

Conversation Will Save the World

ARTSCI 1137.xx (1CR) • AU20xx

Day, Time, Place

Prof. Mark Rudoff

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Office Hours: TBA

Course Description: You may have observed that we live in a time when American society is riven by seemingly endless, irresolvable conflicts. Some scholars theorize that this state of conflict is only a symptom, that the root illness is that our culture has lost the practice of meaningful conversation. In this seminar we will canvass the possibilities of conversation, analyze diverse modes of discussion, and practice the skills, conventions and values that support fruitful conversation. You made the choice (an excellent decision, I might add) to go to college in a place that affords opportunities to engage brilliant minds across the broadest possible spectrum of backgrounds, disciplines and perspectives. If we can do good work in this class, we will better understand how to use conversation to take full advantage of those opportunities.

Required Texts:

- Sherry Turkle. *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital World*. New York: Penguin Random House, 2015. You will need a hard copy of this text. (See the course rules below.) Used copies are available on Amazon or B&N for under \$10.
- Conversation Will Save the World Course Pack TBA. [Includes readings from Stanley Fish, Harry Frankfurt, Daniel Kahneman, Sam Leith, Don Miguel Ruiz, Caroline Stephen, Edith Wharton, Molly Worthen, and others.]

Course Objectives:

1. To acquire and practice a more nuanced understanding of conversation as the foundation of human interaction and social engagement.
2. To consider the effects of the digital environment on face-to-face interaction, and how we can change behaviors to promote fruitful conversation.
3. To study conversation as a trope in art and literature.
4. To become sensitive to different modes of conversation and learn how to navigate a broad range of conversational situations.
5. To develop skills and values that position a smart, sensitive scholar to contribute confidently to productive discourse in challenging times.

Required Activities:

1. Fair warning up front: NO SCREENS! With the limited exception of those occasions when an assignment involves media or we need instant research to resolve an issue, all phones, tablets and computers will be asleep and out of reach.
2. Attendance is required. Each student may cash in one “get out of class free” during the course of the semester.
3. Students are expected to prepare assigned reading, attend each class, and participate in class discussions. I will evaluate your participation by how actively and meaningfully you engage and contribute to class discussion.
4. Students are required to keep a journal. (Format is entirely up to your taste and judgment; I am personally a fan of both moleskins and old-fashioned cheapo marble notebooks.) There will be short, informal weekly writing assignments that focus on features of conversation that we treat in class. At each class I will collect the journals for review; your journal will be available for pickup the following morning (because you will need it for the next assignment).
5. There may be a modest cost associated with attending the business lunch session.
6. Here is what is NOT required for the course: there are no papers, exams or extensive outside research.

Grading: Satisfactory/ Unsatisfactory

Class participation:	80%
Journal:	20%

COURSE ITINERARY

Wk	SUBJECT	READING
1	Introduction: Survey of the terrain, including some improv theatre.	Turkle
2	Conversation in the digital age	
3		
4	Learning to listen	Stephen
Difficult Conversations		
5	Argument and its imitators	Fish
6	Lies, prevarication and bulls**t	Levitin, Frankfurt
7	Persuasion	Leith
8	Mediation	GUEST
Formal Conversations		
9	Meetings and interviews	
10	The business lunch	GUEST
Obstacles to Conversation		
11	Checking your assumptions	Kahneman
12	The Troll Aesthetic, "Don't even ask," and other conversation blocks.	Worthen
Conversation Will Change the World		
13	Toward a personal conversation	Ruiz
14	manifesto	

Academic Misconduct

I have the goal of encouraging collaboration, discussion and group study as you develop your ideas; note, however, what you submit must consist of your original work. All students are expected to understand OSU rules on plagiarism, impersonation and other academic dishonesty issues. If you are not clear on the policies, consult the Office of Academic Affairs website, particularly the Code of Student Conduct: <http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/csc/>. A good guide is the 8 Cardinal Rules: <http://oaa.osu.edu/coameightcardinalrules.html>.

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. At OSU, academic dishonesty is defined as an intentional act of deception in one of the following areas:

- cheating: use or attempted use of unauthorized materials, information, or study aids;
- fabrication: falsification or invention of any information;
- assisting: helping another commit an act of academic dishonesty;

- tampering: altering or interfering with evaluation instruments and documents; or
- plagiarism: representing the words or ideas of another person as one's own.

An act of academic dishonesty may result in an "E" grade for the course and University disciplinary action.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions) that have been certified by the Office of Student Life Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office of Student Life Disability Services is located in 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue; telephone 614- 292- 3307, slds@osu.edu; slds.osu.edu.