

CMN 698 (01): *DIALOGUE, TEAMWORK AND CONFLICT*

Professor Sheila McNamee

**Office hours: Monday 2-3, Wednesday 1:30-2:30
and by appointment**

Horton 111A

Ph: 862-3040

sheila.mcnamee@unh.edu

Thought is not merely expressed in words; it comes into existence through them. Every thought tends to connect something with something else, to establish a relation between things. Every thought moves, grows and develops, fulfils a function, solves a problem (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 218)

...why shouldn't the processes 'within' people be similar to the transactions between them, in which speakers' attempts to realize their thoughts are negotiated in a back-and-forth process...? (Shotter, 1993, p. 108)

"Epistemology: Is knowledge knowable? If not, how do we know this?" (Woody Allen, 1992)

Course Overview

In his *Discourse on Method*, Rene Descartes took as his first principle of philosophy the statement "I think, therefore I am." Descartes' starting point has been extremely influential, not only in philosophy, but also in the disciplines of communication and psychology. In addition, his dictum, "I think, therefore I am," has provided a handy way to legitimate our everyday assumptions about what it means to be a person in our culture (an individual) and, as a corollary, where thinking occurs (in the head).

Much has come from Descartes' formulation, but in this course, we are going to explore the growing body of work that stands Descartes on his head. Instead of starting with "I think," we are going to explore the idea that a significant factor in our achievements at work and play can be traced not to our individual attributes but rather to the relationships that we develop in our conversations with others. Our focus shifts Descartes' "I think, therefore I am" to "We communicate, therefore we are." This course is about dialogue which can be talked about as a form of *thinking together*. This implies that what we typically consider to be the individual, private act of *thinking* is actually a social, relational activity. What we *know* we come to know by virtue of our interactions with others. Thus, dialogue is the source of all we take to be real and valuable.

This social approach places communication at the center of our attention. A course following the Descartes model would necessarily focus on individual psychology and cognition. In contrast, a social approach begins and ends with communication between people. We will spend a significant portion of the course exploring dialogue as both a condition of being human and as a method for generating change or resolving conflict. We will examine the dialogic basis of human relationships, drawing on a range of philosophical traditions and practical activities that

highlight the social basis of thought. Although we will confront difficult and sometimes abstract material, this course is about team building (community building), alternative conflict resolution, and creative problem solving because it is in these practical activities among people that what we have come to call “thinking” occurs.

Format

This course is about dialogue, teamwork and conflict. That means that you must commit to playing a very active role during class time and outside of class in groups/teams. Our classroom discussions will very much involve you. This is not a lecture class but is considered a seminar and thus I will expect each of you to come to class prepared to actively discuss the readings as well as your observations and your group experiences. Please note that readings listed on the schedule must be completed by the date identified. Additionally, **because class time is limited and a large portion of your work will require participation in a group or team, you should be prepared to make a commitment to frequent group meetings outside of class time. If you anticipate difficulty finding time for these meetings you should not take the course.**

Requirements

Attendance and Participation (10%): As stated above, your consistent attendance and full participation are expectations for every single class. I care very much about your attendance and will interpret any unexcused absence as lack of interest or effort on your part. If you must be absent, I expect to hear about it before class and not after. No doctors appointments during class time except in the case of an emergency that you can document.

Response Papers (15%): Each of you is expected to write a short “response” to any three readings during the semester. These responses should be 1-2 pages, typed and handed in the day we are discussing the reading. I will not accept response papers that are handed in *after* we have discussed them in class.

Team Project (60%): You will work as team with others in the class, selecting a group or community to study. The basis of your selection will center on your assessment that the group you are observing is approaching a situation, issue or problem from a monologic/individualist philosophical stance and thus they are ineffective in constructing any kind of meaningful change or solution to their situation. Please note, they might be quite able to devise solutions to their problems but the solutions only create further problems. The group is unable to completely transform their way of working together. The job of your team is to *design and facilitate* those involved in a dialogue that attempts to transform their approach to the situation, issue or problem. In order to assess how well you can put theory to practice, you are required to document in some observable form the monologic manner in which the group you are studying operates. Similarly, you are required to document in some observable form the dialogic manner that your facilitation helped develop. These documentations will be shown to the class and you will be assessed on your abilities to articulate (1) how the original interactions of the group you

study are illustrations of monologism, (1) how your facilitation connects to dialogic practices, and (3) how the culminating activities of the group you are studying are (or come closer to) dialogic interaction.

