

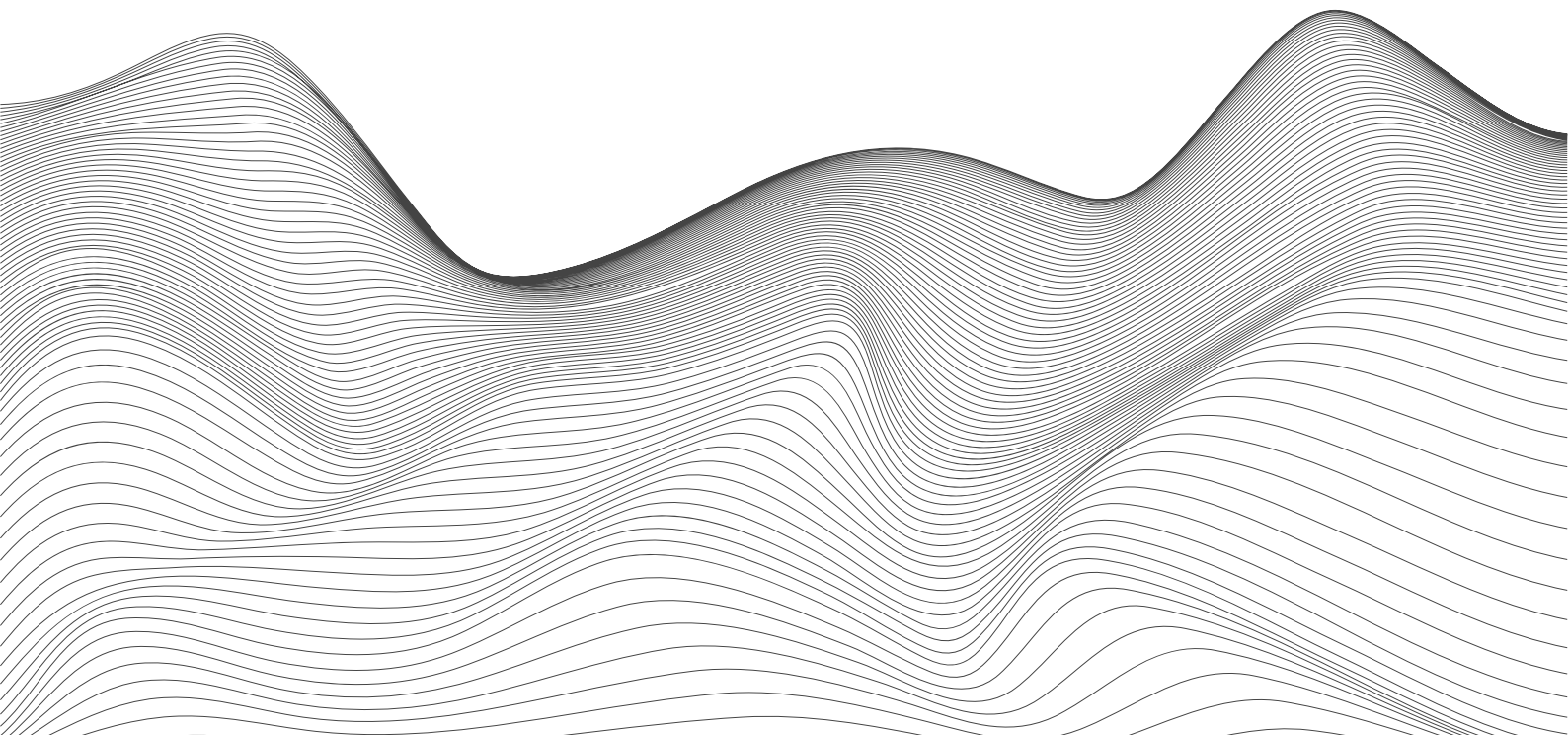
WILLIAM C. FRIDAY FELLOWSHIP
FOR HUMAN RELATIONS

S E M I N A R I V

OCTOBER 17-20, 2024

WILDACRES RETREAT

Little Switzerland, McDowell County, North Carolina





Dear Friday Fellowship Class of 2023–2025,

I hope this opening letter—another beginning in your fellowship experience—finds you well and holding strong through whatever currents you are floating along in at the present moment.

I write to you this letter on September 22, 2024, the fall equinox, when we supposedly have near equal amounts of day and night. A balance, of sorts.

When first gathering together for Seminar IV at Wildacres Retreat in just three week's time (October 17–20), we, as a collective, will hold a balance of sorts, too. A middle place along this journey we call fellowship: three seminars behind us, three in front.

Even with symmetry on our side, many dynamics within and around us have changed us, as individuals and as a group. To be sure, the window of time wherein that symmetrical middle moment resides won't endure long. Soon enough, we'll be on 'the other side.'

And yet, still, we will be together again almost exactly one year following the start of it all, with much left to unfold before us. How are we different? How have we grown? How are you different? How have you grown?

Perspective is a gift, often emphasized by the passage of time. I believe perspective is also a form of labor and a privilege. Mostly, I believe perspective is a practice.

Each of our Seminar IV core texts address perspective-taking. I encourage you to take notice when reading how each author approaches perspective-taking and how they describe its utility. Where are there overlaps in their perspectives? What is the shape and shade of degree of their contrasts?

Throughout the seminar weekend, we'll engage a variety of practices that invite us to reflect on and share our perspectives; nourish our minds, bodies, and spirits; and energize our imaginations toward perspectives not yet seen.

We will have the privilege and honor of having two guests join us throughout the weekend. Dr. Darin Waters, North Carolina State Historian, will return with us one year following his joining us at Seminar I in 2023. We will also welcome Wildacres Leadership Initiative board member, Alicia James, who brings a wealth of experience in government financing and public policy. Both guests will engage in dialogue with us about the state of things here in North Carolina, past and present, and what that might hold for envisioning a future where *all* North Carolinians flourish.

