University of Massachusetts
Graduate College of Education
Critical and Creative Thinking Program

CrCrTh 616: Dialogue Processes
Fall 2017 Syllabus
Professor: Olen Gunnlaugson, PhD.

COURSE DESCRIPTION*

Dialogue Processes is structured as an online learning community for cultivating practical, reflective and transformative approaches to engaging and facilitating dialogue processes. Building from the MIT Dialogue Project in the early 90s, this course will focus on Otto Scharmer's groundbreaking work with the four fields of conversation and presencing—a generative dialogue approach. The course is designed to develop our individual and collective capacities for bringing significant changes in how we think, communicate and learn together in conversation. There will be regular skill and capacity building exercises, student coaching and a final project that involves conducting a reflective or applied dialogue based project in your organization, community or peer group. The course will be delivered through Vista, Skype, Wimba and draw on inspirational audio and video files where possible.

* note: course syllabus is subject to revision and change as required

COURSE OVERVIEW

From the middle of the twentieth century leading into our present day, interest in dialogue grew considerably across disciplines, bringing about a renaissance of practical applications and approaches to dialogue. Briefly considering this body of work will prepare us for our exploration of Scharmer's recent approach to dialogue with his model of the four fields of conversation and presencing. Each week will include lectures and dialogues, weekly online threaded discussion, as well as an assortment of capacity-building exercises, peer-based coaching, personal blogs and practical assignments for applying these cutting-edge conversational tools in your organizations, workplaces and personal life.

COURSE GRADING

Online Participation, Readings (25%)

There will be weekly posted questions and inquiries designed to deepen your understanding and application of the course readings. My expectations for your participation and engagement are based on the quality of your postings (see inquiry guidelines). As the course is not self-paced, everyone is expected to work on their own and together in order to complete assignments on time.

Weekly Group Dialogues & Assignments (25%)

There will be weekly group dialogues/lectures and two written assignments for the course in order to support us in making deep dives into the weekly readings and lectures.

Dialogue Coaching & Coaching Journal (25%)

The weekly peer-coaching module is designed to build key capacities for generative conversations. I ask that everyone participate in 2 weekly ½ hour coaching calls with their coach and coachee. You will also keep an online coaching journal in the form of a blog to document your growth and development through the course (see coaching journal guidelines).

Final Project (25%)

Your final project is expected to develop from inspiration that you discover in your online inquiries, weekly readings, group dialogues, coaching calls and coaching journals. The final project will cover an aspect of the course that is meaningful and central to the dialogue-based questions you are exploring in your professional and/or personal life. Further details will be announced in week 5. Note: this assignment is suitable for inclusion in CCT students' required Reflective Practitioner's Portfolio (http://cctrpp.wikispaces.umb.edu).

Learning Objectives

Dialogue Processes is based on specific objectives that might be summarized in three categories:

1. The acquisition of knowledge pertaining to group communication

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:
a) Know how to apply the basic course principles and concepts;
b) Demonstrate an understanding of the communication methods studied in depth within the course;
c) Have a sound grasp of the different approaches to conversation surveyed in the course;
d) Be aware of communication challenges and opportunities for influence within the workplace;
e) Effectively interpret and proactively influence typical dynamics of conversation within the workplace;
f) Discover conversation as a leadership tool for empowering others and effecting positive change;

2. Acquire practical knowledge for applying communication principles in groups

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:
a) Apply the communication principles, methods and practices examined in this course for the purposes of influencing and occasionally solving the complex problems pervading organizations in our time
b) Effectively communicate across diverse workplace situations;
c) Inspire conversational leadership in one's peers and workmates, in turn positively influencing the communication culture and environment of one's organization

3. Develop key personal, professional and conversational leadership skills and abilities

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:
a) Effectively apply the new paradigm of communication introduced in the course in their communication with other individuals and teams
b) Demonstrate key conversational leadership skills, principles and practices for communicating with this new communication paradigm in the workplace;
c) Build on existing communication strengths by improving upon existing weaknesses.
e) Prepare a team-based performance of a particular communication model

SCHEDULE OF SESSIONS
The course is divided into a series of thirteen online sessions that correspond to each week.

Week 1: Launching our learning community
Our first week will begin with everyone introducing themselves online. During this week, I invite you to familiarize yourself with the course homepage online. After reading the introductory lecture, I ask that you choose your dialogue artist/theorist for assignment one and post your theorist online as soon as possible. Please view the following pointers before beginning the course:
http://cct.wikispaces.umb.edu/Pointers

Week 2: Historical Overview of Dialogue
The second Week will offer a brief overview of the history behind Scharmer's work in dialogue. During this Week, students will write about a dialogue artist/theorist and complete a 2 page summary portrait to be posted online. This week will also feature the launch of the Coaching Corner, where students will join a coaching group for semester-long peer-coaching.

