

## COMM:4176/036:176 ADVANCED RELATIONAL THEORY [FALL 2013] RELATIONAL RHETORICS AND EPISTEMOLOGIES

**Instructor: Steve Duck, Daniel and Amy Starch Distinguished Research Chair**

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Office hours: Tuesday 11.00-12.30 (151-BCSB) Thursday 11.00-12.30 (164-EPB) You can sign up outside my office, take pot luck, or make another arrangement

**Class meets:** 9.30-10.45 Tu and Th in E238AJB

Department Office is 105-BCSB; Chair: Walid Afifi ([walid-afifi@uiowa.edu](mailto:walid-afifi@uiowa.edu)) 335-0580

For each semester hour credit in this course, students should expect to spend two hours per week preparing for class sessions (This is a three-credit-hour course, and so standard out-of-class preparation per week is six hours).

### COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course is based on the premise that relationships are far more than emotional attachments or bonds. They are not merely happy, emotionally satisfying elements of our lives but they significantly shape our experiences of the world and contribute to our senses of identity, our outlook on life, and even the way in which we think about experiences and life in general. The course deals with such questions as “How do people know their world?”, “How much of what we know is individual knowledge and how much comes from groups and our personal relationships to other people?” and “How does membership of relationships structure our experience, affect our ranges of knowledge, and organize our daily lives?”.

The course introduces a variety of communicative situations by means of which individuals establish, reconstitute, and demonstrate their membership of communities and relationships. However, the course will develop the idea that these relational activities serve **epistemic** functions, which is to say that they construct, constrain, or facilitate means through which a person knows and experiences the world. Relationships are more than satisfying reliable alliances with others; rather they are communicative loci where the person's knowledge of life is shaped, formed, and interpreted. Thus relationships are both an influence on our ways of thinking and also are places where we sculpt our identity and learn or modify our worth to others.

### Course Objectives:

- (1) To gain basic knowledge of advanced theoretical concepts in relational communication research, in relation to epistemic and rhetorical functions of relational communication.
- (2) To develop the ability to analyze a variety of relational theories through application of relevant research concepts and everyday life examples.
- (3) To develop an understanding of the role of relationships in the broader activities of communication in a variety of settings.

### Readings:

Duck, S. W. (2011) *Rethinking Relationships* SAGE Inc: Thousand Oaks, CA. [ISBN 978-1-4129-5876-9] This has been ordered from the Iowa Hawk Shop (University Book Store.).

Occasional readings from ICON.

For advanced enthusiasts a number of other original sources may also prove useful or interesting but are not required:

Davis, M. S. (1983). *SMUT: Erotic reality/obscene ideology*. Chicago: Univ of Chicago Press.

Stone, L. (1990) *The family, sex and marriage in England 1500-1800*. Penguin: Harmondsworth.

### **Course requirements and grading**

Course grades will be assigned on the basis of points accumulated throughout the semester. I do not curve the scores: what you earn is what you get. Standard point cutoffs will be used to determine final course grades: A = 100%-90%; B = 80% - 89.99%; C = 70% -79.99%; D = 60 % - 69.99%; F = 59.99% and below. I will use + and - grades for scores that are within 3 points near these top and bottom cutoff values. A maximum of 100 points is possible. I do not use rounding up. If you don't quite make it to 90% then you don't quite make it to A-. Point accumulation will be as follows:

<u>Essay assignments due Oct 3<sup>rd</sup> and Nov 21<sup>st</sup></u>	30 points each
<u>Class presentation due 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec-End of Semester</u>	20 points. [The rest of the class will award these Class presentation points]
<u>Short Note assignments due Sept 10<sup>th</sup> and Nov 7<sup>th</sup></u>	10 points each

