

# Syllabus

## **CRCRTH 618: Creative Thinking, Collaboration, and Organizational Change**

**Summer 2015 hybrid format (Face-to-face students: register for class #2316; distance students register for class # 2317)**

**July 17 – August 1, 2015, 3 Fridays and Saturdays from 9:00am-4:15pm**

**UMass Boston, Wheatley Hall 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Room W02-157**

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Office/phone call hours: contact the instructor for an appointment

## Key Reference Links

- Course wiki (starting point for all course material): <http://crcrth618su.wikispaces.umb.edu/>
- Summer 2015 academic calendar for online courses/College of Advancing and Professional Studies: <https://www.umb.edu/academics/caps/credit/summer/calendar>

## Course Format

Hybrid format, with on-campus class meetings with students at a distance joining all meetings via synchronous video conference. The course wiki is the central location for primary materials and links to all other resources used in the course.

## Catalog Description

Through interactive, experiential sessions and structured assignments, students learn critical and creative approaches to working in organizations. Skills addressed include: communication and team-building; facilitation of participation and collaboration in groups; promotion of learning from a diversity of perspectives; problem-finding and solving; and reflective practice. Students apply these skills to situations that arise in business, schools, social change groups, and other organizations with a view to taking initiative and generating constructive change.

## Course Overview:

This course is about exploring the relationships between creative thinking, collaboration, and organizational change and finding insight into the connection between theories about these relationships and the realities of how organizations, teams, and communities work (or don't work) in practice. This course, within the Critical and Creative Thinking program, supports an interdisciplinary perspective, where we can draw upon diverse interests, backgrounds, and types of organizational settings (schools, businesses, government and nonprofit agencies, social organizations, families, etc.).

Further, we give attention not only to improving organizations but also seek to expand our understanding of how individual thinking relates to collaboration and organizational work. Through a number of activities, interactions, and readings, the course provides a framework for students to build a body of knowledge that bridges theory and practice and provides tools and strategies around organization change in their own settings.

## Preparation Assumed for this Course, and General Expectations

This course has no prerequisites. No specific preparation is required for this course, although students will hopefully have developed some perspective around collaboration and creating change in organizational settings. The course recognizes the growth of possibilities and challenges of a digital age and allows room for exploration organizational change of collaborators in both physical and virtual space. Students may enter the course with some ongoing professional issue or organizational challenge in mind that they hope to address, but such an issue need not be well-defined by the time the course starts.

Because of the condensed format of the summer course, some readings may be assigned to be completed in advance of the first workshop. Notice of any such readings will be indicated to registered students by email no less than two weeks in advance of the first meeting (see required texts below).

Students will be supplied additional information by email before the start of the course to confirm any updates, such as use of technical systems. Generally, students should know their umb.edu email address and password and be prepared to use these to sign in to university-supported systems. All registered students, including non-degree students, are provided with a university email address. Unless otherwise informed, students are expected to check their umb.edu email account for messages once the course actually begins. Students may have their umb.edu account set up to automatically forward messages to a personal email address that they use more regularly, if they prefer, but ongoing communications from the instructor will typically be sent only to the umb.edu address.

Students are expected to meet all standards specified in the Student Code of Conduct, available here: [http://www.umb.edu/life\\_on\\_campus/policies/community/code](http://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/policies/community/code)

## Course Learning Objectives

At the end of this course, students will have:

1. Assembled a set of tools and skills they can apply in their schools, organizations, and other workplaces for communication and team-building; facilitation of participation and collaboration in groups; using systems thinking to address complex organizational dynamics; and developing as leaders around problem-finding and solving and reflective practice.
2. Mapped out a plan for practice that adopts and adapts the tools and skills in specific situations, and to evaluate the outcomes in support of a learning organization.
3. Experienced interactions and exercises that stimulate them to carry out their plan and, more generally, to keep learning about tools and skills for creative thinking, collaboration, and organizational change.

## Required Texts and Materials

1. Senge, P. M. (1994). *The Fifth discipline fieldbook: Strategies and tools for building a learning organization*. New York: Currency, Doubleday. (ISBN-10: 0385472560, ISBN-13: 978-0385472562). Used copies are often available inexpensively from online booksellers.
2. West, M. A., & Work Foundation. (2012). *Effective teamwork: Practical lessons from organizational research*. Third Edition. Chichester, West Sussex: BPS Blackwell. (ISBN-10: 0470974974, ISBN-13: 978-0470974971). Recommended: Available free in ebook format from the UMass Boston library through the WorldCat database for students logging in with their university account: <http://umassboston.worldcat.org/title/effective-teamwork-practical-lessons-from-organizational-research/oclc/778436281>
3. microphone + webcam for students participating from a distance (a headset-microphone and USB video camera, or a laptop with built-in mic. and webcam, for example)
4. students attending the meetings face-to-face are strongly encouraged to bring their own laptops or make arrangements with the instructor to have access to borrowed laptops on campus (because of the hybrid format, some activities work best when everyone has access to certain online materials during the class meetings)

## General Course Logistics and Schedule

Course meetings happen on 3 consecutive Fridays and Saturdays from 9:00am – 4:15pm EDT. Each meeting day will include a 1-hour break for lunch as well as multiple short breaks. Students are expected to attend all days of the workshop; not attending on any given day amounts to missing a substantial amount of material and cannot be easily made up.