On the following page, you'll notice a bird's eye view of the 2023-2025 Friday Fellowship curriculum thus far. With time, what have you noticed of the curriculum and your experience within it? Across the pages of this reading guide, what catches your attention? What patterns, imagery, and words stand out to you? How has that compared to each of the reading guides before this one?

My intention with these questions is not to badger. Nor do I ask to be rhetorical. Rather, I hope to hold up a metaphorical mirror while standing beside an open door with a warm welcome. As with the absence of quizzes, there is no curtain, no prescribed lesson book, no answer key. If anything, within the context of my role, I offer a curriculum by emergent design imbued with leadership as a practice of human relationality and care.

Long before I was reading emergent strategies by [adrienne maree brown](#), I was reading [Freire](#) and [hooks](#), and long before that, [Dewey](#) and [The Hundred Languages](#). My point is that emergent curriculum has forever been a part of me and my approach to learning and teaching. With inquiry as the modality and care at the center, every activity or exercise is a practice, a tool. Meaning is made in the process and practice of thinking, doing, and being together.

How many practices can you name that we've engaged in over the course of this last year? Of those, what do you notice? Which practices are worthwhile for you to carry forward? What can you leave behind? After all, we cannot practice everything, everywhere, all at once, though we may try. At best, we may find some balance. Perhaps only for a moment or in one context. With perspective, we might deepen our practice for just one moment longer, in one more place, with one more person. Then we begin again. And again. And again.

From a Buddhist perspective, holding such balance is known as [equanimity](#).

May we each, and together, find the balance and equanimity we need.

with much warmth and care,
Beth



BUILDING A PERSPECTIVE

Seminar I

Being and Becoming

Introductions

*From where and
who do you come?*

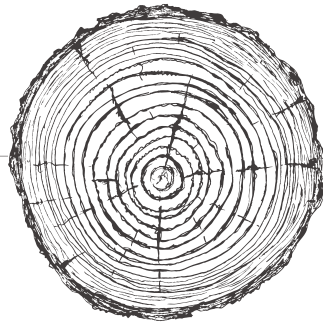
Seminar II

Awareness:

Pivot from lens to mirror and
shift from an external focus that
limits our perception to one of
honest self-reflection

Practice: Reflection

*How do we practice
clarity of truth?*



*How do we cultivate
transformational
connections within
collective care?*

Practice: Care

Connection:

Pivot from transactional to
transformational relationships
- build connections that
leverage our shared humanity
for collective care and
compassion

*How do we envision
possibility?*

Practice: Imagine

Vision:

Reimagine how we think
and act by shifting from
'problem solving' to
'possibility creating'

SEMINAR III

SEMINAR IV



As we return to Wildacres Retreat in October 2024, you might take note of the passage of time by returning to the North Carolina-based texts ([linked here](#)) from our 2023 Summer Reading Collection ([linked here](#)). You might also consider the following reflection questions in addition to those we have frequently returned to.



What has changed for you in the last year?

What have you changed over the last year?

What have you learned, experienced, or gained insight about over the course of this last year?

Whose or what perspective is clearer for you now?



What is made possible through reading a **singular** story?

What is made possible through **differing** perspectives of the **same** story?

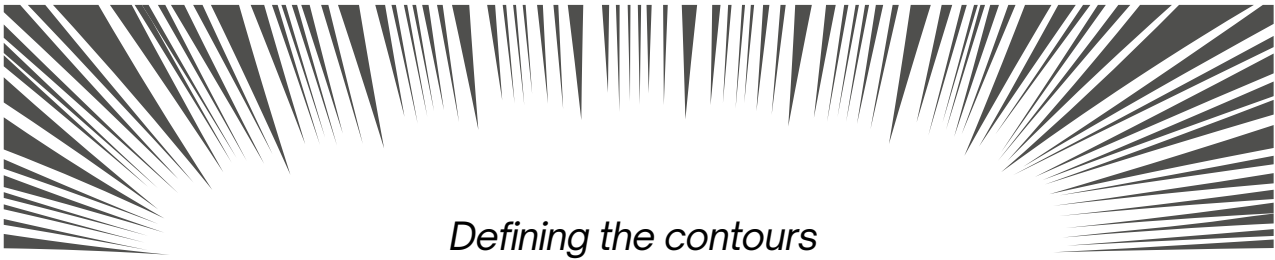
What is made possible through reading a **collection** of stories?

What is made possible through reading as a **collective**?

What questions or curiosities does our collective reading raise?

What limitations surface? For you, individually? For us, as a collective?

How do our collective questions shape our ideas about **leadership**?
North Carolina? Our communities? The Friday Fellowship?

