McMillan, R & Grenny, J & Switzler, A. *Crucial Conversations: Tools For Talking When Stakes Are High*
ISBN:978-0-07-177132-0
- Cuddy, A. (2015) Presence (First Edition) New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company
ISBN:978-0-31625657-5

Purchase Your Two Tool-Kits ONLY Through Barnes & Noble for Licensed IP Material (i.e. both Crucial Conversation and Accountability Tool-Kits, MP3's, etc.)

- Patterson, K. & McMillan, R & Grenny, J & Switzler, A. (2012) Crucial Conversations Participant Toolkit (4.3/Fourth Edition) Provo, Utah: VitalSmarts
Item Number: Red-2 Day-PTK-v4
- Patterson, K. & McMillan, R & Grenny, J & Switzler, A. (2013) Crucial Accountability Participant Toolkit (1.0/First Edition) Provo, Utah: VitalSmarts

(Note: The course material is not inexpensive. It is specifically purchased licensed material from VitalSmarts, a premier global executive education corporate training house. The material is distributed ONLY through Barnes & Nobles. However, given it is for an OSU leadership development class, it is academic discounted pricing that is actually a full 50% off a typical commercial executive training price.)

COURSE EXPECTATIONS:

Each of us is responsible for the success of this class. I have designed the course to maximize learning in an accelerated short form. I am committed to facilitating a positive, high impact, immersive learning environment in the classroom. However, what you get out of the course is ultimately up to you.

It includes a highly interactive set of experiences, where much of the learning is in the “doing”. It is unlike most other courses as it is skill-based rather than knowledge-based. It is an experiential encounter. It is more about linking and leveraging what you say, think, feel and do for impact; and less about what knowledge you create or memorize for intellectual utility (e.g. planning, analysis, etc.). Therefore, regular attendance throughout the six weeks is critical. Keep up with the readings. Engage in regular introspection and apply the course material to your own experiences. Come ready for class; engage, observe, experiment, ask questions of any kind.

Be respectful and supportive of the different skill levels and efforts within the role plays and discussion scenarios. Approach differences from a strength-based perspective. So first consider “what do I see happening that is effective”; “what is working well”. Developmental gaps will be considered after real and legitimate strengths are highlighted.

As an aside, and as you can appreciate, only course-related screen activity is accepted. No IMing, no surfing the web, no text messaging, etc. If you come in late to class be sure that you do so in a way that does not distract your peers. Also, audio or video recording of classes are not permitted without instructor permission. Moreover, posting of course materials on the web is not permitted.

Any student with special accommodation needs due to a disability should speak to me within the first week of the course. Students with special needs are responsible for making me aware of their situation.

Remember, this course is for your benefit and development and you will get the most out of the course (and ultimately be most successful) by making it relevant to your own life situation. If we both do our parts, this course will make a difference for you and be a positive learning experience for all of us.

GRADING:

Grades

This three credit course moves at a quick pace from May 14th to June 13th. Given the limited time, the syllabus will be streamlined, in-order to specifically focus on the foundational, “must-know” concepts. Yet, do not under-estimate the intensity or the level of effort required to partake in this course.

Regarding grades, we all know that some students may be just a few points away from the next grade. The cut-off points and final grades based on those cut-offs are NOT NEGOTIABLE. I am not sympathetic to students who approach me during the last week looking for extra points. The time to accumulate points is during the course, not at the end.

If you are concerned about your class performance, contact me as soon as those concerns arise. I will try to help you improve your performance but you must take the initiative to do so. In addition,

there may possibly be an opportunity to earn extra credit by participating in research. *If an extra credit opportunity arises, I will announce it in class and provide additional details.*

A straight 100 point scale will be used to determine your final grade based on the total points you earn during the course (see below).

- ❖ **Individual Participation** **25%** (25 points)
Includes attendance, active engagement, and observable contribution adding to self, team and class knowledge/skills. An optional make-up assignment is offered for any one missing hours from this very short course.
- ❖ **Team Content Assessment Exercise** **5%** (5 points)
Consists of a content review exercise in a team setting where individuals demonstrate understanding and application of key principles in the Crucial Conversations and Crucial Accountability modules of the course.
- ❖ **Team Presentation on Presence** **30%** (30 points)
A review of three chapters on the book 'Presence' is selected in-order to describe and demonstrate principles in an applied job relevant setting. The team address ways of engaging in a structured and spontaneous/improvisational setting where stakes are high, opinions vary and emotions run strong. All team members must have similar amount of face-time in the delivery of the class presentation.
- ❖ **Capstone Individual Legacy Project** **40%** (40 points)
Develop a career-life portfolio profiling values, strengths, skills, interests and developmental opportunities for securing meaningful high impact actions and commitments for the future. This consists of developing a thoughtful 3-5 page guiding reference, based on collected assessment data and reflection, for enriching a broad range of relationships and goals for your future.

