Course Overview

This course is concerned with an interpretation of dialogue that assumes a fundamental connection and relationship within and between embodiment/direct experience and communication with symbols (words). Characterizations of embodiment and of language necessarily encompass diverse fields and perspectives. This diversity of perspectives is at the heart of the course and is expressed both academically through the readings and discussions therein and phenomenologically through the dialogue practice that we will engage in. It is hoped that participants will embrace both of these methodologies and the systematic comparison and interpolation of their consequences.

As you will see going through the readings there is a strong emphasis on the work of Martin Buber. This emphasis is warranted for several reasons. First, Buber was a 20th century philosopher that took up the issue of dualism as a response to both advances in physics and the playing out of the consequences of this subject/object dualism in human culture and civilization on a global scale. Second, many communication theorists have tried to understand Buber’s work in the context of ordinary communication and interaction. The reading of the course begins with many chapters devoted in one way or another to Buber’s ideas and ends with a reading of his work I & Thou. Lipari, however, represents a different thread in the discussion. Her text focuses more closely on the phenomenological and physical experience of speech, thought, and listening. Her text is a bridge between Buber and David Bohm’s short work On Dialogue. With Bohm, we see a very abstract discussion of what Lipari makes increasingly concreted.

A chief aim of the course is to surface how ordinary communication and discourse relates to the language and behavior of those we deem “leaders”. The theorizing in this course is also central to leadership studies defined as a transdisciplinary (Finkenthal, 2008; 2012) endeavor seeking to understand how affectivity, manifest through the movement of power, purpose, and influence in human interactions, organizations, and institutions, affects and informs rational knowledge and expectations. While we won’t be specifically addressing “leadership” issues or literature it is hoped that course participants will make their own links to how they both perceive and enact “leadership”.

A primary assumption underlying this course is that our speech or language is involved in an oscillating movement between emergent and novel expression and the expression of socially constructed and normative conditioning. A further assumption is that we use our speech and language habitually and that it can become mostly unconscious. It is from this lens that we can think of ourselves as “conditioned” by our circumstances and our practices. We become what we do and the more efficient we are in what we do the more unconscious of the actual doing we may become. And yet underlying this habitual mode of communication is the possibility of emergent and novel speech. The dialogic situation is one in which both poles of communication as described above are active and reflected upon.
Another overarching theme in this course is the relationship between my interpretation of dialogue and the practice of Jesuit pedagogy. Jesuit pedagogy teaches in general that human existence is ideally an ongoing flow of conscious reflection between and among our context, experience, actions, and evaluations. The pivotal role that reflective consciousness plays in this movement between the embodied (context and experience) and the discursive (action and evaluation) is at the heart of the dialogic principles as expressed in this course.

The concepts of identity, role, self, other, and object will also be studied in light of global, organizational, and personal perspectives. Throughout the readings, we will focus on phenomenological and subjective position of the self and the development of responsibility of that self to the world.

We will also engage in an ongoing ‘radical’ dialogue separate and apart from the theoretical and intellectual approach to the topic. This practice of radical dialogue is an open-ended approach to experiencing and understanding communication that focuses as much or more on the subjective phenomena of being in community (the dialogue circle) as it does on what is actually said by people that choose to speak.

This process can be disconcerting on a number of levels. The type of dialogue we will practice is fundamentally and intentionally uncertain – with no explicit topic or purpose we are left to just listen to the space – listen to each other; and listen to ourselves. Because we are asked to suspend habitual responses to the speech of others we may feel some discomfort. Some people (and I am one of them) that experience this form of dialogue feel an acute self-consciousness arising out of either the difficulty of suspending response or the protracted silences that often occur. This can result in reactivity and judgment about the process. The point of this practice is first to realize the phenomena of our own social conditioning and then begin to understand how this conditioning affects our interactions and judgments/prejudices. The primary consequence or “end” of this practice is in each one of us (ideally) taking full responsibility for our perceptions and judgments. It should also be noted that this “understanding” (if that is the right word) resulting from the dialogue practice is not conceptual, abstract, or theoretical – we are engaged in a practice intended as a “training” or a “skill”. This skill is the ability to stand in your own shoes and take a radical responsibility for your own judgments, thoughts, and beliefs.

This practice of dialogue can help (it is asserted) counter some of the effects of unconscious conditioning and begin to teach us about how better to stay in relationship in a pluralistic, diverse, uncertain, and complex world. This courses’ main contribution to leadership studies is the development of both theoretical and experiential knowledge and insight into fundamental aspects of inter-human communication and its effects on practices, beliefs, and norms. One of the primary assumptions of this course is that people in leadership roles that can engage dialogically are necessarily more relevant and effective in their leadership.