### **Assignments:**

- 1. Essays:** Two essay assignments will be graded. The objective in these essays is to apply everyday material, whether it be readings, films, Youtube clips, newspaper cuttings, website references or other materials of your own, to a couple of theoretical questions listed later here. Because this is an upper level class your work will be judged in terms of its depth of analysis, application of theory, skill in selecting examples and so on – in short by criteria suitable for advanced work.
- 2. Class presentation:** You will work on a project, either alone or in a small group, and present the results to the class in a 30 min slot at the end of semester. Class members will grade the presentation for a) difficulty; b) quality of preparation; c) quality of presentation, d) use of time and equipment. The resulting points will be calculated into each person's final grade. In the case of group presentations, all members of each group will assess the contributions that their group members make to the final product and will give those comments to me privately. The results of this assessment will be used to weight the points awarded by the rest of the class when the presentation is delivered.
- 3. Short Note assignments:** Two short note assignments, described more fully below, will be graded and you will comment specifically about, first, positive and, second, negative relationships that you have, in light of course reading, lecture notes and your own thinking.

### **Reminders, warnings and advice: The Pompous Bit**

You are all responsible adults who do not need me to be your parent and chase you up to do your work. I am here to educate you (from the Latin, meaning “to draw out” [your potential]) and it is my job to help you to learn, if you wish to do so.

Attendance at lectures is expected. If you attend classes then you will learn more than if you don't. I do not formally check attendance because it is up to you, not me, whether you fulfill your responsibility to attend class or not. Class assignments will require you to include material covered *only* in lectures in class. I do not post lecture notes on the Web, so you can get the lecture material ONLY by coming to the lectures. This is a pedagogical choice appropriate for an advanced level course, because I want this to be an interactive course and one where lectures are responsive to issues raised by students at the time. This means, in effect, that if you were there you will know what was covered; if you weren't there, you won't. It's your choice and the consequences are yours.

Class participation is up to you and is expected. If you have questions or answers and want to have them discussed then please feel free to offer them. If you just want to sit there, that's fine with me, though I will learn your name and will ask people for their opinions about reading material or aspects of lectures during the classes. You won't get credit for participating and you won't get penalized for not participating, because voluntary participation is part of education, not

something extra that is worthy of extra reward. You participate, you learn; you don't, you don't. It's up to you.

**Deadlines are meaningful.** If you miss them then you will not score as well as if you meet them. In the real world, as you know, if you are repeatedly late with a report for your boss, you will be fired. Your boss will not care how much work you put into the project nor how good YOU think it is nor how much you need to be rewarded for it. If you are late, you are late. If it is no good, it is no good, however much you want to argue the point. Working hard is not a guarantee of a good grade but it is probably a necessary condition for one. That's life. If you want to get more out of the class by coming and talking through points with me then I will gladly give you that chance. Just ask.

I do not change grades because people come to tell me they worked hard, nor because they think that they really deserved a higher grade or that they need a higher grade to graduate. I grade what you give me, using my years of expertise as a teacher, and I grade it on quality and evidence of learning and relevance to the course, not on your effort alone nor on your need. That, again, is life in the real world of adulthood that you have already entered. Amen.

## **Outline of class meeting schedule**

### **Week 1**

#### **Tues. Aug 27<sup>th</sup> Course introduction: Relationships and communicating as ways of seeing or knowing**

We often treat "communication" as obvious, self-evident use of words or nonverbal signaling, and "relationships" as things we are "in". By contrast, this course focuses on the non-obvious forms of communication that occur in patterns of relating to other people (for example, the physical limits on the embodiment of relational forms, the effects of low power in a relationship upon the things that we are allowed to know). The ways in which we interact with others convey and communicate messages about many different aspects of life, all connected to our ways of creating and understanding the structures of social experience. Basic notions of such understandings and assumptions are introduced in this lecture.

#### **Thurs Aug 29<sup>th</sup> Reasons for relating: The seven provisions of relationships**

Traditional theories of the basis of relationships assume that relationships are based on attraction to others, similarity and personal and human needs. This lecture takes some of those understandings, based on Weiss' Provisions of Relationships, and exposes the underlying importance of communication in satisfying interpersonal needs but also in creating membership and hence a sense of identity that is central to our understanding of the world.

*Week's reading: Chapter One in RethRels [i.e. Rethinking Relationships]. Pp1-27*

Also read Morry et al (2013) on ICON

**Week 2****Tues 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept and Thurs 5<sup>th</sup> Sept Class will not meet**

Instead of class you should do research for your short assignments [due next week in class Sept 10<sup>th</sup>].