Course Grading Scheme	
Letter Grade	Point Range
A	93 - 100
A-	90 – 92
B+	87 - 89
B	83 - 86
B-	80 - 82
C+	77 - 79
C	73 – 76
C-	70 - 72
D+	67- 69
D	60 - 66
E	0 – 59

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

The Ohio State University and the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM) expect that all students have read and understand the University’s Code of Student Conduct, and that all students will complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. Students must recognize that failure to follow the rules and guidelines established in the University’s Code of Student Conduct and this syllabus may constitute “Academic Misconduct.”

The Ohio State University’s Code of Student Conduct (Section 3335-23-04) defines academic misconduct as: “Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University, or subvert the educational process.” Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) *plagiarism, collusion* (unauthorized collaboration), *copying the work of another student, submitting the same or similar work for credit in more than one class, and possession of unauthorized*

materials during an examination. Ignorance of the University's Code of Student Conduct is never considered an "excuse" for academic misconduct, so you need to review the Code of Student Conduct and, specifically, the sections dealing with academic misconduct.

If I suspect that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, I am obligated by University Rules to report my suspicions to COAM. If COAM determines that you have violated the University's Code of Student Conduct (i.e., committed academic misconduct), the sanctions for the misconduct in this class could include a failing grade for the course, disciplinary probation, suspension or dismissal from the University. If you have any questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, please contact me.

Course Outline and Assigned Reading*

Date Assigned Reading

Week 1 Crucial Conversations Course Intro; Appreciating Strengths and Recognizing Opportunities

(Read: Ch. 1, “What’s a Crucial Conversation and Who Cares?” and Ch. 2, “Mastering Crucial Conversations” in the Crucial Conversations Paperback.)

Tue, Aug 22 Course Introduction; Syllabus and Journey Roadmap

Thu, Aug 24 Tool-Kit Module #1: “*Getting Unstuck*” -- Exploring Visible and Invisible Barriers

The first sessions are about deepening the awareness of what is working well and what is not; and how to quickly explore below the water-line intentions and motives that are creating relational roadblocks. Topics include:

- ❖ Taking inventory of what makes each of us successful; the “secret sauce”
- ❖ In Conversation: Common themes of the challenges that get in the way
- ❖ The visible and invisible barriers
- ❖ Getting “unstuck”: beyond a “fools-choice”
- ❖ Mining for ground truth in the moment

Week 2 Crucial Conversations: Exploring Intentions

(Read: Ch. 3 “*Start with Heart*,” in the Crucial Conversations Paperback.)

Tue, Aug 29

Thu, Aug 31 Tool-Kit Module #2: “*Start with Heart*” – Focusing on What You Really Want

Week 3 Crucial Conversations: Mapping Mental Models: Framing Your Experience

(Read: Ch. 6, “Master My Stories” in the *Crucial Conversations* Paperback.)

- Tue, Sep 5 Tool-Kit Module #3: “Master My Stories”
- Thu, Sep 7 Three Skills: Separate Facts From Stories; Watch for Three Clever Stories;
Tell the Rest of the Story

Staying in Dialogue When It’s Toxic or Less-Than-Ideal

These sessions are about re-setting conditions that soften defensive or argumentative ways. It explores an authentic fashion to support simultaneously the person behind the position while setting soft ground rules for engaging straightforwardly and honoring legitimate differences between self and others. Topics include:

- ❖ Getting clear what we want
- ❖ Recognizing how we function under stress
- ❖ Getting centered: Connecting our head and heart to be grounded in a tough environment
- ❖ Reckoning what we think and feel but don’t say, versus what we actually say
- ❖ Experimenting with ways to re-start, re-direct our brain in a hostile context

Week 4 Crucial Conversations: Sharing Tough Messages In A Non-Threatening Fashion

(Read: Ch. 7, “State My Path” in the *Crucial Conversations* Paperback.)

