COURSE PROPOSAL

from

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to

Joseph Scimecca

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A course in

SOCIAL SYSTEM DESIGN

as part of

the GMU

Conflict Resolution Program

SUMMARY

It is proposed to offer in the spring of 1987 a course
titled SOCIAL SYSTEM DESIGN at the graduate level. This course
would carry 3 or 4 credits. It would have both lectures and
practice in a problem-solving laboratory environment.

The course would be taught by Dr. John N. Warfield,
University Professor, with assistance from others. Included
as assistants would be Dr. Alexander Christakis, Dr. David Keever,
Dr. Ben Broome, and possibly others to be nominated from the
Conflict Resolution Program at GMU.

This course would be a revised version of a graduate course
previously offered at two other institutions (the University of
Virginia and the University of Northern Iowa) by Dr. Warfield.

The objective of the course is to prepare graduate students
for leadership positions in complex problem-solving, including
problems arising out of conflict situations.

The preparation will include presentation of theory,
methodology, and case examples in the lectures; and problem-
solving sessions in the laboratory. The laboratory facilities
will be provided by the Center for Interactive Management (CIM).

If this course proves to be very successful, an ultimate
outcome in future years might be to develop a laboratory
like that in CIM which would become dedicated to use only in
the George Mason University Conflict Resolution Program.

It is anticipated that two other initiatives will accompany
this course offering, as follows:

- Some limited formal activity to familiarize the
  Conflict Resolution Program staff with the
  resources and practices of CIM

- At least one joint research proposal involving
  CIM and the Conflict Resolution Program, that
  draws on the experience and expertise of CIM,
  and which could include partners from one or
  more other universities

COURSE DETAILS

1. <u>Title and Number of Credit Hours.</u>
   SOCIAL SYSTEM DESIGN   3 or 4 credit hours

2. <u>Semester and Year for Planned Offering.</u>
   Spring, 1987, for initial offering.
   Thereafter what happens will depend on the results of this offering.

3. <u>Course Description.</u>

   Organizations as social systems, forms of organizations (groups, teams, task forces, committees, corporations, bureaucracies), behavior of people in groups, organizational adaptation versus organizational design.

   A language of problem-solving, with emphasis upon design, including discrete mathematics, graphics, processes, and physical settings.

   Isolating the factors that may inhibit effective problem-solving: inadequate theory and methodology (the "science" factor, inadequate physical facilities for group problem-solving (the "context" factor), lack of actor capability (the "creativity" factor), poor processes for group work (the "process" factor), inadequate resources such as information, local support for documenting group work, economic resources to implement solutions, etc. (the "resources" factor), and conflict among the actors (the "conflict" factor).

   The balanced approach that assigns relative saliency to the six factors, and strives to reduce the inhibition to the essential "core of conflict", while understanding that there may not be any such core.

   Design laws and practices, design philosophy and rationale.

   Design of organizations, short-life and long-life, in the light of political considerations.

   Issue-specific designs, laboratory sessions, and term paper.

This class will meet for a 3-hour lecture or laboratory session each week during the term. If there are one or more lecture-free weeks, the laboratory sessions will meet twice during such weeks, for 3 hours each.

Prerequisites: Consent of Instructor, membership in the Conflict Resolution graduate program.

4. Objectives.

- To sensitize the student to human perspectives on social system design, through development of models of social systems of various types, and analysis of human roles and values in these systems

- To clarify organizational influence upon individual behavior, and to identify those factors that inhibit effective problem solving in most of today's organizations

- To develop student capability to design social systems with emphasis on such factors as mission, roles, activities, events, matching actors to roles, and matching resources to problem situations

- To illustrate in practice the means of eliminating all inhibiting factors in problem-solving other than the "core of conflict", through design of the problem-solving processes, contexts, and social system

5. Syllabus
See attached sheet.

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SOCIAL SYSTEM DESIGN
SYLLABUS

1. **Organizations as Social Systems.**
   - The definition of social system
   - Forms of organizations
   - Behavior of people in groups
   - Organizational change
   - Bureaucracies

   wk 1

2. **The Nature of Complex Problems**
   - Substantive complexity
   - Structural complexity
   - Process complexity
   - Escalation in group problem-solving
   - Factors that inhibit progress (see Figure 1 attached)

   wk 2

3. **The Language of Social System Design.**
   - Mathematics
   - Graphics
   - Processes and Settings

   wk 3

4. **The Fundamentals of Generic Design**
   - From systems science
   - From behavioral science
   - From experience

   wk 4

5. **The Theory of Generic Design**
   - Laws
   - Principles
   - Methods
   - Relation to Scientific Thought

