2021 Professional Seminar on Frontline Humanitarian Negotiation:

Negotiating Humanitarian Programs in Hostile Environments

Description

Since 2006, Claude Bruderlein and his team have been developing an experiential research and teaching program on humanitarian action for students at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government and the T.H. Chan School of Public Health as well as other graduate schools within the Harvard network. Several academic courses were offered within this program in collaboration with international agencies and NGOs, including the annual Winter Field Study Course IGA-353M / GHP 543 during which students explore the challenges and dilemmas of a specific humanitarian crisis through various critical lenses. These courses have centered on the roles and perspectives of humanitarian professionals engaged in frontline negotiation in specific contexts such as Jordan, Lebanon or Nepal, offering a more personal insight into the engagement with host governments, armed groups and affected populations. This program collaborates closely with the Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation (CCHN) based in Geneva, Switzerland.

This year, the Professional Seminar on Frontline Humanitarian Negotiation is jointly offered with the Negotiation and Conflict Resolution Collaboratory at the Center for Public Leadership, Harvard Kennedy School as part of its portfolio on the Future of Humanitarian Negotiation.

What is a Professional Seminar?

A Professional Seminar functions as a collaborative initiative, offering an opportunity to deepen one’s understanding of a complex domain and expand participants’ perspectives by facilitating informal exchanges between students and practitioners on current challenges and dilemmas of the domain in real time. Building on the model of a study group, it aims to set a regular space of informal exchanges and personal reflections on field practices challenging assumptions and opening new areas of engagement between students and practitioners.

The purpose of the Professional Seminar on Frontline Humanitarian Negotiation is to engage graduate students to study and review strategic approaches for navigating the challenges and dilemmas of negotiating in some of the most complex and tense humanitarian environments. The seminar will undertake desk research, interviews with frontline practitioners, and explore the design of practical tools and methods to bridge theory and practice at the humanitarian frontlines. While not a prerequisite for the 2022 Winter Field Study Course GHP 543 / IGA-353M, the Fall Professional Seminar will draw on similar methodologies to explore humanitarian diplomacy and crisis management across a series of complex and tense operational environments in Asia, Africa and the Middle East.
Focus of the 2021 Fall Professional Seminar

Humanitarian frontlines are complex environments where negotiators face political uncertainties, social intricacies, adversarial counterparts, and rapidly changing conflicts. Illustrated most recently with the evolving crisis in Afghanistan, the relationship between humanitarians and their counterpart(s) reflects the tension and power relationships surrounding humanitarian access negotiations. While political tensions are very much part of humanitarian negotiation processes, these may lead at times to implicit or even explicit threats, extortion and coercion compromising the life and integrity of humanitarian staff in the field and their operating principles.

Given the lack of preparation to deal with complex power relationships in the humanitarian sector, humanitarian personnel or organizations can inadvertently worsen an already tense environment. In this context, humanitarian organizations and personnel need to prepare to prevent adversarial relationships and proactively address the deterioration of negotiation environments. Humanitarian negotiators, agency representatives and mandators need to be equipped with core experiential skills and the analytical capacity to envision, frame and shape negotiation frameworks in tense situations. Rather than an environment of hostility, humanitarians working in this space need to actively build productive and trustful relationships. Navigating these complex environments entails a capacity to analyze the sources of hostilities, map power relationships and networks, deconstruct arguments and assess interests served, as well as develop the required strategies and tactics to establish and maintain a constructive environment to support the humanitarian operations.

This Professional Seminar will conduct research on tools and methods to address power relationships, prevent corruption, mitigate extortion, and rehabilitate affected relationships with counterparts in adversarial negotiations. Grounded in a literature review of humanitarian diplomacy and crisis management, students will explore the intersection of theory and practice. Each session will build on students’ analysis of a theme found within a hostile frontline environment through pre-reading, practitioner interviews, and evaluation of existing tools and methods.

Fall 2021 Professional Seminar Objectives

From the seminar perspective, and through readings, discussions and dialogues with field practitioners, it is expected that students will:

- Gain an understanding of the challenges and dilemmas specific to hostile humanitarian negotiation environments and explore new approaches to addressing leading issues;
- Build knowledge of existing literature on humanitarian diplomacy and identify gaps between research and practice at the frontlines;
- Develop practical and professional skills in terms of negotiation practices in crisis environments; and
- Engage with members of the CCHN Community of Practice.
Format of the Professional Seminar

Taking advantage of CCHN networks among field practitioners, students will work in teams drawing relevant literature on specific humanitarian crises and the experience of humanitarian professionals and organizations operating on the frontlines. The Seminar will be supervised by Claude Bruderlein, Faculty Instructor, and coordinated by Maura James, Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation, and Monica Giannone, Negotiation and Conflict Resolution Collaboratory. Most of the sessions will take place remotely with some meetings planned on the Harvard campus.

