

# HAMLET'S MIND

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*Because something is happening here*

*but you don't know what it is do you, Mr. Jones?*

Bob Dylan, *Ballad of A Thin Man*

## 2018 Course listings with open enrollments

**Note:** The training fee for the five-day courses offered through the NC Community Colleges is \$125.00 and for the two-day courses, \$70.00. *This partial list does not include the training I am doing for specific entities; the online classes or webinars I will be conducting as the year progresses.*

Investigative Discourse Analysis, Mar. 12 – 16, Blue Ridge CC, Hendersonville, - Open enrollment

Interviewing and Interrogation, Mar 19 – 23, Coastal Carolina CC, Jacksonville, - Open enrollment

Interviewing and Interrogation, Mar 26 – 30, Rowan/Cabarrus CC, Salisbury, - Open enrollment

Interviewing and Interrogation, Apr 30 – May 04, Guilford Tech, Greensboro, - Open enrollment

Interviewing and Interrogation, May 07 – 11, Davidson County CC, Lexington, - Open enrollment

Investigative Discourse Analysis Jun 25 – 29, Guilford Tech, Greensboro, - Open enrollment

Interviewing and Interrogation, Sep 24 – 28, Randolph, CC, Asheboro, - Open enrollment

Interviewing and Interrogation, Oct 22 – 26, Davidson County CC, Lexington, - Open enrollment

Interviewing and Interrogation, Nov 5 – 9, Guilford Tech, Greensboro, - Open enrollment

Interviewing and Interrogation, Nov 26 - 30, Stanly County CC, Albemarle, - Open enrollment

### *The Interview: A Societal Microcosm*

**This examination is the third in a six-part series addressing the societal, shifting paradigms impacting the conduct of the interviewing process. Interviewing is “the theatre of life”. Consequently, that which is on-going within society will be reflected accordingly within the interviewing operation. Our focus will be on the interviewer as well as the interviewee.**

My attention is entirely on the issues as they manifest here in the United States. For those readers in other countries, I would never presume to opine on the societal circumstances, causality or ramifications outside of my own borders. It is a Southern thing that is just not done in polite society. Hopefully, you'll follow suit.

I am looking forward to the feedback from the readership – some may agree with my assessments and others find issues. In either case, it is all designed to make for stimulating, mutually informative discussion. As my dad always told me, “*Son if we all thought alike, everyone would be in love with your mother*”. For me, it is not necessary that we think alike, but, more importantly, that we think!

Additionally, our explorations do not serve as a pulpit for ascribing blame - there's more than enough to go around - but, rather, to become aware of the condition, its impact upon the interviewing process and, as interviewers, adjust accordingly.

This, our next examination is: **Interviewing the Digitally Addicted.**

Here is a cold, hard truth: I hold the North Carolina law enforcement officers participating in my, in-state, interviewing classes to a very high, participative standard. And here is why: first off, North Carolina law enforcement is part of my DNA. This is home. I expect a high degree of professional bearing that results in a personal commitment to the class. Secondly, these officers are going to be conducting interviews and making assessments that, if conducted poorly, portray the innocent as guilty and let the guilty go free - what can be more important? Routinized interviewing is an oxymoron in the like manner of *journalistic integrity*. Thirdly, these officers not only get the training tuition-free, they are being paid to be there. I'm in this class giving it my all and that is what I expect of them. Nothing less.

That being the case, first thing Monday morning of the five-day class, I read them the riot act about staying off the phone during the conduct of the class. I remind them that I did not come here to look at the top of their heads, as they engage in smart-phone meditation, while this class is in progress. There are regular breaks and they can check it out during those times. Lastly, I let them know that if I find them on the phone during class, we both agree that whatever is on the phone is more important than what is going on in class. Consequently, they are "excused" from the class, for the duration, to go and see to that which is most imperative at this point. I have "excused" more than one participant from class and I have every reason to expect it will happen

again. Phones have become a source of addiction and I don't expect that circumstance to moderate. I am blessed with a thick skin so, the resultant slow walking and sad singing does not phase me.

In many cases, you would think my "pay attention requisite" had placed them into Dante's seventh ring of the inferno. I can see the angst. So be it. These are law enforcement officers and foundational to interviewing is the self-discipline required to pay attention and stay in the moment for an extended period of time.

