

COMM 499CI

SEMINAR: Dialogue, Discourse, Identity and Community

Fall 2012
University of Massachusetts
Department of Communication
Machmer W25
Tuesday/Thursday 4-5:15

Leda Cooks
315 Machmer Hall
545-2895
leda@comm.umass.edu
Office Hrs: T/TH 2:20-3:50

This is a two-semester, eight-credit Communication Honors Capstone course on Dialogue, Discourse, Identity and Community. This course also serves as an Integrative Experience for the Communication major. In the first semester (Fall 2012), we will cover a broad range of theories and methods for studying various aspects of the relationship between concepts of dialogue, language, identity, community based research and citizenship. Additionally, students will learn methods of dialogue facilitation and will participate in dialogues in class. Each student will develop a proposal to conduct an original research project on some relevant topic in the theory and practice of dialogue. The second semester (Spring 2013) will be devoted to the implementation of your individual research projects; each will culminate in an archivable Honors Thesis. For general Capstone guidance, see www.comcol.umass.edu/capstone.

When dialogue is called for, whether in close relationships, on college campuses, in communities and in and across nations, the assumption is often that conversation can achieve equality and social change. This course will explore the philosophy, politics and practices of dialogue as they intersect with social group identity and social justice. Students will consider the ways dialogue can build our capacities for collaboration and creativity in our relationships with others, as well as the conditions under which dialogue might become harmful. We will examine the assumptions about dialogue, its association with communication and democracy and political consequences. Students will learn about the practice and models of dialogue, and build their skills as dialogue facilitators. All students will facilitate dialogues in pairs in class the first semester and in the second semester will work with local high schools or community sites of their choice. Additional course assignments will include discussion questions on course readings, a journal, in-class presentations, a draft proposal for the thesis fall semester, and a completed thesis by the end of spring semester. Students will be expected to submit their work for presentation at the Undergraduate Research Conference on campus.

Integrative Experience: This course serves as an Integrative Experience for Communication undergraduates. According to the General Education Council:

"The Integrative Experience (IE) requirement at UMass Amherst addresses the challenges associated with educational fragmentation. Positioned in the upper-division, the IE provides students with a structured opportunity to look back on their early college learning experiences, reflect upon and make connections between those earlier experiences and the more advanced

work in their major, and use their integrated learning to prepare for the demands of the world beyond the University."

This class fulfills these requirements in several ways, as seen in the Course Objectives and Assignments below, which require you to engage real-world issues in dialogue with others. For further information on the IE, please consult the Gen Ed website:

<http://www.umass.edu/gened/teachingAdvising/integrativeExperience/ie.html>

Course Objectives: Most syllabi spend some time here telling you what skills you will learn. This one will too. However, a main objective of this course is to make the connection between critical reflection about your own identities and the ways you interact with and conduct research with people who are different from you. And yes, we all have room for improvement there. So, here are some other skills you might perfect in this course:

1. Listening skills. We may think we do it well, but most of us are pretty lousy.
2. Conflict skills. A big part of dialogue across differences is learning about patterns of conflict; defensiveness and anger are a common response to new and threatening information.
3. Facilitation skills. You will learn how to facilitate dialogues among your peers, and for some of you, with high-schoolers in area schools. Improvement here will draw upon and advance oral communication and collaboration skills introduced in General Education and Communication courses.
4. Research skills. You will learn how to develop research questions based on observation of anomalies, and critique of existing research or gaps in research done to date. You will connect theory to methods of conducting research, and practice analyzing and interpreting data and reporting results. You will also recognize the limitations of all research. Improvement here will also ask you to draw upon information literacy skills learned in Gen Eds and Communication courses.
5. Self-Reflection and Critical Reflection skills. You will learn to understand the links between critical theories about identity, social justice and the (mis)uses of dialogue among social groups, communities and organizations. You will also have an opportunity to reflect on yourself as a learner and citizen, and on your education to date and in the future.
6. **Some Potential Personal Objectives:** To try to engage fully (mind, body, spirit) in the course and in class dialogues and exercises. To take risks (not physically threatening) with our bodies as well as our minds. To listen to others, not just for validation but especially when we disagree with their points of view. To recognize and respond constructively to intolerance and injustice. To recognize our own areas of (dis)comfort and learn to respond with openness to new

and different ideas in the hope that we can build alliances toward social, political, economic and cultural equity.

MOODLE:

For your assignments and most of your readings in this class you must have access to MOODLE. To access MOODLE you must have an active UMass email account.

- To reactivate your OIT account come to room A213 LGRC, M-F from 8:30-4:45
- Make sure to bring your U card or other picture ID.
- Be aware that account reactivations and password changes do not take effect immediately.