**FIRST SHORT NOTE ASSIGNMENT:**

- A. **List all your important positive relationships** (you decide what “important” means); classify them into groups that make sense to you {the relationships in each group seem to have something in common and that group is different from the other groups}; indicate, **for each group**, 3 reasons why you have relationships like that. **This assignment is harder than it looks, if you do it properly.**
- B. **Find a newspaper clipping**, magazine article or other media (song, TV, Ad, Youtube clip, ...) that shows how relationships shape our understanding of the world and our experiences in it. Present it beautifully for me to enjoy. I WILL look up and play all YouTube clips and URLs as part of grading.

You can also start work on your first essay assignment that is due in two weeks. By the end of this week you should have done the research necessary to start the frame of your assignment and have some ideas of what you will say in the essay.

**\*\*Read: VanderDrift (2012) on ICON****Week 3****Tues Sept 10<sup>th</sup> Personal and social orders: Language as representation and presentation**

Talk identifies and expresses preferences. Some things are preferred to others both by individuals and societies. Certain forms of relationships are not acceptable in a society and other are. In what ways does interaction with other people provoke or reinforce our own and society's preferences?

**HAND IN FIRST SHORT ASSIGNMENT****Thurs. Sept 12<sup>th</sup> Everyday rhetorics and relationships**

This lecture looks at the ways in which relationships create a symbolic form and structure through which we can perform certain sorts of social tasks, for example persuasion. We will also consider some ways in which relationships are offered to the outside world as symbolic and persuasive or ritual forms of reinforcement of social order (for example, we will examine the wedding ceremony and look at the rhetorical forms which it highlights and the symbolisms of social structures which it communicates).

*Week's reading: Chapter 2 in RethRels pp 29-43*

**Also read Duck, 1995 and LaRossa (1995) on ICON****Week 4****Tues Sep 17<sup>th</sup> Communication and relating**

A fundamental human tendency is to talk, and moreover to talk about oneself. People in close relationships evolve their own ways of talking about themselves in their relationship and often adopt communication patterns that are unique to their particular relationship. This lecture explores the ways in which relational communication channels our thoughts and hence our understanding of the outside world through our inner discourse.

*Reading: Chapters 2 and 3 in RethRels pp 44-79*

**Thurs Sep 19<sup>th</sup> Theories of relating and knowing: What has Personality got to do with it?**

Although we may perhaps understand “personality” as the way a person is, this course proposes that personality is a way in which people understand their circumstances and respond to that understanding. Taking the point of view of Attachment Theory (a theory that presumes that later patterns of relationships are based on the sort of relationship formed with early love figures) this lecture proposes the view that personality is a form of knowledge of other people. Hence personality influences our ways of dealing with others, communicating with them, and understanding social situations.

**Also read Simons on ICON**

**Week 5**

**Tues Sep 24<sup>th</sup> George Herbert Mead and the bodily materiality of relating**

George Herbert Mead emphasized the materiality of knowledge, that is to say the ways in which our physical and material circumstances influence our ways of understanding things. This class will explore the material side of relating and the ways in which, for example, forms of relationship differ between the young and the very old, the sick and the well, those who have easy access to one another and those living in Long-Distance Relationships. How (and why?) do these material differences affect our senses of self, of relationship, of our satisfaction with life, and our communication patterns?

*Reading: Chapter 4 in RethRel pp. 81-99*

**Thurs. Sep 26<sup>th</sup> Identity as a consequence of the physical and spatial materiality of life**

How is the ability to conduct relationships affected by physical aspects of self, such as Physical Attractiveness or physical illness (especially chronic illness or disability) and how does that material restraint affect a person’s styles of communication, sense of self, and ability to be a member of the social community? We will also briefly consider the relationship patterns of physically attractive people and consider the role of physical appearance in the accessibility of relationship forms and styles.

*Reading: Chapter 4 in RethRel pp99-116*

**Also read Allan on ICON**

**Week 6**

**Tues Oct 1<sup>st</sup> Long Distance Relationships**

The physical world involves space and distance. What are the differences between relationships conducted over short distances and those conducted over long distances? How does the material effect of space/distance influence our experience of relationships?

