

# **Walking the Talk: Communication and Leadership Across Cultural Difference**

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Meadville Lombard Theological School  
610 S. Michigan Ave  
Chicago, Illinois

## Instructors:

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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 and lead across various cultural orientations in preparation for leadership in multi-racial and multicultural settings.

“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 build bridges of understanding and integrity. In this course, *every* act of communication – even within similar cultural groups – is a cross-cultural encounter. The course is focused on individual skills building and will be highly experiential and emotionally intensive, giving learners multiple opportunities for real-time engagement with difficult expressions of cultural conflict. Academic credit: 1.5 credits.

## 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 and leadership and identify strategies for continuing to learn in an accountable way
- 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 assignments

Please note: The reading and viewing load for this class is heavy because it is part of the methodology of learning and part of the strategy of exposing seminarians to sources of growth which do not rely on UUs of color to be responsible for the learning of others.

## Text

- Read, Patterson, Kerry. et al. (2002). Crucial Conversations: Tools for talking with the stakes are high
- Centering: Navigating Race, Authenticity and Power in Ministry. (2017) Mitra Rahnema, editor. Chapters by Rev. Darrick Jackson, Rev. Dr. Hope Johnson and Rev. Cheryl M. Walker.
- Unitarian Universalists of Color: Stories of Struggle, Courage, Love and Faith. Available through Lulu Press. <https://UUofColorStoryProject.com>. Read two stories. ORDER EARLY!!!
- Read, Sue, Daryl Wing (2010). Microaggressions in Everyday Life [see PDF in Populi]

## Websites:

- Allies for Racial Equity <http://www.alternet.org/news-amp-politics/11-things-white-people-can-do-be-real-anti-racist-allies>
- DRUUMM (Diverse and Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries) <http://druumm.onefireplace.org/>
- 11 Things White People Can Do To Be Real White Allies <http://www.alternet.org/news-amp-politics/11-things-white-people-can-do-be-real-anti-racist-allies>
- UUMA Berry Street Lecture (2017) Available at [uuma.org](http://uuma.org) beginning August 15th.
- White Supremacy Teach-In Youth Resources <http://blueboat.blogs.uua.org/2017/04/26/white-supremacy-teach-in/>

## Self Assessments

- Complete the self-assessment exam in Chapter 4, p. “*Your Style Under Stress*.” Bring your score report to class.
- Complete the assessment, “*Inventory for Diversity and Emotional Intelligence in Religious Life*”; [See Populi for handout]
- Complete the project, (if you have not already done so) *The Knowing Project* [see Populi for handout]

## Film/Video

We will be using excerpts of these films in class. In order to allow the teaching experience to be effective, you are required to watch the films in advance.

- Akeelah and the Bee (2006)
- Dear White People (2014)
- TED TALK. Malcolm Gladwell “Blink” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGBVgvisbI8>

## Post-Course Assignment

*Self Assessment and Learning Plan*. You will provide an analysis of your socio-economic “standpoint” and look at how that may affect how you perceive the world as a leader. Using a series of prompts, you will also look at ways you can augment your knowledge of others to whom you aspire to minister.

*Conduct a “Crucial Conversation”* with someone from racially, culturally or religiously different from you and post your outcome on Populi. Format and expectations for your summative essay will be provided during the course and will include methods of multicultural self-education which you can use to prepare for your meeting. More details on this assignment will be provided in class. The assignment will include identifying the skills you wish to work on to further your capacity to be a leader capable of leading multicultural change.

### Learning Schedule

#### *Friday evening. 6:00-9:00 pm*

- Community dinner and formation of a learning community. Bring enough food to share with 2-3 people (assume that others have YOUR food sensibilities, so bring something that YOU can eat). Students from Meadville Lombard’s International program will join the class for dinner; these students are also studying cross-cultural communication in an interfaith context.
- Opening ritual honoring ancestors and those who come before
- Overview of the principles of the course and the principles of cross-cultural communication.
- Introduction to “standpoint theory”

#### *Saturday, 9:00 am - 6:00 pm*

- Workshop I explores conditions necessary for cross/multicultural communication and leadership;
- Workshop II begins building multicultural communication and leadership skills and competencies
- Rituals of closing and affirmation

#### *Sunday 9:00 - Noon*

Individual consultations