This semester we will explore the nature of effective dialogue. Since it is not possible to isolate the art of dialogue from the larger framework of the communication process, we will study the variables needed to “create meaning”; this includes looking at all types of communication (intrapersonal, interpersonal/dyadic, public and mass mediated) and their components (source, message, receiver, channel, feedback, environment/context, interference and more).

This course is designed to help you become a more effective “communicator.” This statement means more than just speaking with others or hearing them speak; there is a significant difference between the physical act of “talking” and the deliberate act of “speaking;” likewise, the ability to physically “hear” another in no way guarantees that “listening” is occurring. To be artful and compassionate communicators, we must understand all the essential variables needed to create meaning and we must be committed to applying them every time we engage in dialogue.

This is a challenging but highly rewarding task; I ask that you approach the material with humility and without preconceived notions of your own communication strengths and weaknesses. The only way to communicate and share the Gospel with clarity, effectiveness and passion is by understanding ourselves (beliefs, values, attitudes) and our limitations (biases). Once we have identified those elements that form the core of our belief system, we can turn outward and attempt to communicate with compassion, sensitivity and ethos. Dialoguing and creating meaning in difficult situations and about complex and controversial issues is not easy but it is an essential skill if we are to carry to others the message of love for one another that is part of all religions.

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Required Text
- Ferder, Fran (1986). Words Made Flesh, Ave Maria Press.
- Pope Paul VI, Ecclesiam Suam (found online at w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/)

Additional Course Readings (I will bring photo copies of relevant material from these sources)
- Isay, Dave. Listening is An Act of Love. (2007)
Attendance and participation is required at each class. Students who miss without consent of the instructors will have their grades adjusted accordingly. There will initially be 5-8 page integration paper due at mid-term. Expectations for the paper will be discussed in the preceding weeks. Students will be required to keep a one page journal entry citing the communication skills they practice between classes.

A final written presentation, to be delivered to the class, addressing some aspect of culture that, in the mind of the student, is calling for dialogue with the “good news” of the gospel. Student will identify why they chose a particular cultural value, practice or position; demonstrate their efforts to understand why this is a prized value, practice or position for another person and/or the culture; finally, describe what the conversation might sound like (a verbatim) if they were to engage an individual or group in dialogue with the worldview and values of the gospel. An example of this dialogue with be provided by midterm.

Art and Asceticism of Dialogue Course Outline

January 25: Introductions. Foundations for our understanding of a the “art and asceticism” of Dialogue
Pius XII, John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul I, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, Francis I
How communications is an expression of culture: Words and ways we communicate our worldview and value system

February 1: Jesus, God’s Dialogue with Humanity. A Scripture Reflection, faith sharing, and reflection on God’s ways of communicating. Dialogue as Evangelization.

Public Mutuality, Private Vulnerability (Parker Palmer)

February 15: Centering Prayer … Grace is necessary for true dialogue


March 1: Creating a Culture of Encounter: Meeting Others, Accompaniment, Dialogue, and Discernment. A Model for Interpersonal Skills. Input and Practice in skill building

March 8: The Skill of Self Disclosure. The Use of “I” statements in dialogue
Spiritual Disciplines for Dialogue #1 (Intentionality, Initiating, Attentiveness, and Charity) Input and Practice in skill building

March 15: Spring Break
March 22: Spiritual Disciplines for Dialogue #2 (Keeping our Focus on the Person, Emotional Intelligence, Active Listening, Probing)  
Input and Practice in skill building

March 29: Centering Prayer: Grace is necessary for authentic Dialogue

April 5: Dialogue and Discernment

April 12: Dialogue for the Common Good: Examples from scripture and U.S. history

April 19: Dialogue During Conflict. Models for Conflict Management (Rosenberg)

April 26: (Open for exploratory conversation and dialogue regarding the class)

