

Conflict, Authority, Boundaries, and Containment: The (Un)conscious Life of Groups and Social Systems



Group Relations Conference
Teachers College, Columbia University
April 12 – 14, 2024

Teachers College, Columbia University

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The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations

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Dear Prospective Member:

Wherever one looks in today's world, conflict is pervasive. Wars are raging around the globe, bringing into stark relief conflicting historical narratives around power, privilege, access to land and resources, and even the right to exist. Population demographics are rapidly changing, economic opportunities are shrinking for many, physical and social boundaries are shifting, and many groups find their social status being challenged. These phenomena have led to polarization, inflexible thinking, and feeling unsafe and insecure both in and between the groups and social systems to which we belong. In these spaces, there seems to be an unwillingness to hold diverse and/or conflicting views; to acknowledge and respect the 'other;' and an inability to contain conflict such that we are left without a sense of security, effectiveness, or well-being in our groups and social systems.

Although this is a challenging context, it also provides us opportunities to learn about how groups and social systems consciously and unconsciously function in times of conflict. How do groups mobilize to cope with conflict? When is conflict constructive and essential to building trust? When a system's boundaries are challenged, what conscious and unconscious aspects of group life are activated? How do leaders and members co-authorize each other in attempts to strengthen the productivity, integrity, and well-being of the group?

This group relations conference (GRC) will offer conference participants many opportunities to examine these questions and others that emerge from the conference theme and from our collective work. Conference staff and members will engage in the shared work of exploring our ubiquitous conscious and unconscious group processes and dynamics as they evolve in the here-and-now of the weekend.

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Conference Directorate:

Jonathan Rust

Director

Mineko Anne Legendy

Associate Director

Ramya Kumar

Director of Administration

Please note:

The GRC is an experiential learning conference and it is designed for members to learn about group and organizational processes. Experiential learning can be powerful, illuminating and also tiring and sometimes stressful. Self-learning often also occurs in the GRC, but the conference is not meant to be a clinical or therapeutic offering. If you are currently undergoing significant stress or managing a difficult personal situation you should forego attendance at this time.

Conference Design and Role of Staff:

The conference is designed as a temporary institution that is organized in a sequence of group and inter-group interactions that provide opportunities for learning. Staff manage the conference boundaries, but they do not manage people. Lectures and didactic presentations by staff are not part of the design. The staff's consultations will focus primarily on group-level phenomena rather than on individuals' behavior.

Primary Task:

The primary task is to study the inter-personal, group-as-a-whole, inter-group, and organizational dynamics as they occur in the here-and-now of the conference

You will have an opportunity to learn:

- Conscious and unconscious factors that shape participation in groups
- How authority is taken up and utilized in groups
- How group dynamics can influence our relationship to and our relatedness in groups
- What roles we take up in groups and why

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Location

Teachers College, Columbia University
525 West 120th Street
New York, NY 10027

Schedule

9:00 am – 6:30 pm ET Friday, April 12, 2024
9:00 am – 6:45 pm ET Saturday, April 13, 2024
9:00 am – 5:45 pm ET Sunday, April 14, 2024

Conference Registration

Registration takes place on Friday from 8:25 to 8:55 am.
There will be a reception on Sunday from 5:50 to 6:10 pm.

Meals and Lodging

Light refreshments and hot beverages will be available each morning in the Member Lounge.
Members are responsible for securing their own meals at the lunch breaks.

The conference is non-residential. Once registered, recommendations for housing accommodations are provided upon request by contacting the administrative team at:
teacherscollegeGRC@gmail.com.

Registration

All invited members must register by **12 Midnight (ET), Wednesday, March 27, 2024**, using the following link: <https://form.jotform.com/220257173673153>

Note: If you are not currently enrolled in the *Group Dynamics: A Systems Perspective* course at Teachers College, please email TCGroupRelationsConferences@gmail.com to be added to the public member wait list. You will be contacted on a first-come, first-served basis with information about how to register and submit payment. Conference registration is \$450, with modest discounts available for current students and for those working in the non-profit sector. Please note that spaces are limited; if you are not offered a spot in this GRC, you will be placed on a waitlist for the next available GRC.

Additional Questions?

If you have questions, please email: teacherscollegeGRC@gmail.com.