Understanding Servant-leadership as a philosophy and as a leadership theory does not make one a servant-leader. Greenleaf claimed that one could become a natural servant-leader from the arduous discipline of learning to listen. How does one develop a listening-first disposition? This course focuses on learning to listen and discern as a way of enhancing our capacity to make decisions.

COURSE TITLE
ORGL 535: Listen Discern Decide
DPLS 775: Listen Discern Decide
• 3 semester credits
• Online

CSLD
• ORGL 535/DPLS 775 is an elective course eligible for the Servant-leader Concentration

COURSE DEVELOPERS
John H. Horsman, Ph.D. & Larry Spears, Servant-leader Scholar

COURSE TEACHER
• Larry Spears

COURSE DESCRIPTION
In this class, students will learn more in-depth concepts of Servant-leadership by learning practices and approaches for listening and discerning as a way of enhancing decision-making capacity. The course begins with a focus on interior and exterior listening. Listening and awareness techniques are then integrated with the principles and practices of discernment. The course progresses from a focus on the individual, to group, to listening and discerning and decision making in organizations and communities.

COURSE GOALS
1. Learning and practicing listening-first to improve decision-making.
2. Learning and practicing discernment to improve decision-making.
3. Enhancing decision-making capacity using listening and discerning in group processes.
4. Learning respectful, responsible stewardship of the listening discerning decision-making processes at the organizational and macro-community level.
COURSE COMPETENCIES

1. Based on the course materials and processes students will demonstrate how to develop a listening-first disposition.
   a. From reflection on the readings, viewings, exercises, practices and assignments students will provide examples of listening-first in an applied decision making context, and be evaluated based on listening-first criteria.

2. Students will demonstrate their knowledge and application of the listening discernment process.
   a. Students will be able to outline the listening and discernment process; describe with examples how listening influences the discernment process. Explain how listening and discerning enhance context and ownership for decision-making. Evaluation is based on discernment criteria and the integration of listening and discernment process as foundational to decision making.

3. Students will demonstrate stewardship of the listening and discernment process at the group, organizational and macro-community level.
   a. Applying listening and discernment to a case, students will demonstrate competency identifying the key leverage points for intervention in the listening discerning process, explain where and how stewardship of the listening discerning process may have improved decision making. Evaluation is based on the rigor of applying listening and discernment criteria; on the integration of listening and discernment processes in group situations; on the integration of listening, discerning and decision making at the societal level.

4. Students explain why and how a discerning, listening-first disposition can positively influence organizational and community decision making capacity.
   a. Drawing examples from their listening experiences and the assigned literature students demonstrate a capacity to persuasively present their understanding of why a listening-first approach complements a serving–first disposition at the individual relational, organizational and macro-systems level. Evaluation is based on professionalism, knowledge, application, example effectiveness, clarity and conciseness.

COURSE MATERIALS

The following books are required: listed here in the order to be read—


Additional texts for DPLS students

The following films are required: listed here in the order to be viewed—

See Course Schedule and Course Resources for further articles, Utube, videos, etc.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**
The course is designed to be presented online in four modules over an eight-week period. Each two-week module will have its own set of materials (e.g., readings, teacher presentations, etc.).

**Dialog Forum Posting Requirements**
(4 modules, 10 points per module = 40% of Grade)
Given that a key component of the approach to learning in this course is listening and dialogue among students, each module will be the focus of an internet-based discussion by students. Draw from the readings, presentations, exercises, and assigned viewings to make at least four postings each week (eight over the course of each two-week module):

a. One posting in the form of an annotated question (AQ) related to the Module topic (0-2 points each):
   - a. AQ identifies the concept with reference to the literature (relevant module content); adds context with an interpretation based on personal experience; poses a dialogical question (2 points).
   - b. Refers to a concept in the literature, poses a question (1 point)
   - c. Refers to a personal experience no literature reference (1 point)
   - d. Poses a question with no context or literature (0 point)

b. Two peer-response (PR) postings to other students’ questions (1 point each):

   a. PR engages AQ, draws from the literature; integrates...
The theme framework and requirements for each Module follows.

**Module One (2 weeks) Silence: A Framework for a Listening-first disposition** (15% of grade)
The first Module poses silence as the framework for learning to listen-first as a servant-leader. When we commit to listening first, what is the best situational condition? How do we learn to listen more holistically, to listen with and for greater clarity? What do experts advise on listening-first? This module and the entire course is an invitation for the student to practice learning to be still in silence, and to enhance our interior and exterior capacity for listening. The readings, exercises, cases and evaluation for this module are directed towards rediscovering silence as we begin an exploration for greater awareness of the individual’s listening capacity.

**Masters ORGL 535**
Write 5-7 content pages double space, or create a 5-7 minute Video. All papers are to be presented in professional APA format, and include at least three references.

**Doctoral DPLS 775**
Doctoral papers/presentations are expected to be more in depth than a master’s level paper by a) providing more detail; or, b) applying an additional theoretical perspective; or, c) including information from additional research. Write 8-12 content pages, double spaced, or create a 10-12 minute Video. All papers are to be presented in professional APA format, and include at least five references.

**Assignment** on developing a listening-first disposition
Write on the theme, “my fortuitous encounter in listening (or being listened to).” Provide an introduction to the experience and some brief background; describe the experience. Why do you consider this a fortuitous listening encounter? Assess the qualities of this listening experience and provide supportive examples. If you were going to do this again with someone else what might you do, how might you prepare, to enhance the listening experience (i.e. apply more effective, empathetic, generative listening strategy)? Reflect on how a listening-first disposition might inform the decision making process. Evaluation is based on comprehension and persuasiveness, on clarity, and on reflective insight.

