



Reflective Dialogue and Transformational Learning

UW-Parkside Workshop

September 29, 12:30–3:30 p.m.

following Lunch from 12:00 – 12:30 p.m.

Faculty/Staff Lounge, Wyllie 247

Facilitator: David Voelker (University of Wisconsin–Green Bay)

Reflective dialogue is a special kind of discussion that can be used strategically in the classroom to cultivate individual reflection, expand the capacity for listening, and build community. To lead a reflective dialogue, the instructor steps back and moderates with a light touch, mainly to ensure that all participants have a chance to share their thoughts and to keep the discussion focused on an established “object” of inquiry. A reflective dialogue opens space for students to work through the intellectual and emotional implications of the content that they are studying, without the pressure for everyone in the room to arrive at the same destination. Reflection (with listening) can be especially productive when students are confronting difficult issues. As Charity Johansson and Peter Felten have explained in *Transforming Students: Fulfilling the Promise of Higher Education*, “reflective analysis—employing critical thinking, dialogue, and intuitive discernment to examine their assumptions—opens the learner to other possible ways of seeing the world around them and their place in it.” Because reflective dialogue emphasizes both listening to others’ perspectives and listening to one’s self, it can play an important role in supporting the cognitive and emotional development that can make learning a transformational process.

Workshop facilitator David Voelker will introduce theory and evidence supporting the pedagogical usefulness of reflective dialogue and will offer the opportunity to participate in a model dialogue. He will also introduce basic principles for facilitating a reflective dialogue, including dialogues on difficult topics, and will share ideas for post-dialogue assessments.



Biography: David Voelker is an associate professor of history and humanities at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, where he has taught since 2003. He co-directs the Wisconsin Teaching Fellows & Scholars program for UW System’s Office of Professional and Instructional Development (OPID). He is currently facilitating a contemplative pedagogy cohort at UWGB and is co-facilitating a one-year Dialogue Fellows program.