Instructor: Blake Poland, PhD
Dalla Lana School of Public Health, 155 College Street, room 588
blake.poland@utoronto.ca / (416) 978-7542

Format: 6 weeks, face-to-face, fall term (Wednesday evenings, September 14 - October 19)

Location: HS614 (Health Sciences Building, 155 College Street, 6th floor)

Prerequisites: An introductory course in qualitative methods, or equivalent experience, or permission of the instructor. NOTE this is an approved elective in the Collaborative Program in Community Development and the CQ methods series.

Rationale & Focus:
From community engagement to the semi-structured research interview, deliberative process to mediation and the learning organization, dialogue and its core elements (capacity to listen/hear, being heard, speaking one’s truth, navigating institutional agendas, storytelling, dialogue across differences) are central. What is authentic dialogue? How does it apply in research, in public health, and community development practice? This course will explore the nature and lived experience of dialogue in its many forms, as well as the many methods that have sprung up around it and that offer a rich and varied toolkit for health and social care professionals, as well as the ethical and pedagogical issues arising from the instrumentalization of dialogue.

Course Objectives
• To explore diverse threads and perspectives within the field broadly defined as “dialogical methods”, from Bakhtin and Habermas to Rosenberg, Freire, Bohm, indigenous perspectives and beyond
• To learn about the theory and practice of dialogue as operationalized in a variety of specific methodologies, including Freirian critical pedagogy, NVC, Structured Story-Dialogue, World Café, Open Space, The Art of Convening, Brokered Dialogue, Literacy Circles, Circles of Compassion, talking circles of various kinds including indigenous traditions, & more
• To explore the merits and potential pitfalls of the application of dialogical methods in the field of public health, and their translation/reinvention into settings that may differ significantly from the conditions of their emergence and initial application
• To explore the potential contribution of dialogical methods to reflexive practice development
• To reflect upon, and discuss, how these methods, debates, and authors’ works resonate and intersect with our own personal and professional development and work
• To learn about dialogical methods not only through texts and discussion, but also through modelling its practices in our interactions, course structure, and methods of ‘e-value-ation’
Required Text(s)

No single text is required, but you are strongly encouraged to obtain a copy of William Isaacs’ classic book *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together* (1999, Doubleday).

Other recommended texts include:


Course Orientation

The role of instructor and students as ‘co-learners’ is emphasized. This reading course is an opportunity for all of us to delve into new material, debate, gently challenge one another, and grow together. In keeping with the focus of the course, a traditional didactic formal lecture format is eschewed in favour of more dialogical and adult education approaches to learning.

The initial pedagogical orientation of this course is informed by the 3 central elements of Cavalcante’s model of ‘Trans-form-action’: reading, writing and action (LER, in Portuguese)

*Reading.* The idea is to move away from reading for content in the way normally emphasized in academic settings (where the reader is not personally engaged, where the focus is on what the author-as-expert wishes us to remember and apply, where students’ own experiences and ideas are not valued) to a fuller (critical, affective) engagement with the text, and how they speak to us. In other words, there is no separation, in aesthetic reading, between the academic and the personal. Therefore, the emphasis will be on an *aesthetic reading* of the texts, wherein “the reader’s attention is centred directly on what s/he is experiencing in life during her relationship with that particular text” (Rosenblatt, 1994, cited in Cavalcante, n.d.). Put differently, the notion is that our work can engage our whole self, and be consistent with (and informed by, as well as contributing to) our own personal growth.

---

Writing. As per Cavalcante’s (Con)Text Method\(^2\), the idea is to make writing a regular activity, and to connect it with the aesthetic dimension of reading described above. We will each write a resonant-text (it could be a short essay, a poem, a song, a short play, a photo-novella) that expresses how the assigned readings resonate with our own experiences, values, hopes and fears. The idea is to connect what we are reading with our own experience and values, to engage with the material more directly.

**Action.** Reading and writing are not abstract intellectual exercises, but rather ways of interpreting and being in the world. They enable a more active subjectivity from which action can arise that has the potential to be more self-actualizing (and thus community-enhancing) because it is reflexive, relevant, grounded, and affirming of self and others.

**Grading & Evaluation** (to be ratified via consensus decision-making in session 2)

*Methods of Evaluation*

- E-value-ation: finding value, valuing perspectives and experiences of others; adding value
- Peer- and self-evaluation, with input from the instructor (methodology to be discussed)

*Grading Scheme*

- Weekly resonant texts (N=5) (reviewed but not graded, 20% participation grade)
- Presentation of a particular method/approach (individual or group) (weeks 4-5) (30%)
- Final course paper or project (individual or group) (50%)

**Course Content**

- **Session 1** Generative & transformative dialogue: roots & shoots, promise & perils
- **Session 2** The essence of dialogue
- **Session 3** Nonviolent/Compassionate Communication (NVC)
- **Sessions 4-5** Methods & approaches for creating & holding space for dialogue
- **Session 6** Dialogue in research: focus groups, brokered dialogue & beyond

