

CONFLICT & DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Using Objective Criteria

Instructions

When doing the reading for this class, there are the two basic kinds of information you need to understand:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, it is *information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible position on an issue, rather than another.

Reading

Fisher, R., Ury, W., & Patton, B. (2011). *Insist on Using Objective Criteria*. In *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In* (3rd ed., pp. 82–95). New York: Penguin Books.

Questions

1. According to Fisher *et al.*, why is it better to deal with conflicting and competitive interests with objective criteria rather than with strength of will?
2. Based on what Fisher *et al.* say about fair standards and procedures, what is it exactly that makes objective criteria objective? Put differently, what might be the difference between objective criteria and subjective criteria in a negotiation?
3. What are some examples of fair standards and fair procedures? How do they work? Why are these objective and not subjective?
4. When discussing objective criteria with the other side, Fisher *et al.* suggest that you “focus on objective criteria firmly but flexibly” (p. 89). What does that mean? How do their “three basic points” (p. 89) go about doing this?
5. Putting all this together, why does using objective criteria encourage wise agreement?

To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting.