1. What kind of content are you covering in the N/M program?

One of my favorite negotiation stories is about the cub scout who showed up late for dinner one night, and when asked why he was so late, said that he had to help a little old lady cross a busy street.

His mother was a bit skeptical and said, “But you were gone FOUR HOURS!”

To which the boy replied, “Yeah, well, she didn’t want to go”.

So, when they don’t want to go, it takes a little more time.

Sometimes a lot more time.

Which pretty much sums up the challenges we face in negotiation and mediation.

Whether it’s getting a deal on buying a house, or agreeing with colleagues on a strategic plan, or resolving a dispute over harassment, product or professional liability, or ending a war, the other side often

Doesn’t want to go.

Just like the cub scout’s little old lady friend.

The aim of the certificate program in negotiation and mediation is to equip students with the conceptual tools and skills to increase satisfaction, and save time, money, and relationships in business, community, and personal life.

We begin by looking at core principles from the literature and history, and then focus on tools that have been tested by professional negotiators and mediators over the years.

Tools like a Conflict Grid, Basic and Advanced Communications Skills, five step models for both Negotiation and Mediation that can be customized for culture and unique cases.

We address special topics like: Dealing with Lies and Abrasive People, Negotiating the Aftermath of Wrong Doing—such as public scandals that cause personal injury—impasse resolution, mediation of organizational disputes, and others

Students will use three text books—two of which I wrote and were endorsed by Bill Ury and Roger Fisher, respectively, who Harvard Program on Negotiation co-authors of the third book we use, Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In.
2. What are the benefits of taking the classes?

I can recall when I first began working in this field.

Even though I had a PhD in psychology, I had no idea how to negotiate, to say nothing of mediate.

And I used to wonder how they did it.

I would hear about a judge who “mediated” a case and wondered what the judge said to the parties to get them to settle the lawsuit without a trial.

Or an international diplomat, shuttling between warring countries, meeting with leaders. What did they say and do to get people to lay down arms and stop the fight?

How does a manager help two employees resolve their longstanding feud?

Participants who take these certificate courses will learn concepts, strategies, and tools to understand “how others have done it, and still do it”

And they will have an opportunity to try these on for size through Negotiation and Mediation Improv events that include feedback aimed at improving performance in real life situations.

The benefits of all this will likely be: increased confidence in dealing with challenging situations where people disagree.

Specifically, confidence in your ability to build rapport, gain important information, deflect personal attacks, stay with a game plan in the face of dirty tricks, unbundle complex problems into component parts, and create integrative solutions.

3. Tell us a little bit about your journey being a Negotiator/Mediator

I am a psychologist who is still deeply involved in negotiation, mediation, and systems design projects right now.

I suppose my interest in these topics began as a kid. Small for my age in elementary school, I learned to talk and joke my way out of scrapes.

This was well before they began teaching third and fourth graders to mediate playground disputes, but it had the same goal: survival!
I was also a preacher’s kid, which I didn’t like so much, and I saw church and small group conflicts up close, and not always a model of civility.

And all of this led to the study of psychology to try to make sense of it all, three advanced degrees, including a PhD in clinical-community psychology, and a career in teaching, research, and the practice of negotiation and mediation.

I am particularly taken with conflict resolution as it plays out in history, in literature, drama, and standup comedy.

A quick look at my bio shows work with corporations, faith-based institutions, personal injury disputes, organizational mediation, and outside the box applications, such as a year living in a tent in the Afghanistan war zone, where I patrolled with American and Canadian soldiers, interviewed villagers, and used the tools I teach in these courses to advise commanders on adjustments to stability operations to meet the requirements of the local population.

4. What kinds of people might benefit from the courses and program?

We believe this course can be helpful to two sets of students. The first are those who would like to do this for a living, become a professional negotiator, a professional mediator, or dispute systems design consultant.

The second group would be those who want to use negotiation and mediation skills to improve their performance at work, to give them a competitive edge as they contribute to the success of their organizations.

We have many former students who tell us that what they learned in these courses helped them do just that. It lifted their level of play to think differently, communicate more effectively, reach agreement more often, with better and more durable outcomes.

5. What outcomes will students achieve by taking the courses?

A manager stopped me by an elevator a few years ago and said, “I know you, from our Negotiation class at, and he named his company. The Conflict Grid! I still use it.”

Another time I was attending a large gathering of mediators and arbitrators, where an attorney who had taken our training, and who was also General Counsel of his Health Care System, was
asked by someone in the audience to describe the MAP model, which he had learned in our course on “Negotiating Quickly”.

He gave a letter-perfect summary, five or so years after he had first learned it.

So, I believe one outcome is that you will remember what you learn in these courses.

And, I believe you will use it.

We have had students say to us things like “the best course I took in such and such a degree program.”

And, “I use it every day, at work, and at home.”

These courses will likely make you more effective at your current job.

And for many, the main benefit may be a brand-new career.

Completion of both Negotiation Skills and Mediation Skills, for example, provides entry level certification for serving as a volunteer or being paid as a professional to do this work.

6. What would a “typical” online class look like?

For the online version of these course we use the same Experiential Learning Model as in the classroom, modified to take full advantage of the online technology.

For each lesson, you will begin with a concrete experience, a case or challenge, maybe a movie or U Tube movie clip, to engage your mind, and then debrief on that.

This is followed by a short lecture that hits key points and builds on the required reading.

So far, that’s three bites at the learning apple—the reading, the concrete experience, and the short lecture to tie it together.

And then practice, which we will call Negotiation and Mediation Improv!

You will do a Table Reading of scripts that let you experience what others have done before you, and you’ll critique and edit their words.

Then, you’ll try it on your own!

As a party, a lead negotiator or a mediator, in the safety of this course, out of the public eye, you’ll have an opportunity to practice and stretch into what may be new territory for you.
You’ll get feedback, and you’ll customize the tools and templates to fit your personal style.

We believe you will find this to be a very robust, and user friendly, learning model.

All done at your own pace, working around your day job and other commitments.

As you can likely tell, I am enthusiastic about this program and privileged to work with an outstanding team of learning specialists to bring it to you.

If what we have described here fits with your goals, we would love to have you join us!