**Module Two (2 weeks): Deepening the Silence: The discipline of learning to listen and discern** (15% of grade)
The struggle to find and maintain silence is synonymous with the struggle to maintain an attentive listening and discerning disposition. Module Two is focused on enhancing awarenesses
and skills through using listening techniques, methods, and models. Discernment is introduced as a complimentary aspect of the listening and decision making framework. The readings, exercises, cases and evaluation are focused on enhancing the individual’s interior and exterior listening and discerning capacity.

**Masters ORGL 535**
Write 5-7 content pages double spaced paper. All papers are to be presented in professional APA format, and include at least three references.

**Doctoral DPLS 775**
Doctoral papers/presentations are expected to be more in depth than a master’s level paper by a) providing more detail; or, b) applying an additional theoretical perspective; or, c) including information from additional research. Write a Servant Leader Assessment 8-12 page double spaced paper. All papers are to be presented in professional APA format, and include at least five references.

**Assignment:** on developing capacity for the group process of listening, and decision-making, a film application. Relate your understanding of how Lincoln used listening in his decision making process to end slavery by applying listening-first criteria. Provide examples from the film to support your findings as you describe Lincoln’s decision process; identify occurrences of individual and group listening. Identify examples of types of listening, and decision making with supportive evidence, and evaluate how well the chosen type/method fits this case situation. How did listening, affect Lincoln individually, the political parties, and the whole society. Relate what you learned about the listening process from this exercise and from this module. Evaluation is based on a demonstration of the comprehension of the listening, on clarity, and on persuasive presentation.

**Module Three (2 weeks): Expanding the Silence: Respectful receptive listening and discerning**
In Module Three, the complexity increases as our framework for listening and discerning expands to include groups and organizations. The test of servant-leadership is whether those served become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants; and, what is the effect on the least privileged in society—will they benefit, or at least not be further deprived. Integrating the views of others with our own listening discerning process can be most challenging; however, the collective forum is where listening and discerning clarity for decision-making is most needed and valued. We will learn to practice a discernment methodology for individual and group applications. The readings, exercises, cases and evaluation are focused on group discernment and the individual’s role in the group process.

**Masters ORGL 535**
Write 5-7 content pages double spaced paper. All papers are to be presented in professional APA format, and include at least three references.

**Doctoral DPLS 775**
Doctoral papers/presentations are expected to be more in depth than a master’s level paper by a) providing more detail; or, b) applying an additional theoretical perspective; or, c) including information from additional research. Write a Servant Leader Assessment 8-12 page double spaced paper. All papers are to be presented in professional APA format, and include at least five references.
Assignment: Developing a listening-first discerning disposition for decision-making. Applying the steps and procedures outlined in Mode 2, or Mode 3 (pp. 159-161) of Sparough, J. M. (2010) What’s Your Decision? How to make choices with confidence and clarity: An Ignation approach to decision making. Identify a decision you either had to make, or are in the process of making; it can be a personal or organizational decision (if it is an organizational decision approach the process as preparation for your personal contribution to the decision process). Identify the Mode you have chosen. Document the process according to each step of the Mode 2 or Mode 3 outline. Note the internal and external listening movements and offer insights into how you addressed each step and came to a decision. Reflect on how listening influences the discernment process. Explain with examples how listening and discerning enhance the context for making decisions. Evaluation is based on the rigor of applying the method to experience, on persuasiveness, clarity, and listening-first and discernment criteria integration.

Module Four (2 weeks): Collecting the Silence: Listening Discerning & Decision Making (15% of grade)
All that has been learned in the course has been preparation for developing a listening discerning philosophy to enhance our capacity for making decisions. Module Four is about taking the next step, gathering what we have heard in our listening and discerning and integrating that with what we have collectively come to know, to make decisions as effective servant-leaders. The module focuses on how listening and discerning may influence our input into decision processes and provides opportunities to practices applying a collective decision model. The readings, exercises, cases and evaluation are focused on making decisions at the individual, the organization and the whole system (community) level.

Masters ORGL 535
Write 5-7 content pages double spaced paper; or produce an 8 minute video; or produce 10-12 content PowerPoint slides (don’t count introduction slide or reference slides). All papers are to be presented in professional APA format, and include at least three references.

Doctoral DPLS 775
Doctoral papers/presentations are expected to be more in depth than a master’s level paper by a) providing more detail; or, b) applying an additional theoretical perspective; or, c) including information from additional research. Write 8-12 content pages double spaced; or produce a 12 minute video; or produce 15-18 content PowerPoint slides (don’t count introduction slide or reference slides). All papers are to be presented in professional APA format, and include at least five references.

Assignment: Understanding how listening, discerning, and decision-making come together for the servant-leader. Create a persuasive video, PowerPoint presentation, or written document, intended to be presented to the CEO/Board of an organization you are involved with. Detail what a listening-first disposition and a discerning disposition entail. Briefly describe the pros and cons of the methods and relate why and how an integrated understanding of the purposes and skills of listening and discernment may enhance decision-making capacity for the organization. Provide practical examples. Evaluation is based on clarity, persuasiveness, and on an integrated understanding of the course materials and processes.
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**Grading Matrix**

- **A= 96-100**
- **A- = 91-95**
- **B+= 85-90**
- **B = 78-84**
- **B- = 70-77**