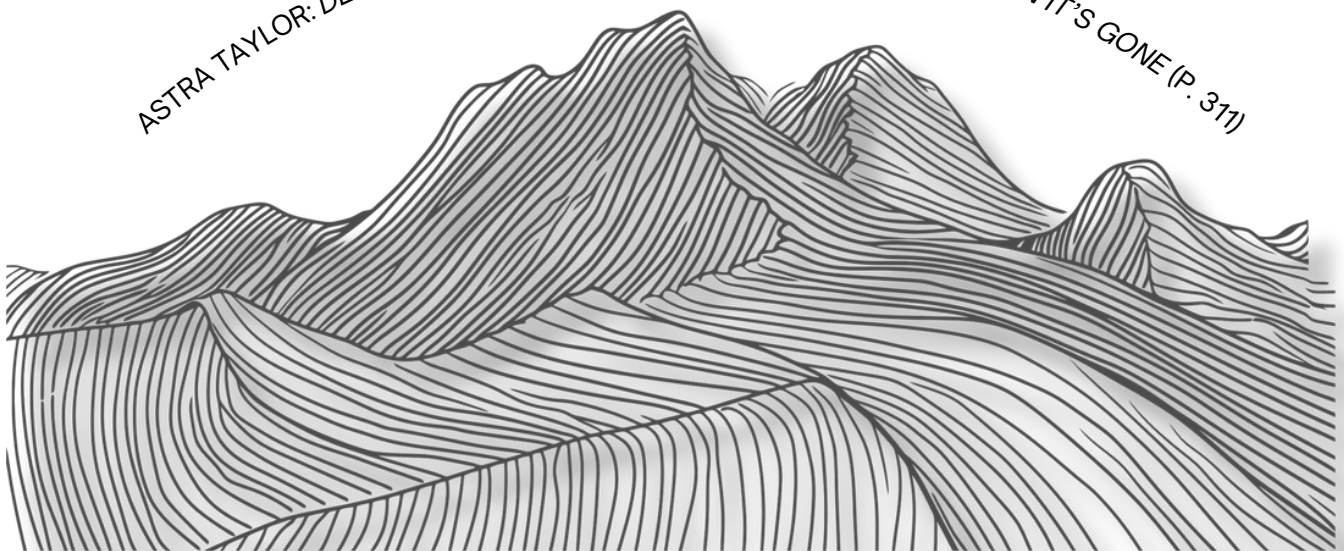


Defining the contours
of this **still-unseen democracy**
is something **we can only do collectively.**
Think and reason the mob must, including thinking
through democracy's abiding paradoxes.

In these pages, I placed the insights of
schoolchildren, doctors, former prisoners, workers, and refugees
alongside the likes of Plato, Locke, Rousseau, Madison, and Marx partly
to underscore people's tremendous and mostly untapped
capacity for reflection—or what **W.E.B. Dubois** called “**excluded wisdom,**”
the **knowledge possessed by everyday people** he believed
democracy desperately requires.

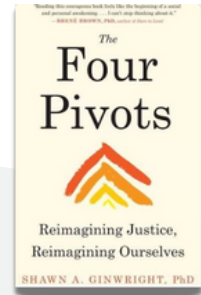
If figuring out how we want to live together entails the kinds of
inquisitiveness, imagination, and critical engagement
that comprise political philosophy, then it too must be democratized.

ASTRA TAYLOR: DEMOCRACY MAY NOT EXIST, BUT WE'LL MISS IT WHEN IT'S GONE (P. 311)



PIVOT 3

FROM PROBLEM TO POSSIBILITY



Suggested Reading

SNIPPETS

Perspective (pp. 151-167)

“Am I looking at this issue through a hole in the fence? Do I have a bird’s-eye view of the issue I seek to change? Perspective, in our journey toward justice, is critical in our ability to reimagine and not just react, and in our capacity to transform and not just respond. We have to learn to be close up, to see and smell the sweat, yet far enough above to really see why people are sweating. Both vantage points are important, and neither is right nor wrong, but rather together they are more complete” (p. 164).

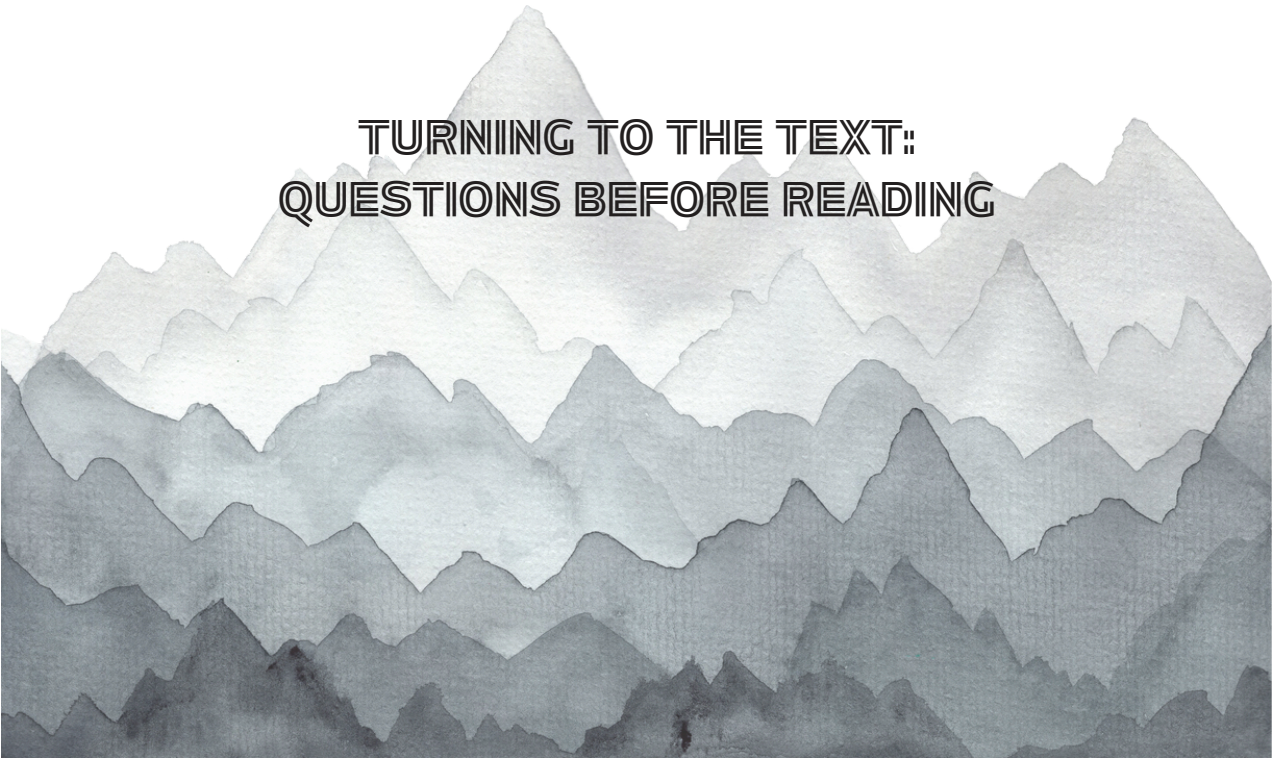
Possibility (pp. 169-185)

“We can create the future we wish to see rather than simply eliminating the present conditions we need to change. For those of us working to improve our society, we have to take seriously our capacity to see beyond the challenges we face and the problems we need to solve. It is critically important that we dream and imagine as well as fight and resist” (p. 173).