I know that this diminished capacity to be situationally aware is not limited to the law enforcement officers in The Old North State. Studyfinds.org reports of a survey that shows that, "Most Millennials, Gen Z adults prefer texting over talking in person". *Computer World* reports, "Smartphones make people distracted and unproductive". Adding, that in the United States, five hours a day is the average time spent on a smart phone. Psychologists have even provided a name for the fear of not being with your cell phone - *nomophobia*.

This diminution of attentive capability **is** - not will - finding its way into the interview process via the interviewee and more significantly, via the interviewer. I have had more than one senior partner in an auditing firm lament that newer hires don't want to have to go out and talk to people. More dramatically, they don't understand **why** they should have to.

It is not the point of this examination to ascribe blame, but rather, to focus on the consequences. And the consequences are these: we have become more and more disengaged from one another. This emphasis on individuality has come at the cost of having the capability to empathize.

Additionally, more and more people sleep with their phone or have it at arm's length when sleeping. If they awake during the night, they check for messages. People even take their phone to the bathroom. Someone can't separate themselves from the phone long enough to go to the bathroom?

I believe this shifting paradigm will require the incorporation of technology into the interview process. To a degree it is already happening. I have an associate who recently conducted a compliance-gaining interview via iPad to iPad. More and more, we will be engaging individuals for whom interpersonal communication is a withered limb. We are going to have to accommodate accordingly. We will need to provide a two-pronged approach: Incorporate interpersonal communication concepts into foundational, interview training and integrate related technology into the interview process. I'm working on some accommodating options and will advise you in reference to them in the fullness of time.

But, hey! You know it is not required to agree with me. Just look around, especially in public venues. Who is looking at another human face and who is looking at a plastic screen? Next time you have to go to a meeting (no meetings ever again, for me, thankfully), notice how the participants place their phones on the table, ready at the hand. Go out to dinner and see who is

sharing their day and who is "screen slurping" - my phrase. Lastly, be aware of how often you look at your phone.

One of my favorite shows was/is *Seinfeld*. While, they may have been talking about nothing, they **were** talking. Now, I guess, they would be texting about nothing. Talk about life imitating art!

### **Wires from the Bunkers – For Which, I am always appreciative:**

*Hey Don... thanks again for the "36 and mix" rule... I meet some great people from all walks of life...go Dawgs!*

By way of explanation: In my interviewing classes, I always stress the importance of practice, practice, practice. My belief is, you interview like you practice. Toward that end, I provide options as to how to practice our craft in situations that are not critical so that the skill-sets will be there in situations that **are** critical. One exercise is what I refer to as the "36 and mix" rule. If someone comes within thirty-six inches (that's three feet for those of you who think in metrics), then I am going to engage them in conversation (mix). Open questions and provocative statements are most effective "openers".

I also practice by watching what passes for interviews within the main stream media. With the sound on, I will monitor the participants' verbal, vocal and non-verbal behaviors and changes therein. I will also, watch with the sound turned off, so as to pay attention to the non-verbal behaviors and the impressions they provide. Additionally, I will turn away from the screen and attend to the verbal and vocal communication endeavoring to take place.

As for keeping my linguistic elements, detecting skills sharpened, I read the New York Times and the Washington Post. I read those only at the public library, of course. It has been said, "That which is utilized, develops. That which is neglected, dissipates". The interviewing process is no exception.

*Don: I have really enjoyed the class. I am having a little difficulty with the last assignment. I have never completed an initial interview plan. I am a little stuck on this one. Any assistance would be greatly appreciated. Thank you.*

The above request, from a participant in an online class was a surprise. This class required that the participants provide documentation that they had taken a foundational, interviewing class. Apparently, planning for the interview was not a part of the curriculum for the class this participant took. Of course, I spent some time in articulating how to develop an interview plan and the importance thereof. To me, interview training lacking content on how to prepare for a specific interview, is like handing out woodworking tools and not describing how to "build something". It has been said and is most certainly true, "Fail to plan - plan to fail". While, the interviewer can't script an interview like a CNN town hall meeting, it is possible to be aware of

the information available, the associations from that information, develop the related questions and formulate a viable, interviewing strategy.