Documentation for this project may take many forms: video, audiotape, transcripts, reflective writing, etc. You will be evaluated on the basis of your ability, as a group, to “capture” the “before” and “after” aspects (i.e., “monologic” and “dialogic” aspects) of the group’s interactions. You will write your own reflection paper on this process. This paper will draw on a journal that you will keep throughout the process of this project. More details about all aspects of this project will be provided within the next few weeks. For now, let me clarify that there are basically five parts of this project:

- Documentation of your class-group’s process. Each group is responsible for handing in a complete **summary of every meeting held** – both amongst yourselves in the planning and analysis stages of this project as well as summaries of your meetings with the group with whom you are facilitating a dialogue. I will provide you with a template for these summaries. One summary per group session. (5%)
- **Initial presentation** to the class in which you identify your choice of group to work with, you explain the ways in which you see this group operating in a monologic manner (clear and precise illustrations are necessary), and your initial ideas for designing and facilitating a dialogic process with this group. (5%)
- **Presentation of your project to the class.** These presentations will take place at the end of the semester and must include a comprehensive description of what you did, how and why. You must include theoretical and conceptual material in your presentation to justify your design and facilitation process. You must also demonstrate how the group you were working with moved from their original monologic orientation to a dialogic, transformative one. If you were not successful in reaching the goal of transformative dialogue, you must articulate your understanding of this failure and make suggestions of how you could do things differently in the future. (25%)
- **Individual reflection paper** in which you apply the concepts and theories from class to your work within your class group, as well as with the group with which you worked to introduce dialogue. (20%)
- **Individual journal** where you chart the development of your work and reflect on what you are doing and what you observe in relation to class concepts. I will provide a template for your journals. You should think of your journals as “date notebooks.” Write down as much detail as you possibly can. It will assist you in preparing your group presentation and in writing your individual paper. (5%)

Position Paper on Dialogue in Context (15%): Each of you will write a 5-7 page position paper on applications of dialogic process in a particular context. I have listed readings for three specific contexts (education, mental health, and medicine/health care) in this syllabus. However, with my approval, you are invited to select your own readings to use as the basis of this paper. These papers should introduce the general topic/context and discuss how a typical, individualist orientation would approach the central issue. Identify some of the problems/difficulties/limitations of this and then introduce the dialogic alternative, weaving into this discussion your views of the way in which dialogue was used in the article you read.

Course Expectations and Policies

- Please do not email papers to me
- No cell phones, PDAs, etc (you get the point)
- Attendance – you are expected to be here. Appointments with Doctors, as any other appointment, are made on your “free time.” This is *not* your free time. You have committed to being here, at this time, during this semester.
- Participation – in various ways.
- If you must miss a class, I request that you inform me *before* the missed class rather than after.
- I expect you to print out each reading from the URL provided on Blackboard so you can take notes on each reading. I may randomly check to see that you have a hard copy of each reading.

READINGS

NOTE: ALL OF THE READINGS LISTED BELOW ARE ACCESSIBLE VIA THE COURSE WEBSITE ON BLACKBOARD EXCEPT THE FIRST READING, YANKELOVICH, WHICH CAN BE PURCHASED AT DURHAM BOOK EXCHANGE.

I. WHAT IS DIALOGUE?

1. Yankelovich, D. (1999). *The magic of dialogue: Transforming conflict into cooperation*. New York: Touchstone. **Purchase at Durham Book Exchange.**

II. ILLUSTRATIONS OF DIALOGUE IN ACTION

The Public Conversations Project

2. Roth, S., Chasin, L., Chasin, R., Becker, C., Herzig, M. (1992). From Debate to Dialogue: A Facilitating Role for Family Therapists in the Public Forum. *Dulwich Centre Newsletter*, Australia, vol. 2: 41-48. *Appreciative Inquiry*

3. Cooperrider, D. L. (2001). Positive Image, Positive Action: The Affirmative Basis of Organizing. In, D. Cooperrider, P. Sorensen, T. Yaeger, and D. Whitney (Eds.), *Appreciative Inquiry: An Emerging Direction for Organization Development*. Champaign, IL: Stipes Publishing.
4. Cooperrider, D. and Srivastva, S. (1990). Appreciative inquiry in organizational life. In Srivastva, S., Cooperrider, D. L. (Eds.), *Appreciative management and leadership: The power of positive thought and action in organizations*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc.

