

Participatory Leadership: the art of hosting conversations that matter and creating cultures of innovation¹ - Fall 2015

Class Dates: the evening of November 6 and all day November 7 & 8
Instructor: Paul Horton, email: paulvhorton@gmail.com

Q: How can we as civic leaders support the creation of trust and cultures of innovation and collaboration in our organizations and in our communities in increasingly complex, fragmented, and uncertain times?

Course Description

There have always been ample opportunities to try and create positive change within our organizations and in the lives of people in our communities. Yet like never before, the world we face today is increasingly complex, fragmented and uncertain. The political climate is polarizing, and in many places trust in government and our other institutions is eroding. This makes collective action difficult. At the same time, more people want to be involved in the civic arena and in shaping the future of their organizations, requiring leaders to explore new ways to communicate, ensure inclusiveness, and work across sectors.

Rather than simply working harder, faster or longer, today's leaders need new approaches to engage with others to discover shared purpose and collectively define the way forward to a desired future. This two-credit course is for both emerging and legacy leaders that understand that more and more of our modern challenges are ones that require a new kind of collective action. Such action requires that we move beyond adversarial agendas and into new kinds of consultative process and engagement strategies that bring out the best in our organizations and communities and foster true collaboration.

The intent of this course is to help you to create resilient teams, organizations and communities and to support the development of people around you. Foundational elements of this course will include a look at different leadership styles and approaches, systems dynamics and complexity theory, and a host of participative process methodologies and principles.

Key Learning Objectives

- Enhanced understanding of collective impact and shared civic leadership principles
- Improved competencies to work within complexity, rapid change and uncertainty
- Ability to authentically convene conversations with diverse groups around issues of public importance
- Increased ability to approach community challenges holistically and whole-heartedly
- Strengthened confidence to initiate effective acts of civic leadership

¹ Our class Canvas site will be open to registered students by September 28, 2015. The final syllabus will be on Canvas.

Credit – This is a 2-credit course. Incompletes will not be granted.

Faculty – Paul Horton, Partner of The Athena Group, paulvhorton@gmail.com

Readings – Read the following articles:

- Wired for Change: Leveraging Insights from Biology – Ann Butler, The Systems Thinker, Vol 19, No 1
- Changing Our Systems by Changing Our Brains: the Leverage in Mindfulness – Elaine B. Johnson, The Systems Thinker, Vol 21, No7
- Collective Self-Interest: The Holinic Shift - Joanna Macy, World Business Academy Perspectives, 1995, Vol 9, No 1
- A Positive Revolution in Change: Appreciative Inquiry - David L. Cooperrider and Diana Whitney
- Civic Engagement and the Restoration of Community: Changing the Nature of the Conversation - Peter Block, The Civic Engagement Series, Sponsored by A Small Group
- The Culture of Collective Impact – Paul Schmitz, Collective Impact Forum, Oct 23, 2014
- Why do leaders need to stop taking up space and start learning how to hold space? - Nick Udall, Oct 28 2014
- How Large Scale Change Really Happens: Working With Emergence - Margaret Wheatley Ed.D. and Deborah Frieze, 2006 The School Administrator Spring 2007
- Leadership in the Age of Complexity: From Hero to Host – Margaret Wheatley with Debbie Frieze, 2010, published in Resurgence Magazine, Winter 2011
- The Unplanned Organization: Learning From Nature's Emergent Creativity - Margaret Wheatley, Noetic Sciences Review #37 Spring 1996
- A Leader's Framework for Decision Making - David J. Snowden and Mary E. Boone, Harvard Business Review
- The Trillion Dollar Vision of Dee Hock - M. Mitchell Waldrop, Fast Company, October 31, 1996

The Art of Participatory Leadership course resource book - Note: I will be referring to this document at points along the way during our time together so reading the entire booklet in advance of the first day of class is optional.

Optional:

- Changing How We Work Together - Peter M. Senge and Margaret Wheatley, Reflections, Vol 3, No 3
- The Dawn of System Leadership - Peter Senge, Hal Hamilton, & John Kania, Stanford Social Innovation Review, Winter 2015

Assignments / Important Deadlines²

By Sunday, October 18 at 5:00pm -- Pre-class work assignment

Write a paragraph or two (no more than 1 page) describing your background and interests relative to the course description and objectives. Email to Paul by 5:00 p.m. Oct 18.

² All written assignments should be no less than 11-point font.

By Sunday, October 18 at 5:00pm -- Pre-class work assignment

Consider the question, what are your thoughts about leadership? Prior to doing any of the course readings, and without consulting any Internet or outside sources, jot down some notes about how you define the term— what does it mean to you? What are the characteristics of a good leader? You will not be required to submit your thoughts to Paul.

By Sunday, October 25 at 5:00pm -- Pre-class work assignment

Provide 1-2 specific examples in your workplace (e.g. internal project or planning effort, significant staffing or process change, external stakeholder engagement effort, etc.) or world (e.g. school or community volunteer committee or activity) that has become polarized or “stuck” in some significant way making meaningful forward progress difficult. Discuss whether or not you think the responses or interventions employed to address these situations is or has been appropriate and if not why not (2-3 pages). Email to Paul by 5:00p.m. Oct 25.

By Tuesday, November 10 at 5:00pm – Post-class work assignment

Following the course, state and discuss in 2-3 pages how, if at all, your previous definition of leadership has changed. What did you find most compelling about the course topics? Cite sources as appropriate. Email to Paul by 5:00 p.m. Nov 10.

By Sunday, November 15 at 5:00pm – Post-class work assignment

By the third day of the course you will be presented with the topic for a 4-5 page paper that will be due by 5:00p.m. on November 15. The topic is likely to revolve around examples in your work or your world where you see rapid change, surprise, uncertainty, volatility, and/or non-linear/non-intuitive behavior being exhibited and specific ways that you might intervene to address the situations in positive ways, based on what has been presented in the course overall.

About the Instructor

Paul Horton is a leadership and strategy coach and community development and organizational change professional with 23 years of leadership-level experience working with the public, private, tribal, and non-profit sectors. He is committed to harnessing diversity, building community, fostering shared responsibility, and working across boundaries to implement collaborative approaches to organizational change. Paul specializes in using participatory leadership practices to build social capital and improve community and organizational outcomes.

Paul co-founded and was the managing director or executive director of the non-profit, Climate Solutions from 1998 to 2007. He was the director of sustainability for the engineering firm, David Evans & Associates and Principal of Paul Horton Consulting Group, LLC. He is currently a partner with the mission driven consulting firm The Athena Group. Paul received his undergraduate degree from The Evergreen State College. He received his Masters of Strategic Leadership Towards Sustainability from Sweden’s Blekinge Institute of Technology and he holds a Certificate in Sustainable Business from the Bainbridge Graduate Institute.