- Tue, Sep 12 Tool-Kit Module #4: “State My Path”
- Thu, Sep 14 Practice Sessions

Week 5 Crucial Conversations: Spotting Shifts From Casual to Crucial

(Read: Ch. 4, “Learn To Look” in the *Crucial Conversations* Paperback.)

- Tue, Sep 19 Tool-Kit Module #5: “Learn To Look” – Recognizing Different Ways Crucial Conversations Shows Up
- Thu, Sep 21 Safely Surfacing and Sorting Differences While Advocating Options

Moving to healthy, productive dialogue involves softening the social space – making it safe to “let go” of known, comfortable, predictable positions and interactions.

- ❖ How to listen when others blow up or clam up
- ❖ How to make it safe to almost talk about anything

Week 6 **Crucial Conversations: How to Create Safe Space to Stay in Dialogue When You're Angry, Scared, or Hurt**

(Read Ch. 5. "*Make It Safe*", in the *Crucial Conversations* Paperback)

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| Tue, Sep 26 | Tool-Kit Module #6: " <i>Make It Safe I</i> " |
| Thu, Sep 28 | <p>Further, testing and building the capacity to recognize and talk about competing realities and multiple truths, allowing parties to willingly understand and even embrace the pain and promise of unstated or misunderstood wants and needs. Topics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Modeling how to share views and opinions in a way that encourages others to do the same ❖ Testing assumptions and where it takes one in the broader context ❖ Building a pool of "shared meaning" that collectively connects thoughts and action |
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Week 7 **Crucial Conversations: Crucial Conversations Lab**

(Read Ch. 9-11: "*Move To Action*", "*Yea But*", and "*Putting It All Together*", in the *Crucial Conversations* Paperback)

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| Tue, Oct 3 | Toward Mastery – Deliberate Practice for Impact and Value |
| Thu, Oct 5 | <p><i>Crucial Conversation Lab</i>, that provides practice within and between pairs and groups. This is an opportunity to apply conversational frameworks that demonstrate capacity to engage in tough conversations at different stages from beginning to end. This includes:</p> <p>Before engagement...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Assessing the landscape: getting unstuck ❖ Reviewing assumptions and choices for framing the "as-is" and "to-be" <p>During engagement...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Describing the gap and making it safe ❖ Acknowledging/creating a pool of shared meaning <p>After the engagement...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Making clear what success looks like: who does what by when ❖ Understanding ways to support success as challenges evolve |

Week 8 **Crucial Conversations: Enhancing Smart Dialogue Skills (AMPP Skills)**

(Read Ch. 8: “*Explore Others’ Path*” in the *Crucial Conversations* Paperback)

Tue, Oct 10 Module #8: “*Explore Others’ Path*” and Team-Based Knowledge Assessment on Crucial Conversations

Thu, Oct 12 **NO CLASSES: FALL BREAK**

Module #9: “*Move From Talk To Action*” - Moving to Action - Building Agreements and Collective Impact

This area focuses on turning crucial conversations into action and results. It can help to think of this lesson and *Get Unstuck* (in Class 1-2), as bookends to the Crucial Conversation process. In *Get Unstuck*, we link the ability to hold crucial conversations to improved results. In *Move to Action*, we make the points that how we end the conversation is as important as how we begin, and that our crucial conversations will only lead to better results if they lead to new actions. Topics include:

- ❖ How to create mutual purpose that aligns intentions and interests
- ❖ Testing for shared understanding; and level of commitment to change views and actions
- ❖ Explore readiness to commit beyond the words while acknowledging reservations
- ❖ Document or agree who does what, how and by when
- ❖ Establish specific ways to follow-up or reinforce new behavior, position or practices

Week 9 **Crucial Accountability: Walk The Talk – Managing the Expectation Gap**

Tue, Oct 17 Module #1-2: Going Deeper – Crafting Accountability for Sustainable Results

Thu, Oct 19 Module #3-4:
Making it Work for the Long Run, involves accountability and support on all sides. This section provides a framework for why people do what they do. It allows learners to more accurately diagnose and resolve the underlying causes of gaps. Topics include:

- ❖ Reviewing the 2X3 Diagnostic Framework: (six combinations)
 - motivation and ability mapped against: personal, social, structural Dimensions
- ❖ Testing each combination for utility (value and results)
- ❖ Applying the framework to real world scenarios
- ❖ Case Analysis: Critiquing accountability conversation from start to

finish; focus on gap closure and action planning with renewed commitment

Week 10

Tue, Oct 24

Thu, Oct 26

Week 11 Crucial Accountability:

Tue, Oct 31 Module #5-6

Thu, Nov 2 Module #7-8

Feedback and coaching is used to highlight strengths and new opportunities to more precisely address disappointment and performance gaps while building new commitment to behavior that meets agreed upon expectations and goals.

