COMM 4363/6363

**D I A L O G U E**

**Introduction to the Course:**

The values of openness, collaboration, respect, listening, presence and communion have perhaps never been needed more than in this cultural era of fragmentation, division and mediated living. Dialogue is at once a very old tradition yet a new style of communicating that fosters trust, insight and creative thinking. Dialogue has increasingly become a viable alternative to the more conventional communication forms of human conversation known as *discussion* and *debate*. Dialogue seeks to overcome the constraints of discussion and the aggressiveness of debate to offer a deeper mode of inquiry and relation-building. This course will balance theory and practice as we attempt to *experience* what we are *practicing* and *studying* conceptually. We will also explore, through class conversations, the essential differences between discussion and dialogue. Once we have attempted and hopefully experienced dialogue in some depth, we will move to consider creative applications of dialogue to a variety of communication settings, issues and problems. The course is risky, though: First, dialogue exposes us to the possibilities of change and transformation through *open* communication; second, the course, itself, is open. The *challenge* is not academic.

There are four primary aspirations of this course:

1. To examine various theoretical and philosophical approaches to human conversation.

2. To enhance awareness and appreciation of dialogic communication values as

applicable to a wide range of communication contexts and goals.

3. To understand more deeply the relationship of speech forms to thought processes.

4. To learn how to convene, and engage in, dialogue practices.

Required Texts:

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

David Bohm, *On Dialogue* (Routledge 1996).

Terese Marie Mailhot, *Heart Berries* (Counterpoint, 2018).

## **Course Policies and Assignments**

## Undergraduate Assignments

**Essay-Exam** 20% A *midterm* take-home essay-exam covering questions concerning

Theoretical/philosophical bases of dialogue practices.

**Notebook & Report** 50% Maintain a journaling “notebook” to record your thoughts, ideas, and

reflections as they develop through the semester in regard to the

growth of your thinking. Use this notebook to cultivate dialogical

thought from which you will submit a final Summary Report on the last

day of class that presents evidence of intellectual growth. The report should be 3-4 typewritten report that summarizes your reflections and insights based on your readings, notebook and reflections at course end.

**Engagement** 30% Attendance, participation, co-facilitation and involvement.

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## Graduate Assignments

**Reflection Paper** 20% A short 3-page reflective essay conveying your insights how

dialogue helps illuminate rhetorical/communication theory.

**Research Paper** 50% 15-20 page essay combining journaling and extraneous research

exploring regarding dialogue as it relates to your area of specific interest

or discipline (See e.g. the special issue of *Southern Communication*

*Journal* v.65 Winter/Spring 2000, which was devoted to dialogue).

**Engagement**  30% See engagement policy description.

**Engagement Policy:**

Attendance and participation are the essential keys to success in this course. However, by using the term *engagement* I intend to mean more than merely coming to class regularly and talking on occasion. *To be engaged* in this course will require that you: (1) **attend** 90% of class meetings {only three unexcused absences will be allowed}, (2) **participate** by listening to others as well as by expressing your own thoughts, (3) be **present** in class throughout each session, conscious and focused on the work at hand, (4) **complete** all readings on time, and (5) **think** hard for yourself, and for the sake of your relations with others, and (6) **stay off** all cell phones & electronics during class. You will be evaluated to have passed this course primarily to the degree that you have been engaged in all five ways throughout the term. If, at any time during the semester, you wish to receive a report on how well you are doing in this regard, please ask me. It is your job *to prove* *to all of us* in this class that *you* *are* *engaged with us* in a mutual commitment to learn as much as we can. Habitual lateness to class as well as habitual early departures do not constitute “attendance”, let alone engagement. Excessive cell phone ringing, text messaging, web surfing and other distractions will constitute being “absent.” More than 3 unexcused absences will alter your final grade.

**Course Calendar**

T 1-21 Introduction and orientation to the course

R 1-23 Communication, contact, connection, experience, relation

T 1-28 Boochani’s Challenge **Read: *Letter from Manus Island***

R 1-30 Reclaiming the sentiment of conversation

T 2-4 Communicative differences: Discussion, Debate, Dialogue

R 2-6 Approaches to dialogue

T 2-11 Martin Buber’s “I and Thou”

R 2-13 Buber, cont’d.

T 2-18 Mapping Dialogue: Foundations

R 2-20 Dialogue Tools

T 2-25 **Practice** (unfacilitated) **Essay-exam due**

R 2-27 **Practice** (facilitated)

T 3-3 **Practice** (co-facilitated)

R 3-5 TBA

* Spring Break

T 3-17 Bohm *On Dialogue* **Read: On Dialogue**

R 3-19 Bohm *On Dialogue*

T 3-24 Bohm *On Dialogue*

R 3-26 Bohm, cont’d: William Isaacs

T 3-31 Isaacs cont’d.

R 4-2 **Dialogue Focus:**  **Read: *Heart Berries***

T 4-7 **Dialogue Focus:**  *Heart Berries*

R 4-9 **Dialogue Focus:**  *Heart Berries*

T 4-14 **Dialogue Focus:**  *Heart Berries*

R 4-16 New reflections and concerns

T 4-21 International contexts

R 4-23 **Open** **Dialogue**

T 4-28 **Open** **Dialogue Summary Report**

*R 4-30 no class--Study Day*

Poem for Course Reflection

**Two Poems by Alice Walker**

**“When We Let Spirit” “Practice”**

When we let Spirit Though

Lead us Like you

It is impossible I am awake

To know At least

Where Some

We are being led. Of the

All we know Time

All we can believe

All we can hope Deep

Is that Slumber is far

We are going From

Home Unknown

That wherever

Spirit takes us I am

Is where A

We Practicing

Live. Alice.

Source: Alice Walker, *Absolute Trust in*

*the Goodness of the Earth* (NY:

Random House, 2003, p. 169 & 178).