Outlook (pp. 187-199)

“A pivot to possibility means that we have to cultivate another outlook where we can see each other, even if we don’t agree... The greatest challenge before us is not simply a political, economic, or social transformation. Rather, the greatest challenge we face is failure to try another way” (p. 199).

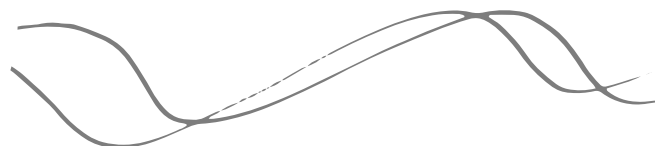
TURNING TO THE TEXT: QUESTIONS BEFORE READING



What curiosities are you bringing to the text?

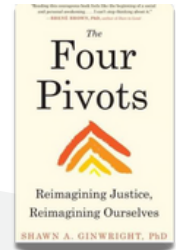
What assumptions do you bring to the text,
and from where do those assumptions come?

What are you hoping to learn from this text?



PIVOT 3

FROM PROBLEM TO POSSIBILITY



Suggested Reading

WHAT QUOTE STOOD OUT TO YOU?

Perspective
(pp. 151-167)

Possibility
(pp. 169-185)

Outlook
(pp. 187-199)

Seminar III Recap

Intro + Chapter 1
An old story:
The Zero-Sum
Hierarchy
(pp. 1-16)

"Today, the zero-sum paradigm lingers as more than a story justifying an economic order; it also animates many people's sense of who is an American, and whether more rights for other people will come at the expense of their own" (p. 9).

Chapter 2:
Racism Drained
the Pool
(pp. 17-40)

"There is such a strong cultural prohibition on being racist that it's important to look at what voters feel and perceive, not just what they say. Race isn't a static state; it's better understood as an action, and one of its chief functions is to distance white people from people who are "raced" differently" (p. 36).

Chapter 3:
Going Without
(pp. 41-65)

"Our research showed that color-blind approaches that ignored racism didn't beat the scapegoating zero-sum story; we had to be honest about racism's role in dividing us in order to call people to their higher ideals" (p. 64).

higher education (pp.41-48) | healthcare (pp. 49-63)

Chapter 4:
Ignoring the
Canary
(pp. 67-100)

"Maynard and the Tomlins' suit for deceptive, unfair, and excessive fees and breach of fiduciary duty to the borrower prevailed in 2000, with a settlement of about \$10 million. "So borrowers all over North Carolina got checks, thanks to Janice and Isaiah," Maynard said with pride"" (p. 100).

Chapter 5:
No One
Fights Alone
(pp. 103-137)

"In order to keep what Du Bois called a psychological wage, white workers needed not to contest too strongly for more material wages. To fight for a fairer system, the working class would have needed collective action, which has always been in tension with the pull of American racism" (p. 124).

Chapter 6:
Never a Real
Democracy
(pp. 139-164)

"The big-money campaign finance system is like so much of modern-day structural racism: it harms people of color disproportionately but doesn't spare non-wealthy white people; it may be hard to assign racist intent, but it's easy to find the racist impacts" (p. 161).



SNIPPETS

**Seminar IV
Suggested
Reading**

SNIPPETS



**Chapter 7
Living Apart
(pp. 167-191)**

“Instead of whites-only clauses in rental advertisements and color-coded maps, today’s segregation is driven by less obviously racially targeted policies... after the Supreme Court invalidated city ordinances banning black people from buying property in white neighborhoods in 1917, over a thousand communities rushed to adopt “exclusionary zoning” laws to restrict the types of housing that most black people could afford to buy... These rules remain today, an invisible layer of exclusion laid across 75 percent of the residential map in most American cities, effectively banning working-class and many middle-income people from renting or buying there” (pp. 171-172).

**Chapter 8
The Same Sky
(pp. 193-218)**

“The birth of the “EJ” [environmental justice] movement in the public consciousness was in 1982, when the state of North Carolina’s decision to dump contaminated soil in the small black town of Warrenton was met with civil disobedience that resulted in five hundred arrests... Forty years later, government data still show that black people are 1.5 times more likely to breathe polluted air and drink unsafe water than the overall population” (p. 207).

**Chapter 9
The Hidden
Wound
(pp. 221-253)**

“Denial that racism still exists; denial that, even if it does exist, it’s to blame for the situation at hand; denial that the problem is as bad as people of color say it is--these denials are the easy outs that dominant white narrative offers to people... research find that only one if five white Americans consistently expresses high levels of sympathy about anti-black discrimination” (p. 230).

“By denying the reality of racism and their own role in it, Berry explained, white Americans have denied themselves critical self knowledge and created a prettified and falsified version of American history for themselves to believe in, one built on the “wishful insinuation that we have done no harm” (p. 231).

**Chapter 10
The Solidarity
Dividend
(pp. 255-289)**

““It’s a powerful, liberating frame to realize that the fallacy of racial hierarchy is a belief system that we don’t have to have. We can replace it with another way of looking at each other as human beings. Then, once you get that opening, you invite people to see a new way forward. You ask questions like ‘What kind of narrative will your great grandchildren learn about this country?’ ‘What is it that will have happened?’ Truthfully, we’ve never done that as a country...

But we are young. What makes America America is the creative power of our people. It is our responsibility to take this privilege that has come from the exploitation of so many people and the land--to use that freedom to create and actualize the aspirations of tomorrow” (p. 287).



WHAT QUOTES STOOD OUT TO YOU?