**Thurs Oct 3<sup>rd</sup> Materiality and Distance: Fun with cellphones**

This class will explore the way people feel about their cellphones and the manner in which the materiality of this technology affects and influences the ways in which people experience life and connectivity to other people.

**Read Knobloch on ICON**

**FIRST ESSAY ASSIGNMENT DUE AT THIS CLASS THOUGH YOU MAY SUBMIT ESSAYS EARLY.** Email submission is preferred, but your attachment file must be titled [yourname]176E1.doc {or docx} (eg SimoneDavis176E1.docx).

Essay topic: In what ways are relationships NOT about “Emotion”? Take any relationship that is important to you and – with reference to the material covered in the lectures and the readings that you have done – indicate ways in which you can reformulate or have reconsidered its meaning, performance or status. The more theory-based your answer the more points you will get. The number of pages you write is up to you but more than 7 is overenthusiastic.

### Week 7

#### **Tues Oct 8<sup>th</sup> Love and the double sexual standard as ways of knowing**

It is all too easy and simple to see love as an emotion that we just feel the way it is, but in fact love is experienced in some different ways by men and by women, indicating that even this is a relational way of knowing. This lecture will explore those things and consider also the existence of sexual double standards as ways of knowing and being in the world. Some recent work on “hook-ups” will also be considered.

#### **Thurs. Oct 10<sup>th</sup> Sense and sexuality: The relationship between sexual activity and knowledge of the world**

Curiously, society chooses to regulate the public enactment of sexual behaviors. The reasoning often offered for this is that it would break down the structure of society if such regulation were not carried out. This class will explore the relationship between “private behaviors” and “public structure”, examining the ways in which sexual behavior is represented as a way of knowing the world and therefore as something in which society at large has an interest.

*Week’s reading: RethRel Chapter 5*

**Also read Babin on ICON**

### Week 8

#### **Tues Oct 15<sup>th</sup> Use of symbols and signs of relating**

This lecture will pick up on some of the themes that have been introduced by Mead and take us into the realm of symbolism with a look at some of the communicative forms of relationship such as symbols of connectedness, “tie-signs” (e.g., wedding bands), patterns of communication that suggest competing loyalties in relationships, and the redistribution of time during the building up of new relationships.

#### **Thurs Oct 17<sup>th</sup> Wealth, place and the structure of social experience**

The notion that close relationships are private enclaves away from the sight of others has already been challenged earlier in the semester, but the notions that relationships should be “intimate” and that they are based on privacy are also relatively modern. Until only some 200 years ago, people conducted all of their lives in the gaze of other folks and had virtually no privacy, as we understand the term today. Furthermore, they often believed that relationships were based on loyalty rather than liking. Also, poverty changes one’s access to places for conducting relationships, which necessarily occur in more public and open places, since one lacks the resources to seclude oneself in a big mansion or private grounds. This class will consider the restrictions on communication that are imposed by access to “place”.

*Week’s reading RelReth ch 6 pp 145-160*

**Also read Allan & Gerstner on ICON**

**Week 9****Tues. Oct 22<sup>nd</sup> Ritual and symbolic gifts in relationships**

Many behaviors and forms of communication in relationships are based on the celebration of the relationship itself. This class will examine the importance of family rituals and rituals of gift giving in the maintenance and structuring of relationships. The role of religious forms in representing relational forms is also considered (for example the Tudor belief that the family was a microcosm of the order of the World's relationship to God).

**Reading: Reth Rel Ch 6 pp 161-170**

**Thurs Oct 24<sup>th</sup> Language, power, inclusion and exclusion**

We are going to look at relationships of power, not just in terms of how they are executed but also in terms of the implications for knowledge. Relationships of power affect not only how you talk with others but how you feel about them, what you get to know and what you are permitted to do or know. Included in this class are slavery and "performance" of masculine and feminine, as done in particular physical settings. But we will go wider than that and explore some of your own experiences.

