

*There is no true word that is
not at the same time a praxis.*
—P Freire



*There is neither a first word
nor a last word.*
—M M Bakhtin

Sociology/Rural Sociology 945

SEMINAR—RURAL SOCIOLOGY: DIALOGUE, DIALOGICS, AND DEMOCRACY

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Spring, 2004
M/W 2:30-3:45, 38 Ag Hall

A growing number of scholars are becoming impatient with the academic battles of modernist versus postmodernist, realist versus constructionist, materialist versus idealist, expert knowledge versus local knowledge, top versus bottom, economy versus polity. This seminar will explore the growing interest in what a more *dialogic* sociology might look like, and whether it might help us make these debates less oppositional and more creative.

Dialogics has been much discussed in the humanities over the past decade, but is only just now starting to enter discussions in the social sciences. Much of the interest has come from an engagement with the writings of the Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, and ideas such as unfinalizability, answerability (or what I like to call “response ability”), critique, heteroglossia, chronotopes, the carnivalesque, and the basic analytic distinction between dialogue and monologue. New theories of culture, categories, power, the self, feminism, everyday life, resistance, communication, social change, social movements, education, participation, democracy, and more are emerging from this growing body of work.

In this seminar, we will explore not only the work of Bakhtin, but we will widen the discussion with an engagement with some complementary strands of social thought, most importantly the dialogics of Paulo Freire, Martin Buber, and feminism, as well as the renewed interest in pragmatism. We will do so at three different levels (corresponding to the three elements of the seminar’s “3-D” title):

- *social practice* (the dialogue part)—dialogue, knowledge, identity, gender, response ability, everyday life, power, and the problem of monologue
- *epistemology* (the dialogics part)—the dialogics of categories, unfinalizability, and resolving the realism and constructionism
- *political theory* (the democracy part)—participation, social change, dialogue and conflict, isodemocracy, monologue and hegemony, critique

Watch for an announcement in early December of a planning session for those interested in the course, so we can shape the syllabus to best fit the interests of those who want to participate.