Chapter 7
Living Apart
(pp. 167-191)

Chapter 8
The Same Sky
(pp. 193-218)

Chapter 9
The Hidden Wound
(pp. 221-253)

Chapter 10
The Solidarity Dividend
(pp. 255-289)

**Suggested
Reading**

**Introduction
(pp. 1-10)**

**Chapter 4:
The Right, the
Left, and the
Ladder: How
inequality
Divides Our
Politics
(pp. 83-112)**

**Chapter 9:
The Art of
Living
Vertically:
Flatter
Ladders,
Comparing
with Care, and
the Things That
Matter Most
(pp. 197-219)**

SNIPPETS



“While the poor may not in fact be getting poorer, a striking aspect of inequality is that even standing in place feels like falling behind if other people around you are moving ahead... [This book] examines what inequality does to us *people*. It investigates how the wealth of others--the top 5 percent, 1 percent, or tenth of a percent--changes how we experience the world” (pp. 8-9).

“Psychologists Kay and Eibach argue that we each carry around an “ideological toolbox” in our heads. We think of our political beliefs as a stable set of principles supported by a solid foundation of logic and facts. But in fact that are more like an assortment of tools we choose among depending on the demands of a particular moment” (p. 90)

“As predicted, participants who felt relatively rich expressed less support for redistribution, while those who were made to feel relatively poor became more supportive. These two groups had the same average income and the same average level of education. All that differed was whether they felt richer or poorer than their peers. Social comparisons led to differences in political beliefs” (p. 106).

“Taken together, these observations suggest that the rise in inequality that has occurred over the past few decades might be contributing to increasingly intense partisanship and political conflict” (p. 107).

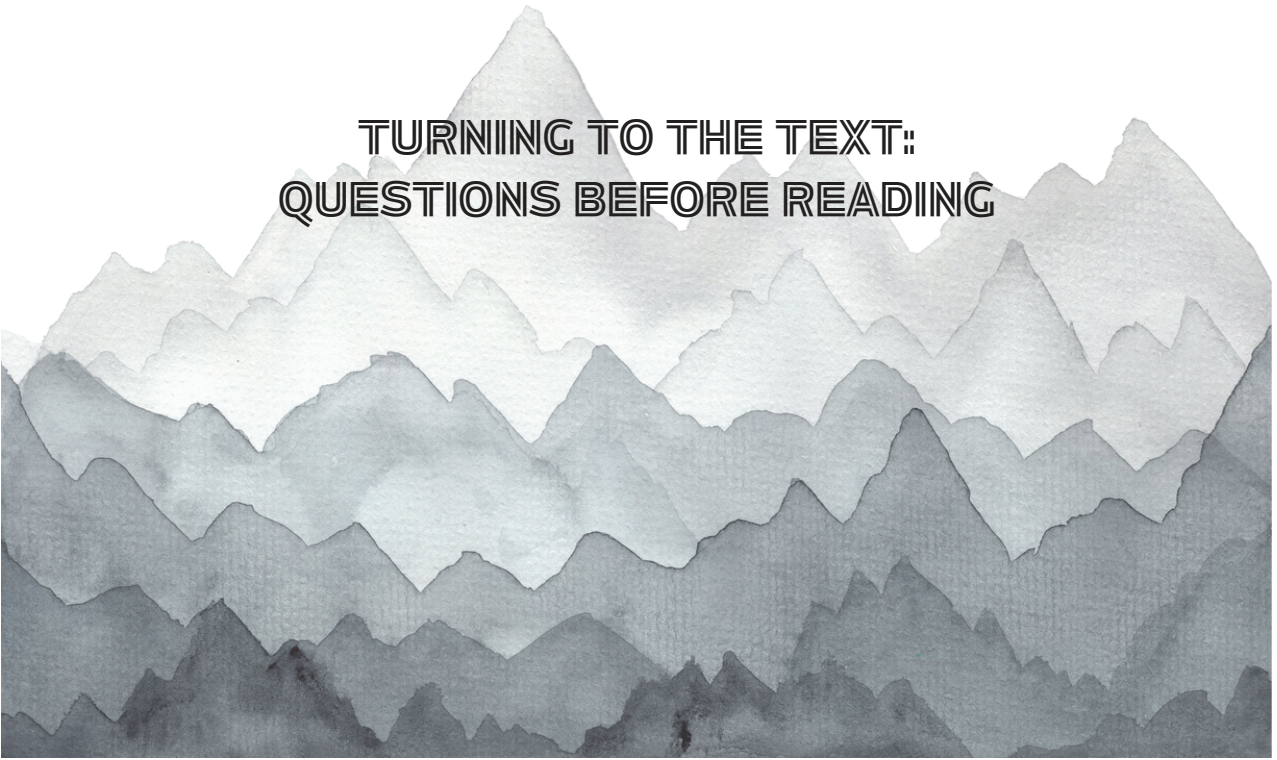
“These trends are dangerous, because when opponents become enemies, people can justify almost anything in responding to them. After all, how can you expect to reason with idiots and maniacs?” (p. 112).

“The goal is to adjust the level of inequality to a more human scale, one that gives people ample room to compete and to move up in their lives, without making economic competition a winner-take-all contest” (p.208).

“Controlled comparison means, first, learning to recognize when we are in the grips of such a compulsion and, second, choosing wisely what kind of comparison is really relevant and useful. The idea here is not to stop comparing; it is to compare more wisely” (p. 210).

“Making the conscious effort to consider what genuinely matters interrupts the unconscious default pattern of looking to others to gauge how much we value ourselves” (p. 219).

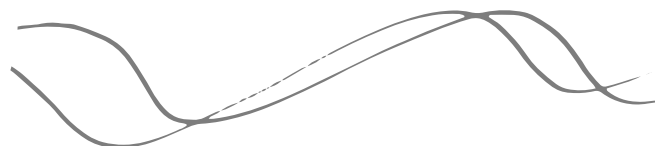
TURNING TO THE TEXT: QUESTIONS BEFORE READING

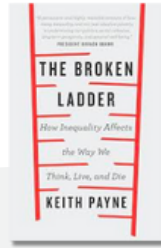


What curiosities are you bringing to the text?

What assumptions do you bring to the text,
and from where do those assumptions come?