Once you have a MOODLE account you can access COMM 499 on MOODLE:

Go to: <https://moodle.oit.umass.edu/webct/entryPageIns.dowebct>

Click on; Log-in. Enter your UMass Net ID and password. This will take you to a list of courses for the current semester. Click on COMM 499.

E-reserves will also be used as a source for course readings. E-reserves may be accessed via MOODLE or from the library home page. The password for the readings is "comm499".

All documents uploaded to MOODLE must be done in rtf (.rtf) or word (.doc, or docx). Please note that files must be readable to be accepted.

Course Requirements:

All students are required to attend classes, to participate in in-class exercises and to turn in assignments on time. Each week two students will be asked to help facilitate discussion of the readings. Students may upload their assignments to MOODLE, but also must turn in hard copies of the journal assignments three times during the course of the semester. All references cited in journals and in group projects must follow APA, MLA or Chicago style guidelines.

Guidelines for this course: This capstone course requires a serious time commitment. That is, you must attend class, participate, and work on group and community assignments outside of class.

1. Students should attend class regularly and show up to class ON TIME. Punctuality is extremely important for a small seminar; late entrances will interrupt the flow of conversation. Attendance will be taken at each class session and latecomers will lose attendance points.
2. Participation is also a major component of this course. It is not enough to show up—you will be asked to lead and engage in dialogue, to take risks emotionally, and sometimes to feel silly or embarrassed. I realize this is a big commitment to a course, but the more you put into the course (including emotionally and physically) the more you will get out of it. It is imperative that you actively *listen* to others in the class, in group work as well as in class discussion. More importantly, you will need to *support* your classmates in the risks we collectively undertake in this class. For these reasons, participation is a significant part of your grade.
3. This course is very "hands-on". You will be expected to apply material from lecture, reading, and your own experiences in in-class exercises and group assignments. Therefore, you must *read* the assigned material, and apply it conscientiously in class dialogues and with high school students or other community participants.

4. Assignments must be completed by the scheduled date. No make up assignments will be permitted, unless the absence is excused.
5. Ground rules for discussion in class must be followed. We will adapt the rules to the class, but some basic rules are as follows: no cross talk or interruptions, name calling or abusive/derogatory comments aimed at others. Be aware of the amount of “floor” time being used by any one person and encourage all members of the class to express their opinions. Please show respect for others when they are telling their stories by not walking in late, reading the newspaper, making faces or exhibiting other rude behaviors. No cell phones on in class, no texting, no reading the paper or doing work for other classes during class time.
6. There is a good amount of reading for this class. Some of the readings can get difficult. Please ask for help when you are having difficulty or if you are feeling overwhelmed. You are encouraged to come to office hours, post discussion questions on the class list, and ask others in class to help you understand the material.

Remember—I cannot read your mind. Please ask for help if you need it.

Academic Honesty: No plagiarism or cheating of any kind will be tolerated. Downloaded papers, or those that are simply copied from another source, will result in a grade of F for the course. Likewise, duplicating or borrowing from others’ journals will result in a grade of F. Group Projects in the form of performances may be taken from other sources, but those sources should be properly attributed. Any questions; please see me. *There will be no exceptions.*

Course Assignments:

1. Facilitation of readings: 25 points. Each week a student will be assigned to facilitate discussion of the readings. Facilitators will provide some discussion questions and will be assisted by the class’ assigned discussion questions.

2. Participation. 75 points.

Attendance policy: This is a course on dialogue. Your presence is obviously important to the success of the class. For each (unexcused) class missed, 3 points will be deducted from your grade. Excused absences include documented illness and religious observances. All work missed from an excused absence is to be completed within two weeks of the absence or you will lose credit for the assignment.

In-class exercises and short response papers. From time to time you will be asked to respond to something we have done in class. These responses will be read and counted as part of your participation grade for the course.

3. Reflections for class discussion. Worth 110 points total. These questions/reflections/comments should be based on your readings for each week, should help us with class discussion, and may also be written in journal form (i.e. based on the connections you make between readings and your own experiences). For each question or comment from the readings you should provide relevant quotes, page numbers, etc. Give some context from the reading to support your question or comment. Discussion questions should be uploaded to MOODLE PRIOR to the start of Tuesday class each week. You should have a minimum of five

questions for discussion/comments. You may receive a portion of the total points for incomplete work.

Please draw from material that speaks to you. In general, the class is designed to promote your learning to the extent that you wish to do so, and it is more important that you are accountable to your own goals than it is to please the teacher.