**Intentions & aims for the course:**

- To explore, contextualize, problematize, and make sense of philosophical, psychological, and sociological interpretations of dialogue and communication.
- To review and consider language as a traditional symbol system and as a non-symbolic practice arising from shared experience.
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- To develop a working knowledge of the history & concepts of dialogue as they relate to leadership studies, organizational coherence, and civil society.
- To develop a personal sensitivity to the nature of group dialogue. This requires increased sensitivity and receptivity to your subjective gestures and responses in conversation through the practice of the form of dialogue developed in this course.
- To cultivate theoretical and practical skills for engaging in civil discourse

Course Structure

This course is composed of reading, writing, class discussion, and sustained radical dialogue.

Most 4 hour classes will open with an overview of the readings. Small group discussions of course notes and readings may then follow. We will generally take a 20-minute break. Following the break we will engage in an approximate 1 to 1.5 hour dialogue.

It is also my habit to prepare interpretive notes of selected readings and make them available on Blackboard prior to class. I use these notes to frame my ideas for conversation when we meet. I also hope that my interpretations inspire students to interpret and analyze the readings from their own perspectives. I typically prepare a number of slides based on my notes to stimulate discussion and/or communicate concepts and ideas.

Assignments

- Please read all assignments and my course notes posted on Blackboard. These notes are meant to be an initial factor in the reading triangulation strategy that involves the author(s) work, your interpretation of that work, my interpretation, and finally our collective interpretation. This process is much more effective when all participants commit to doing the reading.
- Participants will be expected to attend all class sessions. If you miss a class please inform me via email or phone prior to the missed class. Missing more than one class will result in an incomplete and require either taking the class again or auditing it at some future time.
- Participants to keep a reflective journal of each class session to be completed as soon after each class as possible. I will make time at the end of class for these reflections. Journal entries should be emailed to me as soon as possible after each meeting. Please see Blackboard for more specific guidelines.
- Final Paper: 15 - 20 page paper expressing reflection, analysis, and synthesis. See Blackboard for specific information.
- Presentation – (see Blackboard).
- Participation in the dialogue is assessed only to the extent that you show up and maintain the principles discussed. There will be no assessment based on what you say or don’t say. The point of this dialogue process isn’t necessarily to say anything.
Expectations and Assessment

Assessment of doctoral work in leadership studies is challenging. Interdisciplinary work dealing with complex and sometimes contested theories and concepts requires (from my perspective) a tolerance for uncertainty, ambiguity, and contingency. I also expect a high degree of self-directed behavior on the part of doctoral students and candidates. I would like my teaching style, assessment policy, and rubrics to support and facilitate self-direction.

However, behind my questions about assessment and uncertainty in evaluating anyone in an absolute manner there does reside (in my view) a set of skills that serve to hold and shape work with language in a complex world. I believe we need a grammar, syntax, and semantics of clarity, coherence, depth, and breadth. My assumption at the beginning of the term is that all of the students in this course possess the requisite skills, talents, and propensities needed to be clear, cogent, and complete. I admit that the standards I refer to are objectively stated and subjectively enacted. My assessment will be based on the quality and content of expressed thought as exhibited in both written assignments and classroom presentations and participation.

Grading Criteria for Written Work: See Grading Rubric on Blackboard

Content Criteria:
The content of papers should reflect the level and style of content in readings and discussions. There is an expectation that doctoral students will reach outside of their comfort zone in terms of appropriation of ideas, concepts, and frameworks. The substance of papers and other writings will be weighed against the general level of discourse in class meetings and the style and density of expression of the readings.

Thought and Expression Criteria
Student writing should raise vital questions or issues, formulating them clearly and precisely. I will be looking for evidence of breadth and depth and the insightful, in-depth analysis of complex ideas. Main points should be developed and supported with relevant information and references that are appropriately incorporated. Of fundamental importance (and requisite for receiving an A grade on your paper) is an accurate, concise, and coherent thesis or purpose statement.

The organization and logic of your writing is critical. The expectation is for well focused, well organized, and well reasoned conclusions. The writing should flow with the reader not getting lost or having to work to determine what you are saying.

There is also an expectation that your writing/thinking has an open and inclusive character when exploring alternative systems of thought, recognizing and assessing, as appropriate, their assumptions, implications, and/or practical consequences.

Technical Criteria
Your writing should be clear and demonstrate a high level of vocabulary through careful word choice. Sentences should be constructed skillfully and purposefully. Transitions between paragraphs and sections are important and will evaluated for their efficacy in weaving your concepts, themes, and purposes together. Summaries and conclusions are also vital elements of good writing and will be evaluated based on their appropriateness and effectiveness.

Of course, grammar, punctuation, and spelling are expected to be flawless. Careful proof reading of your paper is a basic expectation.
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Papers are to be completed in APA 6th Edition style. References should be cited properly within the text and a complete reference list must be provided. Appropriate use of headings will also be noted.

Required Texts
These books should all be available in the bookstore by the first day of class.

Other required selected readings will be available on Blackboard:

References: