This course will explore the dynamics of **interpersonal conflicts, disputes and troubles**. In so doing we will draw upon bodies of theory and research which argue that what may ultimately become legal claims against others, or even specific forms of crime and deviance, begin as informal troubles or disputes. Such disputes and troubles arise as people come to perceive and formulate grievances against others, and as they pursue and escalate these grievances through various claims-making procedures. In this process one key juncture occurs when a claim is rejected and yet the claimant persists, leading to an overt dispute between the parties. A second key juncture arises when official third parties are brought into the matter; third party intervention may fundamentally shape both the nature and the outcome of any particular dispute/trouble.

This course will focus on how such interpersonal disputes and troubles arise, perhaps fester and/or escalate, and on how parties to disputes attempt to respond to and perhaps resolve these disagreements, sometimes by trying indigenous remedies, sometimes by turning to official third parties. In this respect, focusing on interpersonal conflicts raises critical issues regarding processes of **informal social control** in contemporary social life.

**Course Requirements**

Required readings for this course include:

Sally Merry, *Getting Justice and Getting Even: Legal Consciousness among Working-Class Americans.* (University of Chicago Press, 1990) (available at ASUCLA textbooks)

*Xeroxed Readings* (Course Reader Materials, 1141 Westwood Blvd.)

After for the first class, please complete assigned readings prior to the class session designated in the Course Schedule.

The course will also include midterm and final exams, a workshop on skills helpful in handling interpersonal conflicts, and a course paper. The midterm will make up 25% of your course grade, the final 40%, the paper 25%, and section attendance and workshop participation the remaining 10%. The paper will involve collecting data on several interpersonal disputes and analyzing this data; guidelines will be distributed during the third week of class.

**Course Schedule and Readings**
1. Sociological Analyses of Interpersonal Conflict (April 4)
Vilhelm Aubert, “Competition and Dissensus: Two Types of Conflict and of Conflict Resolution.” Chapter 3 in The Hidden Society. (Bedminster Press, 1965).

2. Non-Authoritarian Dispute Processing: Negotiation (April 6)

3. Mediation, Adjudication and Exit (April 11)

4. Determinants of Conflict Management (April 13)
Calvin Morrill, “Patterns of Conflict Management in Thirteen Executive Contexts.” Chapter 3 in The Executive Way.

5. Processes of Dispute Tranformation I (April 18)

6. Processes of Dispute Transformation II (April 20)
Sally Merry, Getting Justice and Getting Even, chapters 1-6

7. Micro-Politics of Trouble (April 25)

8. The Micro-Politics of Descriptions (April 27)
Dorothy Smith, “‘K is Mentally Ill’: The Anatomy of a Factual Account.” *Sociology* 12:23-47.

**May 2 Mid Term Exam**

**9. Public Place Troubles** (May 4)

**10. Neighbor Troubles** (May 9)
Merry, *Getting Justice and Getting Even*, chapter 7; plus review materials on neighbor cases on pp. 100-05, 116-21, 127-30.

**11. Family and Intimate Troubles I** (May 11)
Merry, *Getting Justice and Getting Even*, review materials on intimate relations on pp. 47-63.
** Nancy S. Blum, “Deceptive and Collusive Practices in Managing a Family Member with Alzheimer’s Disease.” *Symbolic Interaction*. (to be posted on Soc. 146 website)

**12. Family and Intimate Troubles II** (May 16)
Additional reading to be announced (and posted on website)

**13. Workplace and Business Troubles** (May 18)

**14. Violence** (May 23)

**15. Unofficial Third-Party Intervention** (May 25)
Donald Black, “Taking Sides.” Chapter 7 in *The Social Structure of Right and Wrong*.

**16. Third-Party Intervention: The Police** (May 30)

**17. Third-Party Intervention: Lawyers and Courts** (June 1)
Merry, *Getting Justice and Getting Even*, chapter 8.

**18. Mediation** (June 6)

**19. Conclusion** (June 8)

Final exam: Wednesday, June 14, 3-6 pm