III. PROBLEMATIZING THINKING AS AN INDIVIDUAL ACT

5. Capra, F. (1988). "The Pattern Which Connects." In *Uncommon Wisdom: Conversations with Remarkable People*. New York: Bantam Books.
6. Anderson, H. and Goolishian, H. (1988). "Human systems as linguistic systems: evolving ideas about the implications for theory and practice." *Family Process*, 27, 371-93.
7. Sampson, E.E. (1993). Preface. *Celebrating the Other*. Colorado: Westview Press, pp. ix-x.
8. Sampson, E.E. (1993). Chapter 1: The Context of Power. *Celebrating the Other*. Colorado: Westview Press.
9. Sampson, E.E. (1993). Chapter 2: Conceptual Dilemmas. *Celebrating the Other*. Colorado: Westview Press.
10. Sampson, E.E. (1993). Chapter 3: Possessive Individualism and the Self-contained Ideal. *Celebrating the Other*. Colorado: Westview Press.

IV. WHAT MAKES DIALOGUE DIFFERENT?

11. Stewart, J. & Zediker, K. (2002). Dialogue as Tensional, Ethical Practice. *Southern Communication Journal*, 65 (2/3), 224-242.
12. Issacs, W. (1999). Chapter 1: A Conversation with a Center, Not Sides. In, *Dialogue and the art of thinking together*. New York: Doubleday.
13. McNamee, S. and Shotter, J. D. (2004). Dialogue, Creativity, and Change. In R. Anderson, L. A. Baxter, and K.N. Cissna (Eds.), *Dialogue: Theorizing Difference in Communication Studies*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

14. Hyde, B. and Bineham, J. L. (2000). From Debate to Dialogue: Toward a Pedagogy of Nonpolarized Public Discourse. *Southern Journal of Communication*, 65, 2/3, 208-223.
15. Seikkula, J. and Trimble, D. (2005). Healing Elements of Therapeutic Conversation: Dialogue as an Embodiment of Love. *Family Process*, 44(4), 461-475.

V. SOCIAL/DIALOGIC SOURCES OF PERSONHOOD (INDIVIDUALITY)

16. Stewart, J. (2002). A Philosopher's Approach. In J. Stewart (Ed.) *Bridges not Walls*. New York: McGraw Hill, pp. 663-681.
17. Sampson, E. E. (1993). Chapter 7: Celebrating the Other: The Dialogic Turn. *Celebrating the Other*. Colorado: Westview Press.

VI. THINKING AS A SOCIAL/RELATIONAL PRACTICE

18. Roberts, G.L. and Bavelas, J. (1996). The Communicative Dictionary: A Collaborative Theory of Meaning. In J. D. Stewart (Ed.), *Beyond the Symbol Model: Reflections on the Representational Nature of Language*. Albany, New York: State University of New York.
19. Bavelas, J. Coates, L. and Johnson, T. (2000). Listeners as Co-Narrators. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79 (6), 941-952.
20. Barrett, F. J. (2000). Cultivating an Aesthetic of Unfolding: Jazz Improvisation as a Self-organizing System. In, S. Linstead and H. J. Hopfl (Eds.), *The aesthetics of organization*. London: Sage.

VII. PUTTING DIALOGUE INTO PRACTICE

***See recommended readings listed in this syllabus. See below...all available via the URL on the website.*

VIII. DIALOGUE ETHICS

21. McNamee, S. and Gergen, K.J. (1998). Chapter 1: An Invitation to Relational Responsibility. In, *Relational Responsibility: Resources for Sustainable Dialogue*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
22. McNamee, S. and Gergen, K.J. (1999). Chapter 2: Relational Responsibility in Practice. In *Relational Responsibility: Resources for Sustainable Dialogue*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage

23. Gergen, K.J., McNamee, S. and Barrett, F. (2001). Toward transformative dialogue. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 24, 7/8, 679-707.