Weeks 3-7: Four Fields of Conversation
Weeks 3 through 7 will introduce Scharmer's four fields of conversation. For 4 consecutive weeks we will investigate each field of conversation and inquire into the different modes of listening and speaking, communication norms of these fields, as well as significance of each stage of conversation. Weekly dialogues and lectures will guide us through each field and its culture of conversation. Readings will be drawn each week from a broad selection of articles. Dialogue audio or videos with key theorists will be introduced wherever possible. Facilitation practices will be introduced through the coaching modules.

Week 8: Applications of the Four Fields & Presencing

For this session, we will look at the four fields of conversation and presencing and explore obstacles and opportunities for implementing these frameworks in different educational, social and organizational settings. We will also address criticisms of these methods and explore best practices to bring back to our conversations.

Week 9: Facilitation of the Four Fields of Conversation
This session will examine more in detail the transitions between the four fields of conversation, as well as the in-the-moment and foundational practices needed to facilitate these shifts— whether in a one on one conversation or a dialogue group. Approaches to dialogue facilitation and the core capacities required will be addressed in detail.

Week 10: Coaching Conversations
This final course week will focus more in depth on our coaching conversations. There will be a reflective component of the semester of coaching conversations, as well as a coaching assignment where students explore ways of supporting one another with the development of their final project.

Week 11-12: Projecteering & Learning Journeys
These final weeks are focused on applying what we have learned in the course through different forms of peer-to-peer learning, evaluation and teamwork. Here I ask that everyone choose a solo or collaborative project for going deeper into a burning dialogue question or issue in their professional or personal lives. Students will be encouraged to work with others to deepen their learning experiences of dialogue. The option to facilitate a dialogue of your own will also be encouraged. Through this real-world component, you will have the opportunity to apply your new learning in dialogue, set up a dialogue project, and bring the results back to our learning community.

Week 13: Presentations & Reflections
During our final week, everyone will present their offline projects to the group and reflect on their learning within these projects and the course as a whole.

Evaluation during week 13 to be completed at: http://bit.ly/CCTEvals

Participation Requirements

The course will be delivered through a series of thirteen online weekly sessions, with each week taking multiple interactive forms including weekly dialogue/lectures, weekly readings, asynchronous inquiry, phone coaching, web-based audio and video files. This course will rely on the energy, interest and input of each of us to make this a transformative experience for all. Regular participation and online presence is vital.

Required Course Text:

Scharmer, O. (2007). Theory U: Leading from the Future as it Emerges. Sol publishers
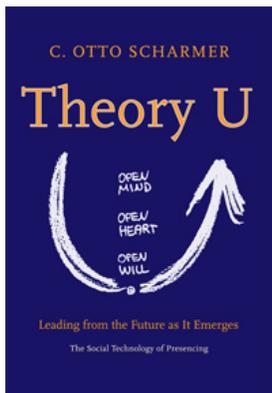
Recommended Course Texts:

Bohm, D. (1996). On Dialogue London and New York: Routledge Publishers

Isaacs, W.N. (1999). Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together. New York: Currency
        Doubleday

Senge, P; Scharmer, C.O.; Jaworski, J.; Flower, B.S. (2004). Presence: Human Purpose and the Field
        of the Future Society of Organizational Learning, MIT

Internet Communication

We will meet online weekly over the semester through Wimba, Vista and Skype. The dates and times of our meetings will be established during week one.

Virtual Office Hours

I will hold my virtual office hours by appointment via Skype internet phone. Please email me in advance to schedule a time.

Email: gunnlaugson@hotmail.com

Plug-ins, special equipment and software
You will need the free adobe acrobat reader to open the pdf documents contained in this course. You can find this at www.adobe.com where you have to search around for the free one or at www.downloads.com You will also need a copy of Skype Internet Phone. You can download a copy of Skype at www.skype.com

You will also need to purchase a headset with microphone for your computer to use Skype.
My Skype Username is: Trifoss.

Our Communication
Instead of sending me e-mail with general questions regarding this course, please post them in the Q & A folder (link through site map here) found in the Discussions section instead. I will respond to any questions posted in the within 48 hours (except on weekends). This is the best place to post all non-private questions that pertain to the course since other members of the class will benefit from the answers as well.

Method of Instruction
Each weekly session will officially start every Monday at 9am EST. The specific plans for each week will be announced at this time. Please visit the homepage at the beginning of each week to review the plan for the week so you can budget your time accordingly. I will not be sending you an e-mail reminder. It is therefore imperative that you log on to the course homepage in order to begin the activities planned for the week. You should plan on logging onto the course web site at least 3 times each week to contribute to threaded inquiry and keep up with other activities that may be underway.