COMM 6340

# L I S T E N I N G

## **Introduction**

The primary goal of this course is: *To enhance one’s inner capacity to listen*. You will soon realize that the full act of listening deeply involves your whole being, dramatically. 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 and attend when one begins to listen in this manner.

The course requires rigorous thought and openness to reorienting one’s perspective of communication, as well as a reawakening of one’s ability to wonder about the ultimate, indestructible questions of life. This is a very demanding and penetrating course.

Although we will study types, skills and functions of listening on a practical level, our chief focus will center on *listening as a way of being*. Thus, 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 in the art of living; and (3) **Practical** exercises and applications of effective listening in various situations.

**Objectives:**

1. To enhance and sharpen communication skills and competencies.

2. To improve the quality of meaningfulness in relationships with others.

3. To reflect upon and discern how listening impacts all human activities.

4. To appreciate the insights of communication research on listening.

**Textbooks:**

Undergraduates:

*The Lost Art of Listening*. Michael P. Nichols. NY: Guilford, 1995.

Graduate Students:

*The Other Side of Language*. Gemma Corradi Fiumara. NY: Routledge, 1990.

(in addition to Nichols’ *The Lost Art of Listening*):

**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. Each absence beyond three unexcused absences will lower your final grade by five points.

### Assignments

Undergraduate Students:

**Participation** 20% Active listening and expressing. Essentially a commitment

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

**Journal** 20% Maintained as a reading journal. The journal will serve as a record

of your notes/thoughts in reaction to the substance of each chapter of Nichol’s book, which will also indicate the development of your thinking about the act of listening; to be turned in at the end of the semester as an bound set of reflections.

**Essay** 20% A 3-5 page, typed and double-spaced creative essay about any

current and concrete communication problem—public, communal or private—that you believe could be alleviated by restoring the art of listening in the situation. Reference to two outside sources of information will be required.

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

**Reports** (details to be explained in class—deadlines flexible for 1 week):

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

[2] listen in stillness/silence for one hour

[3] listen empathetically to a friend/relative

[4] listen visually to a sunset

For Graduate Students Only:

**Participation** 15% Active listening and expressing. Essentially a commitment to engagement with ideas and people that must be proven in action.

**Journal** 35% Maintained as a “reading journal” focusing on thoughtful reaction

to Fiumara’s text. turned in at the end of the semester as an entire bound-set of reflections.

**Research** 50% A critical paper in which you will test the thesis of Fiumara the

**Essay** state of with current scholarship on listening/communication in

academic journals.

##### POLICIES

* Grading Scale: **A**=90-100, **B**=80-89, **C**=70-79, **D**=60-69, **F**=59 and below
* Tardiness and unexcused absence from class are unprofessional behaviors that must be avoided.
* Reasonable and appropriate accommodations will be made for students who present a memo from [Student Disability Services](http://saweb.memphis.edu/sds/).
* Academic misconduct and disruptive behavior will not be tolerated.  Violations of University policy will be reported to the [Office of Judicial and Ethical Programs](http://saweb.memphis.edu/judicialaffairs/).
* As a student in this course, you are required to uphold academic integrity in all aspects of the course, especially on examinations and papers, and thus are cautioned to follow the letter and spirit of the standards outlined in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities (available at: <http://saweb.memphis.edu/judicialaffairs/pdf/CSRR.PDF>). Cheating, plagiarism, forgery, and falsification are serious offenses and will be dealt with according to the procedures outlined in the Code. Sanctions for academic dishonesty may include lowered or failing grades on assignments or the course, probation, loss of privileges, and suspension or expulsion from the University.

### Meeting Schedule

M 8-26 Orientation to the course

W 8-28 Listening in a culture of noise & commotion (**problem of social atrophy)**

M 9-2 Labor Day – no class

W 9-4 Listening as an art of being (& the inner capacity to listen)

M 9-9 Being, Doing, Having and ... listening

W 9-11 Contemplation and listening consciousness

M 9-16 Mindfulness, silence and listening spaces

W 9-18 Humane communication

M 9-23 Our many needs for effective listening

**W 9-25** Process of listening **A Report Due**

M 9-30 Listening and silence

W 10-2 The listening self and the phenomenon of presence

M 10-7 Philosophical problems

W 10-9 Philosophical problems, continued **A Report Due**

**M 10-14** --no class, Fall Break—

W 10-16 Communication competencies

M 10-21 Overview of listening skills, needs and situations

W 10-23 Discriminative listening

M 10-28 Discriminative listening **Essay Due**

**W 10-30** Comprehensive listening

M 11-4 Comprehensive listening

W 11-6 Appreciative listening **A Report Due**

M 11-11 Appreciative listening

**W 11-13** Critical listening

M 11-18 Therapeutic listening

W 11-20 Therapeutic listening **A Report Due**

M 11-25 Contemplative listening (& the value of gratefulness)

W 11-27 --Thanksgiving Holiday—

M 12-2 Reflection on journals, reports **Journal Due**

**W 12-4** Final discussion and closure

(R 12-6 --Study Day--)