What are you hoping to learn from this text?





Suggested Reading

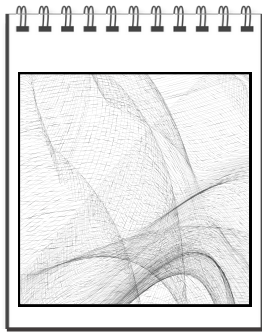
WHAT QUOTES STOOD OUT TO YOU?

**Introduction
(pp. 1-10)**

**Chapter 4:
The Right, the Left,
and the Ladder:
How inequality
Divides Our
Politics
(pp. 83-112)**

**Chapter 9:
The Art of Living
Vertically: Flatter
Ladders,
Comparing with
Care, and the
Things That
Matter Most
(pp. 197-219)**

SKETCHING



Astra Taylor's documentary, ***What is Democracy?***, blends everyday experience and political theory to address questions viewed as central to democracy.

Available on Amazon
or for rent on
Youtube or AppleTV



Another documentary by Taylor: **You are Not a Loan**

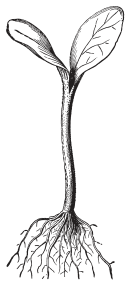
Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWSkDCx8gH4>

CONNECTIONS

On Being with Krista Tippett
podcast episode with

angel Kyodo Williams:

The World is



Our

Field of

Practice

Link:

<https://onbeing.org/programs/angel-kyodo-williams-the-world-is-our-field-of-practice/>

In the new podcast, titled *The Sum of Us*, **Heather McGhee**

discovers the stories of everyday Americans who are working to build multi-racial communities to rally against the racist policies, practices and ideas built into our society. McGhee comes with some examples, and explains how the podcast differs from and continues the goal of her original book.



Link:

<https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/takeaway/segments/sum-us-podcast>

Ezra Klein Show podcast episode:

**Zadie Smith on
Populists, Fraud and Flip Phones**



Link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=id_k43ZU8t4

TEDtalk by **Rory Sutherland:**
Perspective is Everything

The circumstances of our lives may matter less than how we see them, says Rory Sutherland.



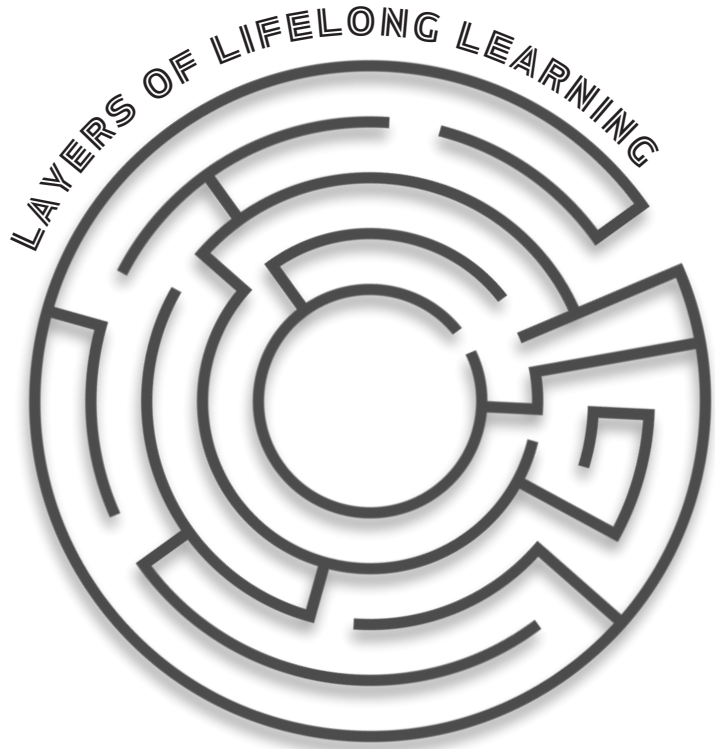
Link:

https://www.ted.com/talks/rory_sutherland_perspective_is_everything?subtitle=en

Returning to Wildacres Retreat one year after Seminar I gives us another unique opportunity to reflect on where we've been, what we've gathered, gained and lost, learned and let go of, individually and collectively.

During Seminar IV, we will once again return to dialogue as a fundamental component of human relations and fellowship.

The following pages of this reading guide are reminders of Thich Nhat Hanh's offerings from *The Art of Communicating*.

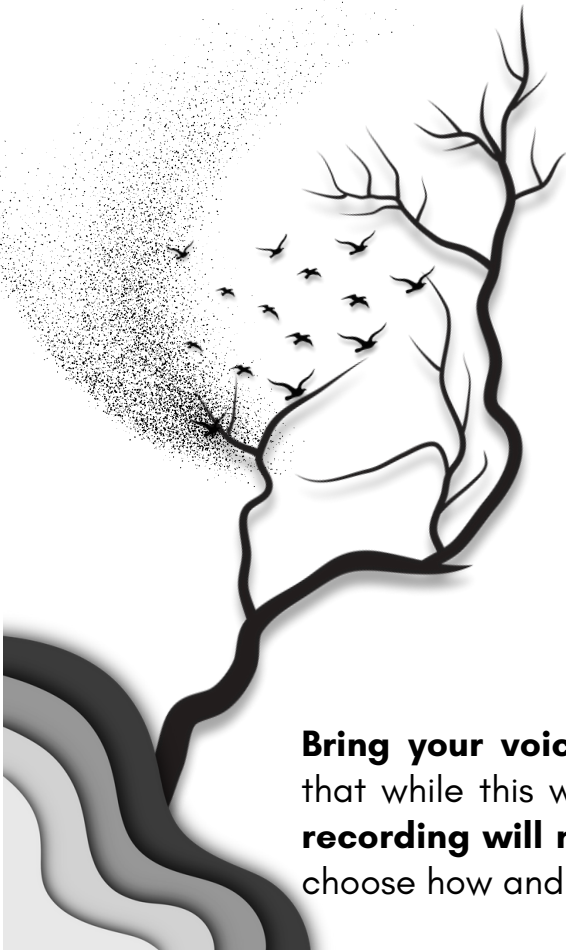


TO PREPARE:

Voice-record yourself reflecting on a recent dialogue you've had with someone. This could be a conversation with a family member or loved one, a meeting with a colleague, a short exchange with a neighbor, or a discussion at a community-based gathering.