Criteria/what I am looking for in your reflections/comments:

Openness: Noting where you are triggered and trying to understand reasons for feeling misunderstood, defensive, etc. Working to challenge yourself and your beliefs, values, attitudes: where could you be more patient with others? What do you refuse to examine? What stereotypes do you hold on to? When have you deliberately/voluntarily engaged with people who are different from you? How does that make you feel?

Affective Learning: We cannot separate the emotional from the cognitive—in other words, much as we might try not to in the classroom we *feel* as much as we know. How have you learned (or not) how to articulate the pain, sadness, guilt, anger, discomfort or even numbness you feel about social injustice? What stories do you bring with you into the classroom around these issues and what emotional investments come with them? How might your emotions precede or determine your openness to recognizing injustices (note: this does NOT mean you are personally responsible)? When do you feel safe, or more comfortable talking about difficult things? When do you feel connected to other people in dialogue?

Meta-Dialogue: One of the challenges of this class is engaging in dialogue. Another is making connections between the readings, the in-class dialogues and your own reflections throughout the semester. Think of the course readings as part of the conversation and work to see the relationships between what is covered there, what is discussed and your thoughts as you engage with your colleagues in class and on-line etc.

**You will be asked to post two reflections to the CESL Blog. These posts will be shared with others outside the class, so please write accordingly. These posts will be worth 20 points.

4. Final Paper – Research Proposal. 200 points. The major requirement for the fall semester is a research proposal for an original research project on some aspect of dialogue that intersects with other concepts we have discussed throughout the semester. (You will carry out your proposed projects in the spring semester.) Your project may take any number of forms. Since you will be trained in facilitation and will be doing some, the most convenient place for your project could be the schools in which we will work. Possible examples might be an observational study of how students respond in dialogue to topics labeled as “risky” or “uncomfortable” in groups that vary in terms of race/ethnicity; interviews with youth about what roles dialogue can play in changing school climate ; a survey of students who are involved with dialogues before and after to see if they perceive a change in their relationships, abilities to have difficult conversations, leadership abilities, etc; evaluation of a whole school dialogue program, the multi-high school summit and so on. However, other projects that are community based and involve dialogue in some way can also be a basis for your research. Do something that is of significant interest to you!

The proposal will be developed in a series of steps, with the following deadlines for the various written components:

- 1) October 23: A brief, preliminary statement of the phenomenon, problem, etc. including the theoretical framework and the rationale for the study (2-4 single spaced pages), along with a (separate) preliminary bibliography (10-20 readings)
- 2) November 13: A critical literature review of the studies in your bibliography, assessing the quality of current knowledge in some area, building to your argument and/or to identifying a specific gap in our knowledge (5-10 pages)
- 3) November 29: A preliminary methodological sketch/outline with discussion of the links to theory (1-2 pages).
- 4) Dec. 8: A complete and fully-integrated proposal that includes: rationale for research study, literature review, research questions and preliminary ideas about methodology-- combining and elaborating on all the previous steps into a final document (20 pages)

Some possible topics: You may analyze the effectiveness of dialogues on racial identity and whiteness based on data collected from a large scale dialogue on the UMass campus. You may design pre and post surveys and then facilitate 2 or more dialogues in the residence hall (with ARD approval), with high school students (I will provide assistance here) or the senior center downtown. You may survey and assess student comfort with and competence at discussing race on campus, as well as their comfort with discussing social group privilege. You may stage a performance that engages social justice issues as a moodle to dialogue and assess responses to these issues.

Assignment weights:

200 Research Project Proposal

75 points participation

130 points discussion questions

25 points student facilitation of readings.

Total points; 430

Course Outline/Schedule:

*****Please note that some readings are on moodle and some on e-reserves. E-reserve readings are indicated as such. The rest are on moodle.E-reserves can be accessed from the moodle site. The password for the course is "comm499"

September 4: Syllabus outlined. Course overview.

September 6: Dialogue defined: promise and problems. Community based learning defined.

Reading Assigned: Carcasson, M. (2011)Facilitating Democracy through Passionate Impartialty. *Spectra*

Manusov, V. (2011). Being Civil with ourselves. *Spectra*

September 11: Civility.

First discussion questions/thoughts due on MOODLE BEFORE the start of class.

Reading Assigned: *The Power of Talk*. Chapter 1

Weiler, *Finding a shared meaning: Reflections on dialogue*.

September 13: Language as a frame for reality, identity. Dialogue

Reading Assigned; Kirk and Okasawa-Rey, Identities and social group locations

Schoem et al. Intergroup Dialogue

September 18: Social group identity. Identity wheel. Social Justice

Reading Assigned: *Intercultural Communication* (Peace Building and dialogue), Chapter

Discussion questions due on MOODLE before the start of class: Schoem, Kirk/Okasawa-Rey

September 20: Intercultural Communication.