Week 12 Transition: Crucial Accountability and Presence

Tue, Nov 7 Module # Summary

Thu, Nov 9 Introducing Presence: Key Concepts and Actions

(Read: Ch. 1 and 2 in “Presence: Bringing your Boldest Self to your Biggest Challenges.”)

Course Pivot Point: At this juncture, one has completed intensive skill building in both crucial conversations and crucial accountability. The work ahead is to integrate such skills in a broader operating arena with perspective-taking exercises focused on best ways to deepen and sustain personal leadership practices that have impact in continuous, high change, tough environments.

Presence Practice Lab- Huddle Sessions Featuring Personal Bio’s:
(Read: Ch 1 and 2 in “Presence: Bringing your Boldest Self to your Biggest Challenges.”). Also, take a quick look at the attached link:

<https://bookpage.com/interviews/19181-amy-cuddy-.VzFRtufeMt8>

An Appreciative Inquiry into *Bringing Your Boldest Self to Your Biggest Challenges*; Referencing *Presence* chapters 1-6 and 10-11

- Linking conversational tools with performance and presence styles
- Drawing on the HBR article: *Coaching the Alpha Male* - with use of the *Defensiveness Scale*

Review Capstone Legacy Projects in Discussion Groups

Week 13 On Presence: Demonstrating the Style and Substance of Presence*

**Classroom participation grade is in part based on the quality of both team presenting and the quality of observing and giving meaningful peer performance feedback of classroom team presentations*

(Read: two self selected chapters in “*Presence: Bringing your Boldest Self to your Biggest Challenges*.”)

Session Topic: Legacy Planning – Enriching and Securing a Noteworthy Future.

Envisioning and enriching an enhanced future with values linked and expressed to vital behaviors that matter for a life-time: (Committing to key practices that matter for the foreseeable future)

Using the book *Presence* for a class “Gallery Walk” and to address:

- ❖ Stages of a successful change and what disrupts it
- ❖ Bridging the knowing-doing gap
- ❖ How to keep change alive
- ❖ Moving toward mastery

Tue, Nov 14 Team Presentation and Feedback Sessions

Thu, Nov 16 Team Presentation and Feedback Sessions

Performance Learning Theory – Focuses on foundational frameworks that provide deeper understanding around ways to improve and sustain skill-based learning. Areas addressed include:

- *Johari Window: Known and unknown areas as seen by self and others*
- *Pendulum: Experimenting with extending and balancing new behaviors as a way of building and targeting for impact*

Team presentations provide feedback and strategic analysis that guide organizational direction:

Fishbowl feedback on Team Presentations and Coaching Sessions

Week 14 On Presence: Demonstrating the Style and Substance of Presence*

Tue, Nov 21 Team Presentation and Feedback Sessions

Thu, Nov 23 NO CLASSES: Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 15 Reviewing Key Learnings and Actions

Tue, Nov 28	Defining Moments: Ways to Make a Difference; Reflecting on Transformational Intelligence
Thu, Nov 30	Writing Your “Commitment Letter”; Ways to Jumpstart and Sustain a New, Better You...Being an “Impact Player” in Life
	Capstone Legacy Project Due at beginning of class

Week 16 Reviewing Key Learnings and Actions

Tue, Dec 5	Reflective and Futuring Exercises
	Defining Moments: Ways to Make a Difference; Reflecting on Transformational Intelligence

** I reserve the right to make changes to the readings and/or topics as needed. In the event that I do make changes, I will announce these changes in class and via Carmen.*

Faculty Bio: Dr. Mark Sullivan, an organizational psychologist, nationally recognized thought-leader and core-faculty member of the OSU Fisher College of Business, brings over 25 years of industry, consulting and executive educational expertise. He has held C-level, cross-industry leadership positions as a Dow 30 chief learning officer; Fortune 50 consulting partner; chief talent officer; lead negotiator and Pacific Rim expatriate for a G-1000 airline conglomerate; manager of a \$1B product portfolio and business incubator; and advisor/coach to a broad range of senior executives. His motivational speaking and

consulting engagements include NASA, U.S. State Department, CIA, Russian Military Defense, Accenture, McKinsey, Honeywell, Battelle, United Airlines and Harvard Business School.