**Reading: Informal power on ICON**

**Week 10****Tues. Oct 29<sup>th</sup> Relational Rhetorical Terms (RRTs) and persuasion/ education/ knowledge acquisition**

In some communication the "who" is as important as the "what". Our relationships to specific other people structure our reactions to and performance of various social tasks. For example we are more likely to be persuaded by a friend than by a stranger to do something inconvenient. Also the fear of being gossiped about is a persuasive social experience and one that moderates behaviors. How do relationships communicate a sense of the propriety of certain behaviors and why?

**Thurs Oct 31<sup>st</sup> Stories as symbols: The narrative and the epistemic in stories of breakdown**

Most couples have a story about the way in which they met, and the form of those stories itself communicates to other people the key elements of their relationship as well as the basis for that relationship (love, friendship, support, common fate, and many other "reasons"). When people tell stories about their relationship they are also communicating something about the nature of the relationship and its structure. During the reporting of the breakdown of a relationship, people restructure their narratives in order to communicate something about the reasons for the breakdown and their sense of loss. We will look at these complex, but interestingly informative, issues.

**Week's reading: Reth Rel Ch 7 also check out the Information Sources diagram in ICON and think about the ways in which information takes some of its importance or relevance from the source.**

**SECOND NOTE ASSIGNMENTS [DUE TO BE HANDED IN AT CLASS NEXT WEEK]****SECOND SHORT NOTE ASSIGNMENT:**

- a. **List all your important negative relationships** (you decide what "important" means and what is negative about them); classify them into groups that make sense to you {the relationships in each group seem to have something in common and that group is different from the other groups}; indicate for each group 3 reasons why you have

relationships like that.

- b. **Find a newspaper clipping**, magazine article or other media (song, TV, Ad, Youtube clip, ...) that shows how negativity in relationships shapes our understanding of the world and experience in it. Taylor Swift is often picked for this assignment; she is good but there are other singers.

### Week 11

#### Tuesday Nov 5<sup>th</sup> Group preparation

Groups should meet for the class time in order to plan their presentations and begin work on these. **I will be in the regular lecture room in case anyone needs to consult about their plans.**

#### Thursday Nov 7<sup>th</sup> Talking and maintenance

We maintain relationships in all sorts of ways, some ritual (“We always call each other at noon”) and some unconscious (routines of daily life can structure our behavior). Even politeness is both a relationship and a way of knowing (... one’s place, for example). We will look at the ways in which maintenance of relationships is a manner of conduct and simultaneously a way of understanding the world.

Reading RethRel Ch 8 also look at the triangulation diagram on ICON.

### **HAND IN SECOND SHORT ASSIGNMENTS**

### Week 12

#### Tues Nov 12<sup>th</sup> Talking about life: Social media, Intermedia, Internet and TV

In this (post) modern age, one of the omnipresent influences on life is TV and other media/small media and technology as relationship boundary smudgers. Programming on TV can affect our relational lives in a number of ways: for one thing TV presents us with examples of the ways in which relationships can be conducted; for another, the scheduling of TV programs can affect our social life (“Not tonight, Josephine, I am going to watch my favorite TV show”); for another the shared experience of watching TV together can bring people together; finally the discussion of (and reference to) TV programs forms a large part of our social activity and we are expected to know things about TV programs as we move about the world. We’ll talk about the influences of TV and other media on relationships and vice versa.

#### Thurs. Nov 14<sup>th</sup> Involuntary relationships at work and home: The symbolic strength of weak ties

Not all relationships are with people with whom we choose to associate: indeed in many cases we have little or no choice but to interact with them whether we wish to or no (teachers and classmates, In-laws, friends of friends, neighbors, for example). At more extreme locations are such relationships as those between prisoners and guards. This lecture will explore the implications of such relationships and will examine ways in which these relationships are regulated informally and as ways of enacting knowledge.

READING: Types of Networks Chapter on ICON. This is a significantly harder chapter than the ones you have read so far and contains some detailed methodological discussion.

**REMEMBER THAT YOUR SECOND ESSAY ASSIGNMENT IS DUE NEXT WEEK**

**Week 13****Tues Nov 19<sup>th</sup> Interconnectedness and embedding**

We have already seen that we live our lives not only in dyadic pairings but also as members of larger networks of association. Such networks can be supportive in times of need and are resources for advice and guidance, but also impose demands on us to respond to others' needs. In these cases the link between the epistemic (how we know the world or think about particular issues) and our membership of personal relationship is quite direct: our associations influence our beliefs.