****RECOMMENDED READINGS: PUTTING DIALOGUE INTO PRACTICE**

In Education:

McNamee, S. (in press). Relational practices in education: Teaching as conversation. In H. Anderson and D. Gehart (Eds.), *Invitations: Applications of Postmodern Collaborative Therapy*. New York: Brunner-Routledge.

Bruffee, K. (1999). "Collaboration, Conversation, and Reacculturation." In, *Collaborative Learning*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Bruffee, K. (1999). "Education as Conversation." In, *Collaborative Learning*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

In mental health

Seikkula, J., Amkil, T.E., and Eriksson, E. (2003). Postmodern Society and Social Networks: Open and Anticipation Dialogues in Network Meetings. *Family Process*, 42(2), 185.

In medicine/health care

Lannamann, J.W., Harris, L.M., Bakos, A.D., and Baker, K.J. (in press). Ending the End-of-Life Communication Impasse: A Dialogic Intervention. In L. Sparks, D. O'Hair, and G. Kreps (Eds.), *Cancer, Communication and Aging*. New York: Hampton Press.

Katz, A. and Shotter, J. (1999). Social poetics as a relational practice: Creating resourceful communities. Paper presented at *Social Construction and Relational Practices* conference, Durham, NH.

Katz, A. Conant, L., Inui, T., Baron, D. and Bor, D. (2000). A council of elders: Creating a multi-voiced dialogue in a community of care. *Social Science and Medicine*, 50, 6, 851-860.

COURSE SCHEDULE

<i>DATE</i>	<i>TOPIC</i>	<i>READING #*</i>
1/18	Introduction to the Course	
	I. What is Dialogue	
1/23	The Magic of Dialogue	1 (chapters 1-6)
1/25		1 (chapters 7-14)
	II. Illustrations of Dialogue in Action	
1/30	The Public Conversations Project	2 (s)
2/1		
2/6	Appreciative Inquiry	3, 4 (s)
2/8		
	III. Problematizing Thinking as an Individual Act	
2/13	The Pattern Which Connects	5 (Capra)
2/15	Human Systems as Linguistic Systems	6 (Anderson)
2/20	Celebrating the Other	7, 8 (Sampson)
2/22	Conceptual Dilemmas	9 (s)
2/27	Possessive Individualism	10 (s)
2/29		
	IV. What Makes Dialogue Different?	
3/6	Dialogue as Tensional	11 (StewartZediker)
3/8	Conversation with a Center, Not Sides	12 (Issacs)
 Spring Break 		
	IV. What Makes Dialogue Different (continued)	
3/20	Dialogue, Creativity, and Change	13 (McNamee/Shotter)
	From Debate to Dialogue	14 (Hyde)
3/22	Dialogue as an Embodiment of Love	15 (SeikkulaTrimble)
	V. Social/Dialogic Sources of Personhood (Individuality)	
3/27	A Philosopher's Approach	16 (Stewart)
3/29	The Dialogic Turn (Sampson, Ch 7)	17 (s)

	VI. Thinking as Social/Relational Practice	
4/3	The Communicative Dictionary	18 (Roberts)
	Listeners as Co-Narrators	19 (Bavelas)
4/5	Cultivating and Aesthetic of Unfolding	20 (Barrett)
	VII. Putting Dialogue into Practice	
4/10	Group work and discussion	
4/12	Group work and discussion	
4/17	Group work and discussion	
4/19	Group work and discussion	
	VIII. Dialogue Ethics	
4/24	An Invitation to Relational Responsibility	21 (McNameeGergen1)
	Relational Responsibility in Practice	22 (McNameeGergen2)
4/26	Toward Transformative Dialogue	23 (Gergen)
5/1	Project Presentations	
5/3	Project Presentations	
5/8	Project Presentations	

* Please note that the readings are identified by number in this syllabus. You should be able to identify the specific reading due for each class by looking at the number and cross referencing that number to the list in this syllabus.

In all cases where there is a name after the reading number, your access to the reading is through the URL provided on the course website (Blackboard).

In all cases where the reading number is followed by an (s), access to the reading is via a “separate” link, also posted on Blackboard in the “Documents” section.