THE CENTER FOR JUSTICE & PEACEBUILDING A PROGRAM OF EASTERN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY	**EMERGENT FACILITATION FOR A THRIVING WORLD: CO-CREATING ECOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL CHANGE** **PAX 685** **SPI 2026** May 28 - June 5, 2026 *Course meeting location and time:* TBC

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION:

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Communities worldwide are navigating profound ecological shifts - water scarcity, land displacement, extreme weather events, resource conflicts, loss of biodiversity, and others. These interconnected, context-specific challenges require us to reimagine how we collaborate - practicing approaches that can hold uncertainty and complexity, navigate power, engage diverse knowledge and perspectives, and support collective action.

This course develops your capacity to design and facilitate participatory processes for ecological and social change. You'll learn skills for convening people across difference, creating conditions where collective wisdom can surface, and supporting individuals and groups to expand their capacity for skillful action, whether you're working within grassroots movements, civic institutions, or multi-stakeholder initiatives.

COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

Through hands-on practice and experiential learning, you'll explore:

- Designing participatory processes that engage diverse stakeholders and knowledge systems
- Building trust and working adaptively with what emerges across a group
- Holding space for the full range of human response to ecological loss and change
- Developing your presence, attunement, and skillfulness as a facilitator
- Coaching individuals and groups to cultivate new capacities for generative action

We'll practice with methods communities are using around the world, including:

- Climate scenario planning and collective sense-making tools
- Participatory design and co-creative approaches

- Group coaching frameworks for transformation
- Structured methods for unlocking collective intelligence and creativity
- Nature-based and somatic practices for individual and group resilience

You'll leave with:

- Reconnection to yourself and to the living world as you develop your practice
- A toolkit of methods you can apply immediately
- Processes you've designed for your own context and workshopped with peers
- Connections with a global community committed to ecological and social transformation

REQUIRED TEXTS AND OTHER RESOURCES:

List required reading materials and texts include:
- brown, adrienne maree. *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*. AK Press, 2017. ISBN: 9781849352604. Approximately $15 online.
- Macy, Joanna and Chris Johnstone. *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're in with Unexpected Resilience and Creative Power*. Revised edition. New World Library, 2022. ISBN: 9781608687107. Approximately $18 online.

- Wirtz, Daniel. *What is Open Space Technology*:
  https://www.facilitator.school/blog/open-space-technology

- Kimball, Lisa. *Liberating Structures: A New Pattern Language for Engagement*:
  https://thesystemsthinker.com/liberating-structures-a-new-pattern-language-for-engagement/

- SecondMuse, DSIL Global: *Humanizing the Virtual Space*:
  https://www.secondmuse.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Humanizing-The-Virtual-Space.pdf

Supplementary Resources:
- brown, adrienne maree. *Holding Change: The Way of Emergent Strategy Facilitation and Mediation*. AK Press, 2021.
- Lipmanowicz, Henri and Keith McCandless. *The Surprising Power of Liberating Structures: Simple Rules to Unleash a Culture of Innovation*. 2014. (A practical resource for participatory methods)
- Whybrow, Alison, Eve Turner, Josie McLean, and Peter Hawkins. *Ecological and Climate-Conscious Coaching: A Companion Guide to Evolving Coaching Practice*. Routledge, 2023.
- Warm Data Lab: *www.warmdatalab.net*
- The Adaptation Game: *www.tagclimatedrill.org*
- Art of Hosting resources: *www.artofhosting.org*

REQUIRED ASSIGNMENTS:

Reflective Practice Journal (3-credit and 2-credit students)

Maintain a reflective practice journal throughout the course and post-SPI period. Journal entries should document your observations about facilitation approaches experienced, your own responses and learning edges, and connections to your professional context. The journal should include daily entries

during SPI (brief: 15-20 minutes of writing or video recordings) plus three deeper reflections (1-2 pages each) completed after SPI that synthesize your learning. Prompts will be provided, but you are encouraged to follow what is alive for you.

Process Design Proposals (3-credit)
Develop a detailed proposal for a participatory process you will host in your own context. This might be a workshop or convening, an ongoing pod or peer learning container, a community of practice, a strategy for a longer-arc engagement, or another form that fits your work and the people you're designing for.

Regardless of form, your proposal should include:

- Clear articulation of purpose and desired outcomes
- Participant analysis: Who is this for? What are they bringing? What do they need?
- Invitation strategy: How will you call people in?
- Design of the container: structure, rhythm, sequencing, and facilitation notes
- Rationale for your choices, drawing on course frameworks
- Considerations for context and culture

Small Group Facilitation and Reflection (3-credit, 2-credit students)
Working in small teams, design and facilitate a session for the learning community on Days 6-7. Your session might offer a practice round of something you're developing in your Process Design Proposal, respond to what's emerging in the group, workshop a question we haven't yet explored, or serve our closing process. This is an opportunity to embody the principles we've been practicing, experiment, take risks, and learn from what happens. Sessions will be followed by a group debrief and peer feedback.

Following your facilitation, submit a 2-page reflection on your own assessment of the experience and what you're taking forward into your practice.

Requirements by Credit Level:

Assignment	3-Credit	2-Credit	Prof. Dev.
Attendance and Participation	Required	Required	Required
Reflective Practice Journal	X	X	
Process Design Proposal	X		
Small Group Facilitation	X	X	Optional

Percentage of Overall Grade (3-credit students):
- Attendance and Participation: 20%
- Reflective Practice Journal: 20%
- Process Design Proposal: 40%
- Small Group Facilitation + Reflection: 20%

All SPI 2026 coursework is due by no later than August 7, 2026.

These are brief descriptions of required graded assignments for the course. More details for each assignment can be found on the "Guidance Notes" that will be provided in class.

DAILY CLASS SCHEDULE: TBC

SPI ATTENDANCE POLICY:

It is expected that individuals registering for an SPI session will attend the entire course (barring unforeseen travel delays or emergencies). Please contact SPI directly at spi@emu.edu before registering if you know you will have to miss any days of a course. SPI certificates are provided to participants only if they miss no more than one class day unless prior arrangements have been made with the SPI team and confirmed with the instructor. **For-credit participants are expected to attend all class sessions unless they are given permission from the instructor to miss a session.** SPI courses rely on active student participation in a learning community. If a participant misses class repeatedly and this disrupts the learning for others, they will be asked to leave the course and no money will be refunded for remaining course time.

GRADING CRITERIA AND OTHER POLICIES:

SPI provides all students taking the course for graduate credit some supplemental information that will serve as a resource after SPI when students are working on course assignments. This includes information on library resources, EMU's academic integrity policy, and guidelines for writing graduate papers, information regarding the grading scale and course deadlines, and then some suggestions we have for you in order to make your experience of taking SPI courses for graduate credit as successful as possible! These documents are all available online.