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, for dialogue exposes us to the possibilities of change and transformation through *open* communication.

There are four specific objectives of the course:

1. To examine various theoretical and philosophical approaches to dialogue.

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:**

-- Buber, Martin. *I and Thou*. NY: Scribners, 1970.

-- Bohm, David. *On Dialogue*. NY: Routledge, 1996

For additional study, see:

-- Isaacs, William. *Dialogue: The Art of Thinking Together*. NY: Currency, 1999.

-- Peter Senge et al., *Presence*. NY: Contiuum, 2004.

## **Course Policies and Assignments**

## Undergraduate Assignments

**First Exam** 30% A one-hour exam covering the philosophy, concepts and practices

of dialogue. Emphases on Buber, vocabulary/definition and

general understanding. Take-home exam before Spring Break

**Essay-Exam** 20% Essay-exam demonstrating overall understanding of dialogue

and reflective account of in-class dialogue sessions/experiences.

**Reflection Paper** 20% 3-4 typed page essay extending your insights regarding ways in

which dialogue would be most useful regarding contemporary

social problems and/or ineffective communication contexts.

**Engagement** 30% See policy statement below for description

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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** 60% 15-20 page essay exploring specific theoretical concerns

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

discipline (See especially the special issue of *SCJ* v.65 Winter/Spring 2000, which was devoted to dialogue).

**Engagement**  20% 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) **turn off** all cell phones & electronics during class. You will be judged 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.

**Schedule of Dialogue Meetings**

W Jan 21 Introduction and orientation to the course

M Jan 26 Communication and “quality of contact”

W Jan 28 Contact, experience, relation

M Feb 2 Approaches to dialogue (vs. discussion & debate)

W Feb 4 Intro to Martin Buber and his approach

M Feb 9 Discussion of Buber, part 1

W Feb 11 “ “

M Feb 16 Discussion of Buber, part 2

W Feb 18 “ “

M Feb 23 Discussion of Buber, part 3

W Feb 25 “ “

M Mar 2 Buber, later views

W Mar 4 **First** **Exam First Exam Due**

SPRING BREAK, March 9-14

M Mar 16 David Bohm’s approach to dialogue

W Mar 18 Bohm’s approach, cont’d.

M Mar 23 Bohm, ch. 1-3

W Mar 25 Bohm, ch. 4-6

M Mar 30 Bohm, ch.7

W Apr 1 Bohm’s approach as adapted by William Isaacs

M Apr 6 Isaac’s approach and preparation for practice

W Apr 8 Initial dialogue

M Apr 13 Dialogue applied **Reflection Paper Due**

W Apr 15 Dialogue applied

M Apr 20 Dialogue applied

W Apr 22 Dialogue applied

M Apr 27 Final dialogue session

W Apr 29 *No Class—Study Day* **Essay-Exam Due**