COMM 3341 -- Discussion

If we learn best by doing it for ourselves, then we can best learn about discussion through doing it for ourselves. Thus, this course will evolve as a continual discussion. Certainly we will discuss the nature of discussion itself, but our discussions, to be most fruitful for learning, will have to revolve around other topics as well. Therefore, this is a course in which you will be engaged in many discussions.

But we will not stop there, for we will venture beyond the phenomenon of discussion in order to explore a deeper form of communication: dialogue. Hence the altered name of the course: Discussion To Dialogue. We will begin with discussion but then move to the study and practice of dialogue. Although everyone will be required to participate as speakers in this course, we will also stress the importance of listening to complete the communication circuit. There will be a lot of talking in here, but for communication to occur there will need to be a lot of listening as well.

We will not strive to learn only about communication but more importantly you will be challenged to learn more about your self and your life as a communicating being. In other words, we are not going to engage in discussions and dialogues just for the sake of learning course material; there must be higher and more significant goals for mastering this material. We will push to recognize and realize such goals.

Attendance Policy

Because the learning component of this course is steeped in active participation, your attendance--your live presence--will be essential. This policy will be seriously adhered to. You will be allowed 3 unexcused absences before each subsequent absence begins to whittle away 5 points from your final course grade. Be careful and strategic about when you miss classes in this particular course.
Required Texts


Course Workload

Active Participation 50%

First Essay 15%
A 4-6 page typed paper that applies the concept of "flow" to communication in general and to discussion in particular. The essay should be an excursion into theory: both in terms of demonstrating an understanding of flow theory as well as a presentation of your own theoretical perspective in response.

Second Essay 15%
A 4-6 page typed paper that seeks to apply the theory of dialogue to various aspects of everyday living and experience. In addition to demonstrating what you have learned about dialogue, this paper should offer some personal and imaginative vision regarding dialogic values as applicable to all kinds of communication contexts.

Initial Report 10%
A brief 2-3 page presentation of initial remarks about your experience, perspective and skills in regard to the art of discussion, with particular emphasis on a self-assessment of your skills.

Revised Report 10%
A follow-up and revision of your initial report, focusing upon any changes in experience, perspective and/or skillfulness.

Academic Enrichment Credit: All undergraduate students enrolled in communication classes are required to attend or participate in one outside-the-class educational event as approved by the Department of Communication. Notice of acceptable events will be announced in class and displayed on department bulletin boards in the TCA building. Failure to satisfy this requirement will result in 2 points being taken off the final grade.
Schedule of Class Meetings/Discussion Topics

8/27 M  Introduction and orientation to the course
8/29 W  Discussion as phenomenon
8/31 F  Basic fundamentals
9/ 3 M  no class -- Labor Day
9/ 5 W  Basic fundamentals
9/ 7 F  Basic fundamentals
9/10 M  In-class discussion of *Finding Flow*
9/12 W  “    “    “
9/14 F  “    “    “
9/17 M  “    “    “
9/19 W  “    “    “
9/21 F  “    “    “
9/24 M  “    “    “
9/26 W  “    “    “
9/28 F  “    “    “

10/ 1 M  Evaluating discussions
10/ 3 W  Going beyond discussion
10/ 5 F  TBA
10/ 8 M  no class -- Fall Break
10/10 W  Introduction to dialogue theory
10/12 F  Introduction to dialogue theory, cont’d.
10/15 M  Introduction to William Isaacs’s perspective
10/17 W  Dialogue as a conversation without sides
10/19 F  Thinking alone vs. thinking together
10/22 M  Listening
10/24 W  Respecting
10/26 F  Suspending
10/29 M  Voicing
10/31 W  Predictive intuition
11/ 2 F  Dialogue practice
11/ 5 M  Structural traps
11/ 7 W  Setting the container
11/ 9 F  Fields of conversation
11/12 M  Dialogue practice
11/14 W  Convening dialogue
11/16 F  Dialogue practice
11/19 M  Taking wholeness seriously

Report #1 Due

Paper #1 Due
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11/21</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Thanksgiving break</td>
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<td>11/23</td>
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<td>11/30</td>
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<td>Dialogue</td>
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<td>12/3</td>
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<td>Final class discussion, Pt. 1</td>
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<td>12/5</td>
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<td>Final class discussion, Pt. 2</td>
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12/7 F {final exam period, to be used if needed}