   wk 4

6. **The Methodology of Generic Design**
   - How to make a topic generic
   - How to assess scope of applicability
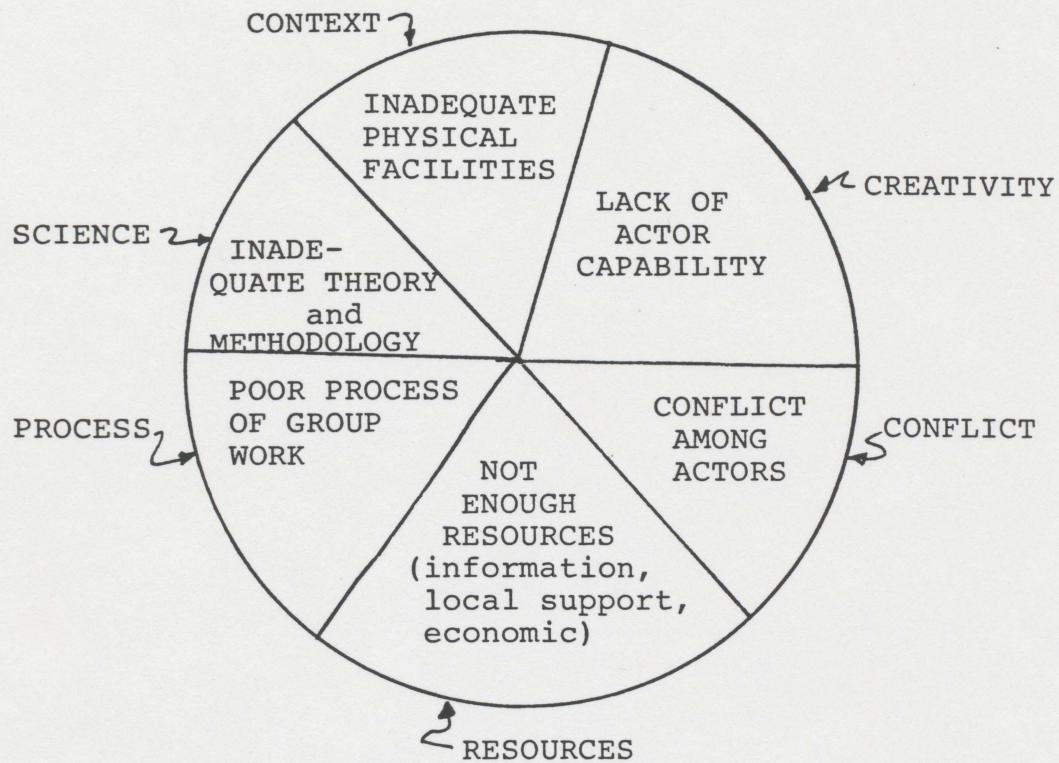   - Methods of idea generation, structuring, clarifying, presenting, interpreting, and validating

   wk 5

7. **Applications to Organizational Design**
   - Case Studies
   - Practice

   wk 6

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CONTEXT

INADEQUATE
PHYSICAL
FACILITIES

CREATIVITY

LACK OF
ACTOR
CAPABILITY

SCIENCE

INADE-
QUATE THEORY
and
METHODOLOGY

POOR PROCESS
OF GROUP
WORK

CONFLICT
AMONG
ACTORS

CONFLICT

PROCESS

NOT
ENOUGH
RESOURCES
(information,
local support,
economic)

RESOURCES

SIX FACTORS THAT MAY INHIBIT OR

PREVENT PROBLEM SOLVING OR

ISSUE RESOLUTION

Figure 1

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6. <u>Method of Grading</u>

Homework   25%

Mid-Term   25%
Examination

Term Paper
* Presentation   25%
* Manuscript   25%

7. <u>Reading List</u>

A. Books on Reserve

1. K. E. Boulding, <u>The Impact of the Social Sciences</u>, Rutgers Univ. Press, New Brunswick, 1966

2. D. Nelkin, <u>The Politics of Housing Innovation</u>, Cornell Univ. Press, Ithaca, 1971.

3. G. D. Brewer, <u>Politics, Bureaucrats, and the Consultant</u> Basic Books, New York, 1973.

4. H. A. Simon, <u>The Sciences of the Artificial</u>, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1969.

5. D. Braybrooke and C. E. Lindblom, <u>A Strategy of Decision</u>, Free Press, New York, 1963.

6. H. D. Lasswell, <u>A Pre-View of the Policy Sciences</u>, American Elsevier, New York, 1971.

7. K. W. Rothschild, <u>Power in Economics</u>, Penguin, Baltimore, 1971.

8. H. J. Leavitt, <u>Managerial Psychology</u>, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1972.

9. A. P. Hare, E. F. Borgotta, and R. F. Bales, Eds., <u>Small Groups</u>, Knopf, New York, 1965.

10. P. Diesing, <u>Reason in Society</u>, Univ. of Ill. Press, Urbana, 1962.

11. L. Von Mises, <u>Bureaucracy</u>, Yale Univ Press, New Haven, 1944.

12. J. March and H. A. Simon, <u>Organizations</u>, Wiley, New York, 1958.

13. J. D. Thompson, <u>Organizations in Action</u>, McGraw-Hill, NY, 1967.

14. J. N. Warfield, <u>Societal Systems: Planning, Policy, and Complexity</u>, Wiley, New York, 1976.

~~15. A. Downs "Inside Bureaucracy"~~

15. A. Downs, <u>Inside Bureaucracy</u>, Boston: Little, Brown, 1967