**Useful Links**

- Chris Corrigan’s extensive resource page [http://www.chriscorrigan.com/parkinglot/facilitation-resources/](http://www.chriscorrigan.com/parkinglot/facilitation-resources/)
- SFU Centre for Dialogue [https://www.sfu.ca/dialogue.html](https://www.sfu.ca/dialogue.html) (see also [http://www.conversationsthatmatter.tv](http://www.conversationsthatmatter.tv))
- The Art of Hosting [http://www.artofhosting.org](http://www.artofhosting.org)
- National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation (USA) - [www.ncdd.org](http://www.ncdd.org)
- Design With Dialogue (DwD) - [www.designwithdialogue.com](http://www.designwithdialogue.com)
- Na-Bolom Cultural Centre, Chiapas, Mexico - [http://www.na-bolom.org](http://www.na-bolom.org)

---

\(^2\) Cavalcante Jr., F. S. (2003). *For A School of the Subject: The (Con)text Method of Multiple Literacies (2nd ed.)*, Edicoes Democrito Rocha.
NOTE that I’ve listed readings in the order I suggest you read them. This also means that if you don’t have time that week to read them all, get as far into the list as you can in the order listed. That way we will know we at least all have the same first reading as a common base, for example.

**SESSION 1**

**ROOTS & SHOOTS / PROMISE & PERILS**


Foreward by Peter Senge (pp.xv-xx) and Introduction (pp. 1-14) in Isaacs, W, (1999) *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together*. Toronto: Currency.


Critics & cautionary tales:


for promise and peril see also:

Goffman, Bhaktin, Habermas, Goffman:


Calhoun, C. (ed) (1997) Habermas and the Public Sphere. MIT Press. (Chapter 1)


SESSION 2
THE ESSENCE OF DIALOGUE

Poland, B, F Cavalcante, J Wong (2014) Talk is cheap… but powerful: The transformative potential of authentic dialogue for addressing the roots of social/ecological injustice and health inequity. University of Toronto: unpublished manuscript.


See also:


SESSION 3
NON-VIOLENT/COMPASSIONATE COMMUNICATION (NVC)

“What is NVC?” Fact Sheet; Key Facts about NVC; & 4-part NVC process fact sheet, NVC Institute, USA, www.NonviolentCommunication.com


See also:

SESSIONS 4-5
METHODS & APPROACHES

Appreciative Inquiry          Indigenous Talking Circle
The Art of Convening          Open Space Technology
Circle Methods                Restorative Justice Circles
Community Conversations (Paul Born) Salon & coffeehouse movements
Empathy Circles               Sociocracy / Holacracy
Engaging Emergence (Peggy Holman) Structured Story-Dialogue Method
The Art of Hosting
Freirian Critical Pedagogy

Appreciative Inquiry


The Art of Convening / Engaging Emergence / Circle Methods / Community Conversations / Salons & Coffeehouse movement & Conversation Café / 1000 Dinners Toronto / (see also The Art of Hosting)


Lerner, M. (1986). *Surplus Powerlessness*, New Jersey, Humanities Press International. (re “Circles of Compassion” in the workplace & community; Preface; Chapter 1; Introduction to Part IV: the mass psychology of compassion)


**Empathy Circles** (see also section on NVC)

Leu, L. (n.d.) *Empathy Aha! Instructions.*


see also:


**Freirian Critical Pedagogy**


see also:


**Indigenous Talking Circles**


Open Space Technology


Restorative Justice Circles (see also NVC)


For a brief overview of the indigenous roots of restorative justice circle methodology, see http://www.livingjusticepress.org/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC={0F6FA816-E094-4B96-8F39-9922F67306E5}.

Sociocracy / Halacracy


Brief overview of classic Sociocracy (30min video): http://sociocracy30.org/topics/study-materials/ (scroll down to near bottom of resources to find it)


see also:


The Art of Hosting (see also The Art of Convening) [http://www.artofhosting.org]

“What is the Art of Hosting Conversations that Matter?” [http://www.artofhosting.org/what-is-aoh/]


World Café (see also material above on Conversation Café & Salons)


SESSION 6

DIALOGUE IN RESEARCH: FOCUS GROUPS, BROKERED DIALOGUE, STRUCTURED STORY-DIALOGUE METHOD & BEYOND

Lehoux, P., Poland, B., & Daudelin, G. (2006). Focus group research and 'the patient's view'. *Social Science & Medicine, 63*(8), 2091-2104.


see also:

- *Nowhere to Go: A Brokered Dialogue* (Fostering an Inclusive Shelter Environment for LGBTQ2S Youth)
- event listing: [https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/nowhere-to-go-a-brokered-dialogue-tickets-26950306091](https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/nowhere-to-go-a-brokered-dialogue-tickets-26950306091)
- Film Trailer: [https://vimeo.com/155203038/65df3c6f6a](https://vimeo.com/155203038/65df3c6f6a)


see also re: Structured Story-Dialogue Method


