DPLS 775 Improvisational Leadership for Transformational Change

Fall 2010 3 Credits
WELCH Assembly Hall
Class Times: Thursdays September 2, 9, 30, October 14, 28, November 11, 18, December 2, 2010
Rev. Dr. Silvia Behrend
Office hours: by appointment: 360 259 3971
Email: revdocsil@gmail.com

School and Department Theme Statement
The Doctoral Program in Leadership Studies and the School of Professional Studies at Gonzaga University seek to build "people for others," people able to define their own sense of identity, live within a moral framework, and articulate and advance social justice.

Course Overview
"So the challenge of leadership today is to be able to stay calm in the midst of ambiguity, to maintain poise in the midst of uncertainty, to be able to keep people's eyes on the larger values that you hope will be enduring and for which it's worth suffering through changes and disorders, and responding with faith and creativity."

Heifetz www.hks.harvard.edu/news-events/.../insight/.../ronald-heifetz

Transformational and servant leadership theories articulate the need for the leader to undergo the personal process of self-awareness and transformation. Their goal is not to transform others, which may be paternalistic or hierarchical, but to use their own experience of transformation to lead with integrity and authenticity. An end result might be that others experience transformation, but that would be a product of the leader providing possibilities for potential change - not mandating transformation. It is the leader's authentic presence that offers others a glimpse into what may be possible for others.

This crucial skill of being open to self-transformation and developing one's own abilities to adapt can be learned. In the best of times, transformational leadership is innovative, creative, investing in the personal worth and growth of each employee. But during difficult times, dynamics change that challenge the leader to remain authentic and flexible enough to adapt and transform the self. Ronald Heifetz maintains that in difficult times, people confer authoritarian power on their leaders in order to contain their fear, restore order and maintain stability. Thus a transformational leader needs skills and experience in remaining authentic, creative, and flexible to resist that pull.

This class will explore how transformational leaders can use the art of movement improvisation to remain creative, flexible, and authentic. Leaders can experience and learn the skill to become exquisitely in tune with the organic flow of energy in a group. In improvisation, the challenge is to be an authentic self while simultaneously releasing this identity in service to the group's needs. Presence and awareness are required as is the willingness to step in and out of leadership roles in an instant.
The theoretical and conceptual foundations of this course will include Ronald Heifetz's new book on the practice of adaptive leadership as well as Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow and creativity. In addition, we will look to Conforti's work on field and form to complement Jung's theories of archetype and the collective unconscious. This three-fold approach will help us articulate our personal experiences within a more comprehensive supra-personal frame.

We will work with improvisation techniques adapted from Barbara Mettler and use case studies from your area of leadership for inspiration. The goal is to practice presence and awareness, to respond seamlessly from your authentic self while remaining connected to the group.

At the end of the class, we will perform one or two short improvisations based on themes that emerge out of our studies and experiences. The intended audience is the doctoral community.

Important information for the class:
There are no physical requirements to participate, everyone is welcome, and no experience is necessary in any kind of art form. You will be led in a logical sequence of exercises that will develop into improvisations. We will be moving an average of an hour and a half per class with breaks in between. Classes will be taped so we can watch what actually takes place in the improvisation. Discussions will be based on experience and observation of the group at work. There is a possibility that some sessions will be filmed for inclusion on the department's web site in an effort to integrate the theoretical, academic and creative experiential aspects of learning. Only those willing to participate will be included, it is not a requirement of the class. A release form will be available.

Methodology:
• Discussion of class theme
• Physical Warm up
• Movement improvisation sequences
• Discussion of movement experience in light of the class theme
• Integration

Participants will:
• Read the required theoretical material,
• prepare one case study to bring to class
• maintain a reflection journal throughout the class
• Participate in the final performance.
• Write a final paper integrating the experience with the theories discussed in class

There will be one field assignment for the November 3rd class to be announced our first class.

Required Readings
Assignments

Due by first class, September 2:
Write a 5-7 page paper based on your understanding of Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow and creativity particularly as it pertains to your own life. Use the text as the jumping off point to explore your relationship to the creative process, where and how it was/is blocked and/or released.

Due on September 30
Write a case study based on Heifetz's work, highlighting any aspect of improvisational leadership challenges in your own work environment.

Due on November 11:
Based on Conforti's work, write a 5-7-page paper integrating your class group improvisation experiences with the notions of field, matter, and archetypal patterning. We will discuss this assignment in more detail in class.

Due on December 9:
Write a 7-10 page paper integrating all aspects of the class, including the performance. More information will follow on this assignment.

Due every class:
You will maintain a journal throughout the class, starting the first day of class. The journal is to be kept daily for the duration of the class. Entries are to be between 1-3 pages in length and will be emailed directly to me on the due dates at behrend@gonzaga.edu. These entries will not be shared with anyone. Directions for the content will be discussed at our first class meeting September 2, 2010.

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<th>Date:</th>
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<td>Csikszentmihalyi</td>
<td>Welch Assembly Hall</td>
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<td>September 9</td>
<td>Journal</td>
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Grading and attendance
Since it is impossible to grade subjective experiences, there will only be two grades given, an A or an Incomplete. I follow departmental guidelines for absences. This is a highly participatory
class; the experiences are predicated on group energy and flow. Absences affect the outcome. Unless you are extremely ill, please plan your calendar accordingly.

To receive an A students must:
- Send in all assignments on time. (If there are problems, please let me know and we can make arrangements)
- Attend every class. Failure to hand in assignments and/or unexcused or excessive absences will result in an Incomplete.

If you have any special needs, please let me know in advance so that I can make the proper arrangements.