COMM 4340 /6340

# L I S T E N I N G

Professor: Office Hrs:

Office:

Phone: Email:

## **Introduction**

The primary goal of this course is: *To enhance one’s capacity to listen and engage in living relations*. You will soon realize that the full act of listening deeply radically involves your whole being in the life of this world, not just social interactions. You can listen with your body, with your eyes, with your heart, as much as with your ears and mind. There is much to hear when one begins to listen in this manner.

The course requires thoughtfulness and openness in liberating one’s perspective of communication from the dominance of speech, as well as reawakening one’s ability to wonder about the ultimate, indestructible questions of life. And I’m not kidding. This is a very demanding course in serious attentiveness.

Although we will study types, skills and functions of listening, our chief focus will revolve around a conception of *listening as a way of living* (being & doing). This emphasis will be balanced on three levels: (1) **Personal** discovery and evaluation of one’s own listening ability as a criterion for communication competency; (2) **Philosophical** issues and concerns regarding listening as a relational art; and (3) **Practical** exercises and situational applications for cultivating listening competencies.

**Aspirations!**

1. To enhance and enliven communication skills and competencies.

2. To improve the experience of meaningfulness in all relationships.

3. To reflect upon and discern the impact of listening on all human activities.

4. To appreciate the critical insights of listening for communicative practices.

**Required Readings:**

Behrouz Boochani, *A Letter From Manus Island* (Borderstream, 2018).

Gemma Corradi Fiumara, *The Other Side of Language* (Routledge, 1995).

**Engagement Policy:**

Absolutely crucial. There are as many ways to be absent as

there are to be present. You must be here consistently to learn through listening practices and to practice listening as communication with others in a way that is mutually co-instructive. Each absence beyond three unexcused absences will lower your final grade by five points.

**Center for Writing and Communication (CWC):**

The CWC offers assistance with written or orally presented assignments for all UM students and may be of help to you in our course. Staffed by consultants from the Departments of Communication and English, the center features space to plan out or work through ideas, review essay drafts, and a studio that allows for recording and reviewing presentations. The CWC is open Mon-Thu 9am-5pm & Fri 9am-12pm, and located on the ground floor of the main campus library. Though walk-ins often may be accommodated, appointments are encouraged and can be made by clicking "Schedule a Session" at the center's website: [www.memphis.edu/cwc](http://www.memphis.edu/cwc)

**Grading Scale for All:**

**90-100= A / 80-89= B / 70-79= C / 60-69= D / below 60= F**

**Please note:**

This is a very packed and continuous schedule of meetings;

there is no good day to skip a class session, capriciously.

As we go along, everything becomes more and more integrated

as understanding deepens with care and cultivation.

The course moves integrally as a whole,

not incrementally in pieces.

### Assignments for Undergraduate Students

**Participation** 30% Active listening, mindful openness and commitment

to engagement with ideas and people that is expressed in action.

**Reading** 30% Maintain a journal of weekly meditations on listening that

weaves your understanding Fiumara’s conceptions in the book (chiefly chapters 6-10) along with regular reflections on your own as well as others’ everyday relational experiences. Use the ideas in the book to initiate each entry—the length and the depth of substance is up to you. Your journal, however, must show a development of understanding from the beginning to the end, which can only be constructed and conveyed by weekly writing rather than a ‘rush job’ at the end of the term. The growth of your thinking is what will be evaluated.

**Reflection** 40% Four 1-2 page reports based on the following listening

**Reports** exercises: (details to be explained in class) – turned in

whenever completed by any one of the four Due Dates.

[1] listen to steady rain for at least 30 minutes

[2] listen in relative stillness & silence for one hour

[3] listen empathetically to a friend/relative

[4] listen “visually” to a sunrise/sunset for an hour

Assignments for Graduate Students Only:

**Participation** 10% Active listening and expressing. Essentially a commitment

to engagement with ideas and people that must be proven in action.

**Reflection**  40% Four 1-2 page reports based on the following listening

**Reports** exercises: (details to be explained in class) – turned in

whenever completed by any one of the four Due Dates.

[1] listen to steady rain for at least 30 minutes

[2] listen in relative stillness & silence for one hour

[3] listen empathetically to a friend/relative

[4] listen “visually” to a sunrise/sunset for an hour

**Research** 50% A critical paper in which you maintain a “reading journal

**Journal🡪Essay** of notes for developing into a progressive thesis for argument and heuristic research ideas. The writing should be tailored especially to your particular intellectual area(s) of passionate study. (May be turned in during Exam Week).

### Meeting Schedule

January

W 1-22 Orientation to the course

M 1-27 Listening in a hypermodern culture of noise and social atrophy

W 1-29 Listening as art of living (expressively, not oppressively)

February

M 2-3 Contemplation and listening consciousness (*opening* the closed)

W 2-5 Mindfulness, silence and listening spaces (*opening* the closed)

M 2-10 What and how much are we missing?

**W 2-12**  Our many needs for “effective” listening

M 2-24 Processes of listening

W 2-26 Listening preferences **Report #1 Due**

March

M 3-2 The listening self and the phenomenon of being present

**W 3-4** Listening without breaking

*Spring Break*

M 3-16 Philosophical problems

W 3-18 Philosophical problems, cont’d

M 3-23 Philosophical problems, cont’d **Report #2 Due**

W 3-25 Overview of communication competencies**/**listening skills

M 3-30 Discriminative listening (primary)

April

W 4-1 Comprehensive listening (understanding)

M 4-6 Appreciative listening (music) **Report #3 Due**

**W 4-8** Critical listening (critical needs)

M 4-13 Therapeutic listening (relieving ex-pressiveness)

W 4-15 Social dimensions and problems: worldwide concerns

M 4-20 Ethical Loneliness (trauma of not being heard) **Report #4 Due**

W 4-22 Fearless listening

M 4-27 Toward an earth ethic of attunement

**W 4-29** Last day of class and final discussion **Journal Due**

*R 4-30 Study Day*

**Poem for Course Reflection**

**My Cottage at Deep South Mountain**

In my middle years I love the Tao

and by Deep South Mountain I make my home.

When happy I go alone into the mountains.

Only I understand this joy.

I walk until the water ends, and sit

waiting for the hour when clouds rise.

If I happen to meet an old woodcutter,

I chat with him, laughing and lost to time.

Source**: Wang Wei, *Laughing Lost in the Mountains*.**

Barnstone, Barnstone and Haixin, Trans. Hanover, NH: University Press of New

England, 1991, p. 3.