Your recorded reflection should be **approximately 5 minutes**. Consider beginning with a **brief overview** of the context (1-2min; who, where, what). In the remaining time, reflect on **your experience** of the interaction, what was said, what you felt and did.

Bring your voice recording to Seminar IV. Please note that while this will be used for seminar programming, **your recording will not be shared** with the group, and you will choose how and what of your reflection to share.



tell the truth

"We have to find the best way to tell the truth so that the other person can receive it easily. Sometimes even the most skillful words can cause pain. That is ok. Pain can heal. If your words are spoken with compassion and understanding, the pain will heal more quickly." (p. 55)

don't exaggerate

"Sometimes when we're speaking to ourselves, we make something seem very tragic to justify and even feed anger. There may be some truth in what you want to say, but you exaggerate what the other has done, so you paint a wrong image of the other. This may seem harmless, but it take you away from the truth and takes away trust in a relationship." (p. 56)

THE FOUR ELEMENTS OF RIGHT SPEECH

be consistent

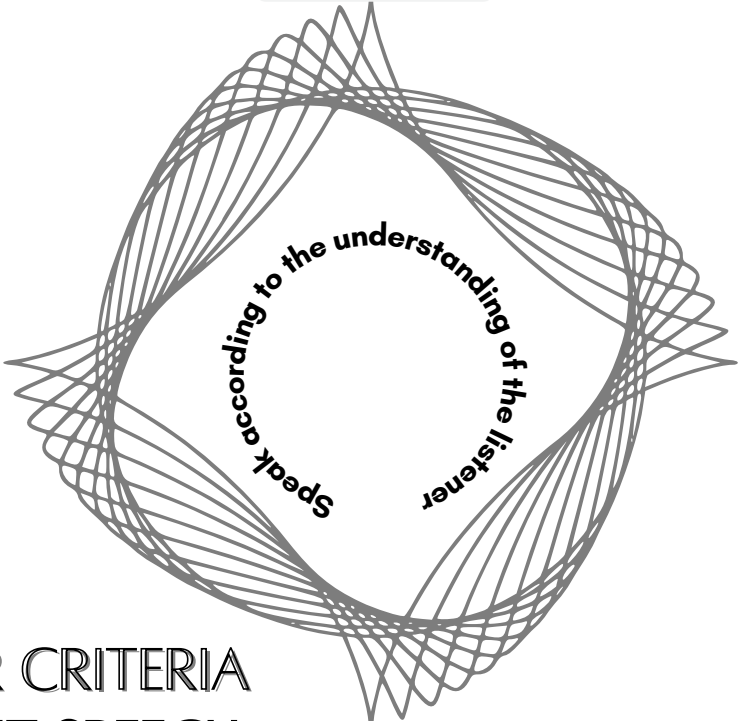
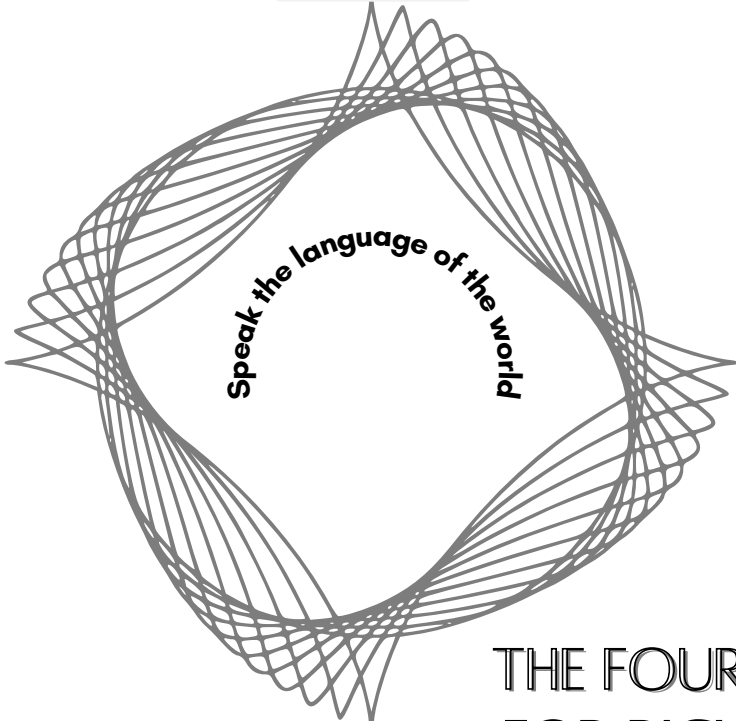
"Being true to your word and not changing the content for your own advantage or to portray yourself in a better light." (p. 57)

