

Walking the Talk: Communicating Across Cultural Difference

January Term, January 7-9, 2011

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Course Description

This weekend, skills-based course provides an opportunity for seminarians and social justice workers to identify and improve their ability to communicate across various cultural orientations. “Communicating across cultures,” in this context, is the act of understanding the assumptions, values and preferences of another human being, and with that knowledge, construct acts of communication that builds bridges of understanding and integrity. In this course, *every* act of communication – even within similar cultural groups – is a cross-cultural encounter. The course will be highly experiential, emotionally intensive, giving learners multiple opportunities for real-time engagement with difficult expressions of cultural conflict. Academic credit: .5

Learning outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Locate personal and group patterns of thought and behavior that thwart cross-cultural communication
- Expand capacity and competency in multicultural communication
- Identify ways in which “UU culture” complicates communicating outside the UU worldview
- Show emerging ability to communicate effectively in high-stress situations
- Understand the core principles of multicultural communication
- Identify future areas for continued growth and improvement

Pre-course required text and films:

Texts

- Patterson, Kerry. et al. (2002). Crucial Conversations: Tools for talking with the stakes are high.
- Gladwell, Malcolm. (2005). Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking.
- Bordas, Juana (2007). Soul, Salsa and Spirit: Leadership for a Multicultural Age.

Films

- Crash (2004). Lion’s Gate Entertainment. (2 hours)
- Akeelah and the Bee (2006). Lion’s Gate Entertainment. (2 hours)
- 12 Angry Men (1957). Blockbuster Movie Rentals (2 hours)

Post-Course Assignment

Conduct a “crucial conversation” and post your outcome on Moodle. Format and expectations for your summative essay will be provided during the course.

Learning Schedule

Friday evening. 6:00-9:00 pm

- Community dinner and formation of a learning community. Bring enough food to share with 3-4 people.
- Overview of the principles of cross-cultural communication

Saturday 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

- Workshop I explores conditions necessary for cross/multicultural communication;
- Workshop II begins building multicultural communication skills and competencies;

Sunday, Noon-5

- Workshop III: Role plays and cross-cultural simulations.
- Workshop IV: Preparation for post-course assignment, due by March 1, 2011.