Seminar Readings

Required reading:

*CCHN Field Manual on Frontline Humanitarian Negotiation*, Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation (CCHN)/ International Committee of the Red Cross, November 2019, available as open source at: [https://frontline-negotiations.org/home/resources/field-manual/](https://frontline-negotiations.org/home/resources/field-manual/)

Further readings will be announced in the fall.

Agenda of 2021 Fall Professional Seminar

Humanitarian Negotiation in Hostile Environments

Fridays 12:00 - 1:30pm ET | October 22 – December 3

7 weeks, 6 sessions *omitting a session for the Thanksgiving holiday*

Session 1 | Presentation on Humanitarian Negotiation in Hostile Environments

Session 2 | Review of study methodology, planning and output

Session 3 - 5 | Presentation and discussion around case studies prepared by students

Session 6 | Summary of discovery and next steps

Selection of the Participants

This is a demanding professional seminar for highly motivated and committed students. Student selection takes place through an application process. Students interested in critical approaches to international affairs and with prior international experiences are welcome to apply. **Prior knowledge of humanitarian negotiation is not a requirement.** Find the application here: [https://forms.gle/6iz4vYE4gQdWvis96](https://forms.gle/6iz4vYE4gQdWvis96). For more information on the application process, please contact Maura James at mjames@frontline-negotiations.org.
Virtual Seminar Room

The Professional Seminar will take place remotely, via Zoom. Sessions are on Fridays from 12:00 - 1:30pm ET. Students are expected to arrive on time and prepared to participate (see Seminar Participation below). Once admitted into the seminar, students will receive the session details including zoom links and links to virtual collaboration boards on Miro.

If possible, we will host one to two informal gatherings of participants. These will be arranged outside of regular sessions. Attendance is not required at additional sessions outside of the Friday meetings.

Seminar Participation

Students are expected to be active participants in Seminar discussions. This includes attending all sessions, being prepared by reading and analyzing assignments ahead of Seminar meetings and being ready to offer reflections and insights during discussions. Students should be prepared to discuss and apply concepts during the Professional Seminar.

Teaching Team

Claude Bruderlein, Faculty Instructor, is a Senior Researcher at the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (HHI) and Strategic Advisor to the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). He directs the Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation (CCHN) based in Geneva, Switzerland. He maintains a faculty research and teaching appointment at the Harvard T. Chan School of Public Health (HSPH) and the Harvard Kennedy School of Government (HKS). He also serves as the Director of the Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation (CCHN), a strategic partnership between the ICRC, MSF, WFP, UNHCR and the HD Centre based in Geneva, Switzerland.

Mr. Bruderlein has been engaged in international humanitarian action since 1985. From 1990 - 1995, he worked in humanitarian assistance and protection with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Iran, Israel and the Occupied Territories, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Yemen as well as in Geneva as a legal advisor to ICRC operations in Europe. In 1996, he joined the United Nations in New York as Special Advisor on Humanitarian Affairs. He worked particularly on humanitarian access in Afghanistan and North Korea as well as the humanitarian impact of sanctions at the Strategic Planning Unit of the Executive Office of the UN Secretary General. He served as an independent expert on the impact of sanctions for the UN Security Council in Sudan, Sierra Leone, Burundi, and Iraq. In 2000, Mr. Bruderlein became a Lecturer in Global Health at the Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH) and founded the Harvard Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research (HPCR). In 2012, he returned to the ICRC as Strategic Advisor to its president while maintaining a teaching appointment at HSPH and HKS.

His email is: cbruderl@hsph.harvard.edu.

Maura James, Seminar Coordinator, is the principal and founder of Salt Meadow Consulting based in Boston (MA). Maura is on the research and development team at the Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation (CCHN) where her current projects include the prevention of environmental hazards, negotiating COVID-19 vaccine campaigns in conflict zones, mixed migration, and humanitarian
mediation and negotiation in hostile environments. While completing her Master of Arts in International Conflict Studies at King’s College London, Maura worked for a public affairs firm where she managed a trans-Atlantic think tank. She remained in London post-graduation where she worked for a small nonprofit on peace and conflict transformation in Turkey, Syria, and Iraq which required frequent travel to Europe and the Middle East.

Her email is mjames@frontline-negotiations.org.

Monica Giannone, Seminar Liaison, is the Director of the Negotiation and Conflict Resolution Collaboratory at the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard Kennedy School. Monica’s current areas of work focus on international climate negotiations, overcoming partisan divide in U.S. legislatures, negotiation in cities and local government, value-based conflict, situations of low-power, and gender and negotiation.

The Negotiation and Conflict Resolution Collaboratory develops ways to connect students of negotiation with practitioners on the frontlines and faculty leading cutting-edge research. The Collaboratory advances the field of experiential learning, motivates innovations in teaching advanced negotiation in simulated environments, and pursues the interdisciplinary study of developments and trends at the intersection of negotiation and leadership.

Monica also co-teaches two courses at the Harvard Kennedy School and is an Adjunct Lecturer in the Management Division at Babson College and teaches negotiation in the MBA program.

Her email is: monica_giannone@hks.harvard.edu.