

difficult d!alogues

In Search of Commonalities for Faculty Teaching DD Courses

As we develop courses that contribute to our stated goal of creating a climate of dialogue on campus, some of us teaching have been asking what we might agree on in terms of the Difficult Dialogues courses. Obviously the courses have and will take a range of approaches to the concept of dialogue – some are being taught about subjects that are inherently dialogic, others often use dialogic methodologies, others do both. In looking to increase our awareness about what a DD course might do, and in seeking some commonalities among them, we are considering the following questions:

How do you understand dialogue and its significance? What particularly interests/concerns/ motivates you regarding the practice of dialogue?

Have you intentionally considered its meaning and role as it relates to this course? Has that led you to use some specifically dialogic methods and processes in the classroom?

Does the structure of the course support respectful speaking and listening aimed at mutual understanding or appreciation of difference? Do you create safety so that students are encouraged to participate in this way?

Are students in the course encouraged to take ownership for their own learning, as well as the collective work of the course?

Does the work of the course encourage critical thinking and engaged listening to explore and hold conflicting points of view?

If you are willing and interested in entertaining some or most of these questions, your course is certainly aiming to increase a climate of dialogue on campus, and will contribute to the DD course series.

Each semester, we hope to advertise the DD-affiliated courses well and in advance, so that the students who register will be conscious of the emphasis within the course when they register. We hope that those teaching the DD courses will be willing to include attendance at several of the DD symposium events as an aspect of the course as is relevant.