## **Ripped from the headlines and into the interview**

### **It's good to be "the trigger"**

It seems, now, that anything - said, done or thought - can "trigger" somebody. We, here in the United States, have devolved into a nation of the easily offended, highly aggrieved and terminally thin-skinned. What is a *trigger*? At [www.mentalhelp.net](http://www.mentalhelp.net), we learn that: "*Triggers are external events or circumstances that may produce very uncomfortable emotional or psychiatric symptoms, such as anxiety, panic, discouragement, despair, or negative self-talk.*"

Colleges seem to be especially populated by enervated savants and faculty, susceptible to no small variety of triggers. Should someone, holding a differing opinion, drive on or near the campus, then it is quickly, off to a safe space, furnished with hot chocolate, cookies, comfort animals, coloring books and a continually playing version of Kumbaya. Survivors of the Titanic did not receive as much aid and comfort as the current assemblage of erudites who inadvertently learned that someone, who had not been previously sanctioned by one or more of their male, man-bunned, adjunct professors, was going to speak. Yes, you read that correctly, they are **going to speak!** The trauma is of such a magnitude, that more than likely, right after graduation, it will necessary to move back home for an extended period of time just from the trauma and stress from the college experience.

My dad, a senior in high school, played in the North Carolina - South Carolina Shrine Bowl on Saturday, December 6, 1941. The next day was the attack on Pearl Harbor. That week, he and the other able-bodied males in his class, signed up and were gone to war for four years. No, off-you-go, hot chocolate, cookies, coloring books or comfort animals. He was on the beach at Normandy. The war ended, he came home, got a job, went to work every day and raised a family. But, be that as it may - better said, be that as it **was**.

Anyway, so eventually, the emotionally fragile, will graduate, emerge from their parents' basement, avoid seeing their shadow and endeavor to seek employment. This is where the interview process comes into play. The interview setting can include employment interviews, criminal inquiries, HR issues, auditor, auditees - just to name a few.

What's going to be involved in interviewing someone who is triggered by nothing more than someone having a different opinion? No doubt, supervising them will be an experience, but, I believe there is some light at the end of the tunnel from an interviewing perspective. Let's go

back to a portion of our definition at the beginning of this exploration - *produce*. "Produce" is a really good, interviewing-operational verb. Think about it, when someone is "triggered", they have turned control of their emotions over to someone or something else. That situation is about as good as it gets for an interviewer. Hey! **I'm** in control of **your** emotions.

The key always has been, and will increasingly be to, through communication, pilot the interviewee's emotions in the direction that results in a positive, interview outcome. This necessity will be most acute in the compliance-gaining interview.

I believe this shifting paradigm will necessitate incorporating strategies (into the interview) that, heretofore, have been utilized when reasoning with children. Traditionally, it has been children who have had to learn to control their emotions (think tantrums associated with a denied toy or treat) and parents who were responsible for teaching them to do so. Apparently, that hasn't happened as effectively more recently as it has in the past. It is, what it is. The interviewer is not in a place wherein they can teach the emotionally defective how to control their emotions, but rather, engage the interviewee on the emotional level, within which they function, and parley that set of circumstances toward a successful, interviewing outcome. One way or the other - experiential or training - will bring forth interviewing modifications.

We'll see. But, in the meantime, could you pass me the cookies and hot chocolate? My wonderful wife, Phyllis has just informed me that I was incorrect in my belief that I was going to ride my motorcycle this afternoon. That revelation is going to take some processing. Better throw me that blanket and the coloring book, too.

**My five texts -and no one should ever be without them all:**

*Interviewing and Interrogation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition;

*Fraud Related Interviewing*;

*Persuasive Interviewing* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition; **(released April, 2016 - power-point slides are available upon request)**

*Investigative Discourse Analysis* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition;

These can be ordered directly from Carolina Academic Press - (919) 489-7486, online at <http://www.cap-press.com> or [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

My newest text, "*An Endless Stream of Lies: A Young Man's Voyage into Fraud*" – is available in electronic and print formats from Amazon or Barnes and Noble.

Okay, see you in May and stay in touch. You know how I worry when I don't hear from you.

Don Rabon, CFE

Successful Interviewing Techniques