All times referenced in course materials and by the instructor should be regarded as Eastern time zone if not otherwise noted.

## Assessment & Requirements

Each session of this course takes the form of an interactive, experiential workshop, using worksheets designed to be adapted to your specific work situations. You are expected to:

1. Attend all the hours of the six total days of the class meetings and participate actively in the exercises and hands-on activities in which you practice with various ideas and tools and adapt them to your own work situations. This includes having completed the participatory activities during the each workshop (see summary below) and having completed assigned readings, worksheets, or other homework assignments in preparation of the current workshop. Readings typically originate both from the required texts and from options of articles provided. (**36** total points = 6 days x 6 points each).
2. Process the experience of the workshops through two kinds of writing done after each one:
  - a. Submit two blog posts after each workshop within the 6 days following that workshop. These posts help contribute to building a community of learning and support during the course. In them you explain the thoughts that have been stimulated for you by the

- readings and their relationship to the workshops. It is not sufficient to send a reference to an article or to just quote the article. (12 total points = 6 posts x 2 points each)
- b. Write 500-word Reflection Papers after each workshop. Guidelines for these papers will be distributed during the workshop, but the basic idea is to integrate your personal reflections on the experiences of the workshop with the insights of relevant articles and chapters you are reading. Due by the Friday following each workshop. (18 total points = 3 workshop papers x 6 points).
3. Develop a Plan for Practice (2400-3000 words) demonstrating how and when you plan to put into practice the skills and tools from all 3 workshops of the course in your professional or community situation. The plan will include a summary of theoretical considerations most relevant to your particular situation, a description of what practices you will implement and thoughtful rationale to support your choices, and a proposal for how you will evaluate the outcome so you can systematically continue to learn from experience and improve your capacity to facilitate organizational change. Examples will be given of previous students' work. By the end of the workshops, you will be given additional guidelines and resources to assist you in developing your Plan for Practice. Due about two weeks after the end of the last of the 3 workshops – specific date to be confirmed during class. (34 points) [For Critical and Creative Thinking students, this assignment is recommended for inclusion in your Reflective Practice and Metacognitive Portfolio (see <http://ctrpp.wikispaces.umb.edu/>)].
  4. Complete the formal course evaluation.

A = 94+, A- = 88-93, B+ =82-87, B = 76-81, B- =70-75, C+ = 64-69, C = 58-63

## Workshop Overviews

### **Workshop 1 (July 17-18): Creative Thinking and Collaboration in Support of High-Performing Teams**

This workshop provides students with a chance to examine and reflect upon research around the principles and best practices that define high-performing teams, determining situations where a team approach, and moving groups in directions that help them to collaborate more effectively and work to embody those principles and practices. Through mindful attention to issues such as status in teams, communication styles, and recognizing how diverse individual strengths interact, the workshop provides a basis for thinking about how to help teams both to evaluate their performance and respond to these evaluations. Further, students will consider how to reflect upon and approach their own participation in teams. Through this reflection, they will establish creative approaches to developing as strong contributors to teams.

### **Workshop 2 (July 24-25): Facilitation of Participation in Group Processes**

This workshop introduces students to a number of different techniques for facilitating group participation, such as using dialogue to address complex, challenging, or ambiguous issues, and adoption of tools that scaffold group members to participate more effectively and authentically, take ownership of collaborative processes, and address risks of group work. Themes include careful listening, forming and posing critical questions, responding to group needs, building upon the generative power of participatory processes, and establishing principles for intervening in group

processes (including situations where someone doesn't necessarily have a formally assigned "Facilitator" role but may still model good facilitation practice).

### **Workshop 3 (July 31- August 1): Individual Purpose and Change Within Organizations and Communities**

In the third workshop of the course, we build upon the first two workshops and extend our thinking by examining organizational change through the perspective of complex interrelationships in wider organizational systems and local and global communities. We will use activities that help students critically reflect on their individual purpose and vision and then develop a framework for themselves to build their personal mastery. Students then make connections between purpose and their ongoing participation in contexts such as professional communities of practice, large group processes, and organizational change at levels that operate around wider social issues. The workshop activities and readings will introduce research on how concepts such as systems thinking can inform our understanding of complex, unpredictable, large-scale change, and through this examination, we return to the idea of understanding how our own creative practice that helps us to navigate this change. This workshop helps students not only to work toward concrete plans for integrating tools into organizational work, but also to see themselves as lifelong learners within a global community and look ahead to the long-term process of change. Some attention will be given to developing the final Plan for Practice.