May 3: Presentations

May 10: Presentations
1. Introductions to one another and class theme, The art and asceticism of dialogue; Developing a Spirituality of Dialogue
   a. Brief Tracing of the Inspirations for a Spirituality of Dialogue with/for the World in Church’s Social Teachings
      i. Pope Leo XII – 1891, *Rerum Novarum* (“Of revolutionary change” or Rights and Duties of Capital and Labor) Focusing on the need to address "The misery and wretchedness pressing so unjustly on the majority of the working class."
      ii. Pope Pius XI – 1931, *Quadragesimo anno* (“In the 40th Year”) Addresses ‘ethical implications of the social and economic order.’ Addresses dangers for “human freedom and dignity arising from unrestrained capitalism and totalitarian socialism/communism.” Calls for reconstruction of the social order based on principle of solidarity and subsidiarity.
      +Pope John XXIII- Message via Vatican Radio to President Kennedy and Soviet Premier Khrushchev during the Cuban missile crisis:
      "We beg all governments not to remain deaf to this cry of humanity. That they do all that is in their power to save peace. They will thus spare the world from the horrors of a war whose terrifying consequences no one can predict. That they continue discussions, as this loyal and open behaviour has great value as a witness of everyone’s conscience and before history. Promoting, favouring, accepting conversations, at all levels and in any time, is a rule of wisdom and prudent which attracts the blessings of heaven and earth.”
      vi. Pope John Paul II (1991) *Centesimus annus* (the hundredth year) affirms the “vital energies” that came forth from RN for the good of the world. Clarifies the Church’s rejection of socialism, affirms the right to private property, denounces poverty, reiterates the need for respect for environment and use world’s resources; further promotes respect of persons and ways of life that respect dignity of life.
I. Pope Paul VI and Evangelii Nuntiandi

#1. “The aim of this encyclical will be to demonstrate with increasing clarity how vital it is for the world, and how greatly desired by the Catholic Church, that the two should meet together, and get to know and love one another.

# 18. For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new: “Now I am making the whole of creation new.”[Rev. 21:5; cf. 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15] But there is no new humanity if there are not first of all new persons renewed by Baptism[ Cf. Rom 6:4] and by lives lived according to the Gospel.[Cf. Eph 4:24-25; Col 3:9-10.] The purpose of evangelization is therefore precisely this interior change, and if it had to be expressed in one sentence the best way of stating it would be to say that the Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert,[Cf. Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 1:18, 2:4] solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieu which are theirs.

II. Identifying Layers (or Strata) of a Culture in need of Ongoing Transformation through Dialogue

A. At the Heart of Every Culture is a Worldview

At the heart of every culture is a dominant worldview. In his book, The Universe Next Door, James Sire describes seven core questions a group grapples with (and respond to) which form the basis of their worldview. His worldview questions (and possible responses) include:

1. What is prime reality—the really real? (God, or “the gods”, or just what!?)
2. What is the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us? (fleeting, lasting, purposeful? Random?)
3. What is a human being? (A highly complex machine, a sleeping god, a person made in the image of God, a naked ape.)
4. What happens to a person at death? (Personal extinction, transformation to a higher state, reincarnation, departure to a shadowy existence on "the other side.")
5. Why (and how) is it possible to know anything at all?
6. How do we know what is right and wrong? (Right and wrong are determined by human choice alone or what feels good, by notions simply developed under an impetus toward cultural or physical survival, through the God we believe in.)
7. What is the meaning of human history? (To realize the purposes of God or the gods, to make a paradise on earth, to prepare a people for a life in community with a loving and holy God, and so forth.
8. What personal, life-orienting core commitments are consistent with this worldview?

These core worldview questions and concerns are addressed consciously and unconsciously in an ongoing dialogue to find meaning to life together in the world. If we were to picture this core worldview dialogue going on amongst a group it might look something like this:

B. **Dominant Cultural Values** develop and flow from the group’s worldview beliefs ……
C. Our cultural worldview and values are then expressed in “symbolic ways” which include our language, expected behaviors, trades and tools, arts, dress, foods, and spiritual and religious symbols and practices.
D. **A Culture’s Institutions** are the structures that protect and hold in place the groups worldview, values and symbols. Institutions also become a symbol themselves.

Evangelization, a dialogue of “Good News” for the culture, takes place through the power of the Word, Who we hope to share, brought to every level of a culture: the worldviews, values, uses of symbols and the institutions we’ve created.

A spirituality of dialogue is rooted in Jesus, the Word, who teaches us to use words to create relationships of love for the common good and so that together, the Spirit has room to transform our cultural efforts to shape the world we live in.