*Reading: Interconnectedness and rules on ICON*

**Thurs Nov 21<sup>st</sup> Membership and membering: Relational contracts in business [and relationships]**

The corporate world, into which many of you will depart in the future, has a growing interest in the forms of relationships. Some companies are trying extra-hard to establish "friendly" relationships with customers and some are going even further to try and treat customers as friends. We will look at some of the research on these issues and consider how the circumstances of consumption communicate something about the brand and the product to would-be consumers.

*Reading: Word of Mouth [WOM] on ICON*

**Second Essay assignment due at Nov 15<sup>th</sup> class: Email submissions REQUIRED and your attachment file must be titled [yourname]176E2.doc {or docx} (eg SimoneDavis176E2.docx.**

**Essay topic:** How do material circumstances and communication within material constraints influence relational processes? The more theory-based your answer the more points you will get. The number of pages you write is up to you but more than 7 is overenthusiastic.

**Week 14****THANKSGIVING. NO CLASSES****Weeks 15 -16****Tues Dec 3<sup>rd</sup> through End of Semester Presentations by class members**

**Presentation assignments:** Present a talk that relates this course to some other area in which you have an interest. For example (but do not feel restricted to this list of ideas) how would you now reconceptualize relationships in business organizations? What relationships are there between different companies in business or between businesses and their clients or potential clients? How should social workers rethink issues of child abuse or family relationships? What are the Public Relations implications of this course? How should teachers modify their work on the basis of this course? What can organizational consultants take from this course?

## STUDENTS' RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

*The following policies are required by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences to be included here*

### **Administrative Home**

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall, or see the CLAS Academic Policies Handbook at <http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook>.

### **Electronic Communication**

University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu). Faculty and students should use this account for correspondences ([Operations Manual, III.15.2](#), k.11).

### **Accommodations for Disabilities**

A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet privately with the course instructor to make particular arrangements. See [www.uiowa.edu/~sds/](http://www.uiowa.edu/~sds/) for more information.

### **Academic Honesty**

All CLAS students have, in essence, agreed to the College's [Code of Academic Honesty](#): "I pledge to do my own academic work and to excel to the best of my abilities, upholding the [IOWA Challenge](#). I promise not to lie about my academic work, to cheat, or to steal the words or ideas of others; nor will I help fellow students to violate the Code of Academic Honesty." Any student committing academic misconduct is reported to the College and placed on disciplinary probation or may be suspended or expelled ([CLAS Academic Policies Handbook](#)).

### **CLAS Final Examination Policies**

The final examination schedule for each class is announced around the fifth week of the semester by the Registrar. Final exams are offered only during the official final examination period. **No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes.** All students should plan on being at the UI through the final examination period. Once the Registrar has announced the dates and times of each final exam, the complete schedule will be published on the Registrar's web site.

### **Making a Suggestion or a Complaint**

Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit with the instructor (and the course supervisor), and then with the departmental DEO. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident ([CLAS Academic Policies Handbook](#)).

### **Understanding Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community have a responsibility to uphold this mission and to contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment should be reported immediately. See the UI [Comprehensive Guide on Sexual Harassment](#) for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy.

### **Reacting Safely to Severe Weather**

In severe weather, class members should seek appropriate shelter immediately, leaving the classroom if necessary. The class will continue if possible when the event is over. For more information on Hawk Alert and the siren warning system, visit the [Department of Public Safety website](#).

### **Group project/class presentation**

Your final research project may be collaborative. Each student in a collaborating group is expected to complete a similar amount of work and to contribute equally to the final project/presentation. Each student will complete a self-evaluation and a group evaluation, describing this equality or the lack of it during the group's work. For more information, see the self-evaluation form for the project. Students who misrepresent themselves as equal partners in this collaborative project but who are actually letting others do the bulk of the work will be reported to the College for academic dishonesty. If you have questions, it is your responsibility to ask them. Collaboration on other coursework (essays, short assignments) is not allowed and counts as plagiarism.