Course Title: Enhanced Dialogue for Couples: Current Research and Practical Tools  
Course Code: WSP 257  
Instructor: Kathryn Ford  

Course Summary:  
In this course, we will learn from the evidence-based work of John Gottman and others. We will also look at the neurological basis for our responses to each other and the optimal conditions for receptivity, expressiveness and learning.  

Participants will be instructed in simple and powerful techniques for staying open in difficult conversations and will leave the workshop with enhanced skills for becoming a high-functioning team.  

*Please see course page for full description and additional details.*

Grade Options and Requirements:  
- **No Grade Requested (NGR):**  
  - This is the default option. No work will be required; no credit shall be received; no proof of attendance can be provided.  
- **Credit/No Credit (CR/NC):**  
  - A student’s CR/NC will be determined by attendance and participation.  
  - This course may not be taken for a Letter Grade.  

Tentative Outline:  
This is a two-day workshop that will take place over two successive Saturdays. Our learning formats will include:  
- Didactic presentation of theory, neuroscience, and clinical research  
- Skills practice with your partner  
- Group discussion.  

MAJOR CONCEPTS  

Dialogue  
Great dialogues are conversations in which participants collaborate to discover ideas and understandings that go beyond those that the participants arrived with. Such conversations generate excitement and trust that then provide the starting point for the next dialogue, creating a virtuous cycle of connection and creativity. In this course we will aim to create such dialogues and to understand the conditions that promote them.
Aperture
Aperture, as defined in this course, is the opening to one’s own experience and the experience of the other. Cultivating the awareness of apertures and the ability to modulate for openness is the basis for success with all other relational skills, most especially dialogue. Human beings are neurologically designed for this awareness. We will discuss the neuroscience of the limbic system and mirror neurons that are the neurological basis for our aperture awareness. We will then explore simple and powerful tools for optimizing apertures in dialogue.

Learning
Learning is the element that makes difference between relationships that frustrate and relationships that satisfy. Every couple has “problems” in their relationship. Couples who view themselves as learners and know how to turn problems into information are able to use their strengths and creativity to their mutual benefit. We are going to explore the powerful leverage that curiosity and awareness provide us in learning about our partners. We will also take a look at the related neuroscience of neuroplasticity and dopamine.

Skillful Repair of Mistakes
Skillful repair of mistakes is perhaps the most important application of our skills. It turns out that the repair process, more than simply “patching things up” actually strengthens relationships. We will discuss what attachment theory has to say about this. We will learn and practice a three-part repair process designed to go beyond minimizing damage to actually strengthening connection.