### **Course Evaluation**

At the end of the course, you will be asked to complete an anonymous, online course evaluation (<http://bit.ly/CCTEval>) as required by the Critical and Creative Thinking program. No personally identifiable information is captured from this evaluation; at the same time, the comments made benefit the program as a whole and wider university in continuing to develop the course, and so evaluation responses may be made viewable to faculty, administrators, and future prospective students so that all may learn from the experiences of past students. No responses will be released until final course grades have been posted.

### **Accommodation Statement**

Sections 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 offer guidelines for curriculum modifications and adaptations for students with documented disabilities. If applicable, students may obtain adaptation recommendations from the Ross Center (617-287-7430). The student must present these recommendations to each professor within a reasonable period, preferably by the end of the Drop/Add period.

### **Instructor Background and Experience**

Jeremy Szteiter is a graduate of Carnegie Mellon University (Cognitive Science) and University of Massachusetts Boston (Critical and Creative Thinking) and now serves as the Assistant Director of the graduate program in Critical and Creative Thinking at UMass Boston. His work has centered on program and organizational development, particularly in adult education in community-based human services and has involved managing, developing, and teaching programs to lifelong learners, with an emphasis on a learning process that involves the teaching of others what has been learned and

supporting the growth of individuals to become nonformal teachers of what they know. Jeremy's work draws upon principles and practices of social change pedagogy, technology-enhanced collaboration, instructional design, and participatory theater.

## Extended Bibliography

Some readings will be provided and drawn from the following list.

- Brookfield, S. (1986). *Understanding and facilitating adult learning: A comprehensive analysis of principles and effective practices*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Cockell, J., & McArthur-Blair, J. (2012). *Appreciative inquiry in higher education: A transformative force*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, a Wiley imprint.
- Elbow, P. (1981). *Writing with power: Techniques for mastering the writing process*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Holman, P., Devane, T., & Cady, S. (2007). *The change handbook: The definitive resource on today's best methods for engaging whole systems*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- Kaner, S. (2014). *Facilitator's guide to participatory decision-making*.
- Komives, S. R., & Wagner, W. (2012). *Leadership for a Better World: Understanding the Social Change Model of Leadership Development*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons.
- Lipmanowicz, H., & McCandless, K. (2014). *The surprising power of liberating structures: Simple rules to unleash a culture of innovation*.
- Macy, J., & Brown, M. Y. (1998). *Coming back to life: Practices to reconnect our lives, our world*. Gabriola Island, BC, Canada: New Society Publishers.
- McDaniel, R. R. J. (January 01, 1997). Strategic leadership: a view from quantum and chaos theories. *Health Care Management Review*, 22, 1, 21-37.
- Meadows, D. H., & Wright, D. (2008). *Thinking in systems: A primer*. White River Junction, Vt: Chelsea Green Pub.
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- Owen, H. (2008). *Open space technology: A user's guide*. San Francisco, Calif: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
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- Pollack, S., & Fusoni, M. (2005). *Moving beyond icebreakers: An innovative approach to group facilitation, learning, and action*. Boston: Center for Teen Empowerment.
- Richards, R. (January 01, 2001). Millennium as Opportunity: Chaos, Creativity, and Guilford's Structure of Intellect Model. *Creativity Research Journal*, 13, 249-265.
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- Schuman, S., & International Association of Facilitators. (2006). *Creating a culture of collaboration: The International Association of Facilitators handbook*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
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- Stroh, P. D. (December 01, 2000). Leveraging Change: The Power of Systems Thinking in Action. *Reflections: the Sol Journal*, 2, 2, 51-66.
- Taylor, P. (2012). *Taking yourself seriously: Processes of research and engagement*. S.I.: Pumping Station.
- Taylor, P. J., Fifield, S. J., & Young, C. C. (March 01, 2011). Cultivating Collaborators: Concepts and Questions Emerging Interactively from an Evolving, Interdisciplinary Workshop. *Science As Culture*, 20, 1, 89-105.
- Wenger, E., White, N., & Smith, J. D. (2009). *Digital Habitats: Stewarding Technology for Communities*.
- West, M. A. (2012). *Effective teamwork: Practical lessons from organizational research*. Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons.

## Syllabus Version

July 2015; This syllabus is subject to change and updated versions may be distributed at the beginning of the course term if adjustments become necessary, but the workload expectations noted above will not be increased after the course starts. Course curriculum based on the original design by Allyn Bradford and amendments by Jeremy Szteiter.