Reading Assigned: **ICC chapter 3**

September 25: Conflict and Power.

Reading assigned: Kellett, P. Chapter one. *Stories and meanings of conflicts*.

Farmer, D. (2003). Paradox of power.

Discussion questions due to MOODLE before the start of class

September 27: Language and Othering

Reading due: *The Power of Talk*, chapter 2

October 2: Identity and intercultural peacebuilding

Reading due: **ICC chapter 3**

October 4: Conflict and Narrative

Reading due: Kellett, P. Chapter one. *Stories and meanings of conflicts*.

Farmer, D. (2003). Paradox of power.

October 11: Discussion questions due to MOODLE before the start of class

Language and Othering

Reading due: *The Power of Talk*, chapter 2

October 16: Social political and economic consequences of inequity.

Reading Due: Lipsitz. *The possessive investment in whiteness*. (e-reserves)

Discussion questions due to MOODLE before the start of class

October 18: Dialogue

Reading Due: Tatum, B. *The complexity of identity*.

Reading Assigned: Wise, T. (2010). *Colorblind* excerpts

October 23: On difference and privilege. What happens when we are confronted with information that makes us uncomfortable, we disagree with, offends our values, etc. ?

Reading: Huang Nissen, Sally. *Facilitating Dialogue Groups* (e-reserves)

McCormick: *Listening with Empathy*.

October 16: Problem posing in dialogue

Discussion questions due to MOODLE before the start of class

Reading due: Freire, Paulo, (1993), *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, London: Penguin.

October 18: Discourse, inclusiveness and othering.

Reading due: *The power of Talk, chapter 3*

Reading: Johnson, Privileges, oppression and difference, chapter 2 (e-reserves)

October 23: Creativity in dialogue; First portion of proposal due.

Reading due: Sawyer, K. (2001). *Creating conversations: Improvisation in everyday conversation*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. Chapter 1.

Discussion questions due to MOODLE before the start of class

October 25: Dialogue and transformation

Reading: Ellinor, Linda & Glenda Gerard, (1998), *Dialogue: rediscover the transforming power of conversation*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. chapter 1

October 30: The ethical imperative to dialogue.

Reading: Arnett et al. *Communication ethics literacy, chapter 1*

Discussion questions due to MOODLE before the start of class

November 6: when is dialogue (un) ethical? In class dialogue.

Reading: *Communication ethics literacy, chapter 2*.

November 8: Ethics, continued. **What is the good life?**

Reading: Reading: Arnett et al. *Communication ethics literacy, chapter 3*

November 13: Dialogue and diversity on college campus

Reading Due: Katz, J. *The challenge of diversity on college campuses*. (e-reserves)

November 15 NCA—Class TBD

Reading: Herakova, L., Jelaca, D., Sibii, S. & Cooks, L. (2011). *Silence in dialogue. Communication Studies*.

Discussion questions due to MOODLE before the start of class

November 20: Racial microaggressions

Reading: Wing, Sue. *Racial Microaggressions in everyday life*.

November 27: Feedback

Discussion questions due to MOODLE before start of class.

Reading: Porter, L. *Giving and receiving feedback*.

November 29: Proposal Presentations

Reading: (Poem). Parker. *For the white person who wants to know*

December 4: Proposal Presentations

Reading due: Herzig, Maggie & Laura Chasin, (2006), *Fostering dialogue across divides. A nuts and bolts guide from the Public Conversations Project, Watertown: Public Conversations Project.*

Discussion questions due to MOODLE before start of class.

December 6: Last Day of Class. Proposal Presentations

PROPOSALS DUE DECEMBER 13, 2012

Spring semester:

In the Spring semester, we will have a single three-hour meeting per week, to allow for more intensive and focused discussions. The entire semester will be devoted to carrying out and writing up the research projects you designed in your fall proposals. Although each of you will conduct an independent research project, you are expected to provide comments and suggestions on each other's work at our weekly meetings.

Although the research projects you pursue will probably vary widely, they will all involve the collection of "data" in one form or another. We will start out the Spring semester making sure you are all equipped to collect your data in the most efficient, feasible, and successful way, after which the actual data collection will begin. Your data collection process must be completed before Spring Break (if not sooner). After Spring Break, our class meetings will be devoted to analysis and interpretation of your findings, and preparation of your final reports, in the form of an archivable Honors Thesis.

We will discuss the format and structure of your thesis in considerable detail, and you should closely follow the instructions and guidelines for documentation and formatting posted at: www.honors.umass.edu/capstone/formatting or www.honors.umass.edu/capstone/submission. These are expected to be a minimum of 50 pages (and will be built largely on your proposals).