use peaceful language

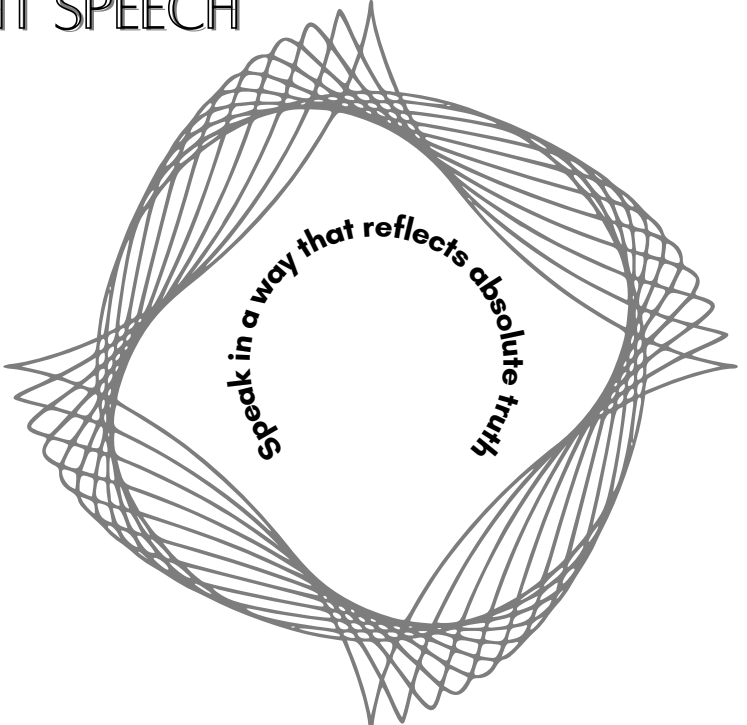
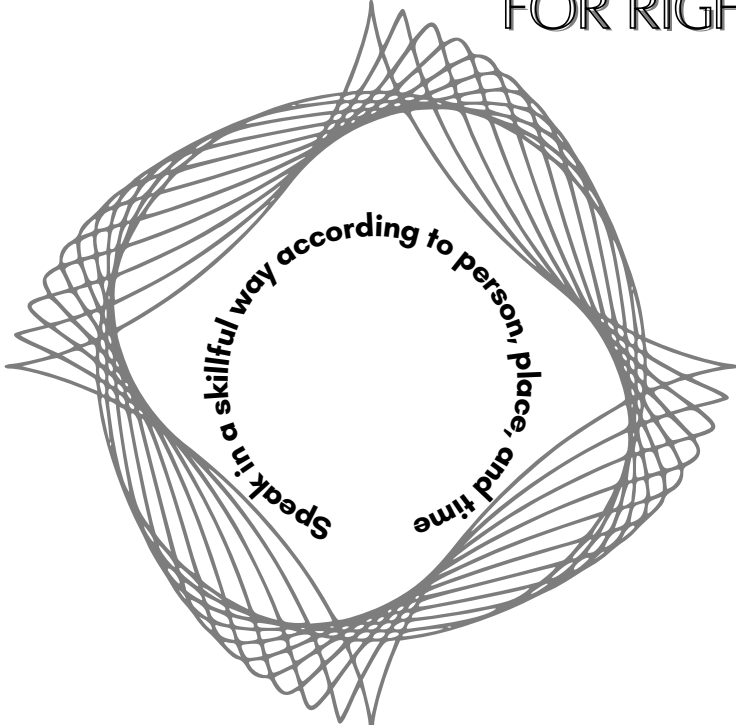
"Refrain from speech that's violent, abusive, humiliating, accusing, or judgmental." (p. 57)

"Sometimes we have to use the kind of language that people speak and the way they view things. If you don't use the language of the world, most people won't understand what you mean, and you can communicate only with people who already think like you." (p. 58)

"We need to keep the truthful content the same while being aware of the perspective and understanding of the person we're speaking to, so others have an opportunity to really hear what's being said." (p. 59)



THE FOUR CRITERIA FOR RIGHT SPEECH



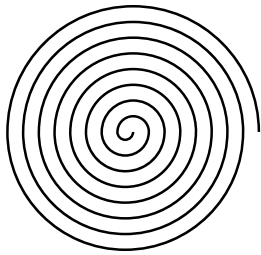
"Your language has to be appropriate to the situation, while not straying from the truth." (p. 61)
"We want to share information in a way that people can integrate and use later, even if not right away. This isn't lying; it's telling the truth in a skillful way." (p. 62)

"We have to be humble and try to look more and more deeply to discover in what way we can talk about these things [the absolute truth, the most profound view of things]." (p. 58)

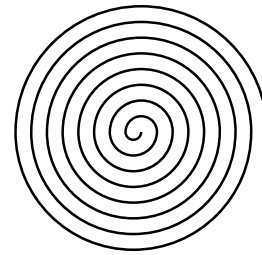
SIX MANTRAS

OF LOVING SPEECH

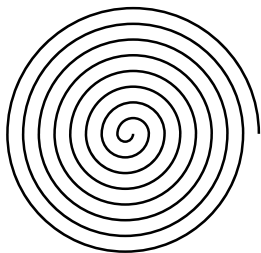
Thich Nhat Hanh describes these six mantras from Buddhism as tools for embodying loving speech. He suggests, as with each practice, to begin with mindful breathing to bring about your true presence. Then you can approach the other person in mindfulness, committed to the practice of compassionate communication (p. 72).



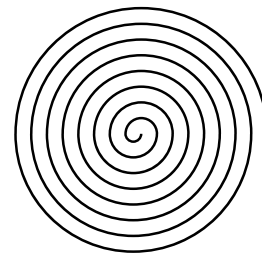
THE FIRST MANTRA
I AM HERE FOR YOU.



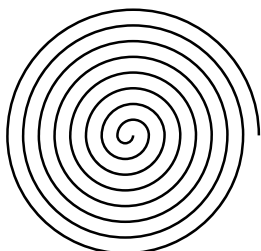
THE SECOND MANTRA
**I KNOW YOU ARE THERE,
AND I AM VERY HAPPY.**



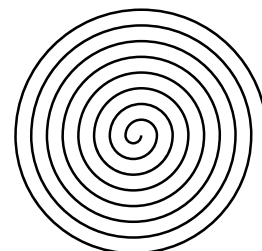
THE THIRD MANTRA
**I KNOW YOU SUFFER, AND THAT
IS WHY I AM HERE FOR YOU.**



THE FOURTH MANTRA
**I SUFFER, AND I WANT YOU
TO KNOW IT. I AM DOING
MY BEST. PLEASE HELP.**



THE FIFTH MANTRA
THIS IS A HAPPY MOMENT.



THE SIXTH MANTRA
YOU ARE PARTLY RIGHT.



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EVEN AS I HOLD YOU
I AM LETTING GO.

ALICE WALKER