

Syllabus

CRCRTH 630: Criticism and Creativity in Literature and the Arts

Fall 2015, hybrid format (Class #6357 online, #6479 face-to-face);

Thursdays, 4:00-6:45pm ET, September 17 – December 17, 2015

Location: UMass Boston, Wheatley Hall 2nd Floor, Room W04-170

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

Course Format

Instructor-led, hybrid course, with weekly meetings at UMass Boston and through Google+ Hangout for online students (some weeks involve independent work with no scheduled meeting).

Catalog Description

Expression and evaluation, freedom and discipline, creative production and its critique-how do these dualities relate to visual and verbal imagination as they are demonstrated in literature and the arts? Specific strategies for eliciting imaginative work in these areas are demonstrated, as are specific strategies for evaluating imaginative works. Finally, this course focuses on ways of helping others (including children) to develop these skills and utilize these strategies effectively.

Notes about Preparation Assumed for this Course

This course has no formal prerequisites. Students may enter the course with some interest in developing the course topics toward a specific application in teaching, organizational work, or personal projects, but this need not be well-defined by the start of the course.

Course Overview

This course uses a project-based learning approach, based on the model of the Collaborative Exploration, to help students explore the development of creative work not only as an expression of the author's creativity, but also in terms of the process and product as sources of inspiration for creativity. Anyone interested in the use of literature or the arts as a basis for extending our thinking will find the course the most valuable and are encouraged to register, including educators, writers, organizational and community leaders, artists, scientists, and activists.

We will explore the research on creativity and criticism in literature and the arts as it informs how we enhance our disposition for self-directed lifelong learning and guide others in workplaces and schools toward creative and critical thinking. Our themes will include the concept of story in helping to scaffold teaching and learning, developing imagination around literature and artistic work that is created for, and by, both children and adults, and examine ways that literature and the arts form a basis for creatively examining and commenting on cultural and social issues.

Students in the course will develop a series of assignments that each capture key principles connecting literature and the arts to creative thinking with room to develop these according to one's professional and personal interests. The kinds of formats possible for projects include but are not limited to some of the following:

- Curriculum unit/lesson plans
- Evaluation of literature or artistic work
- Sketch/storyboard for children or teens (or a script for a theater production/screenplay)
- Multimedia or interactive literature
- Creativity or life design guide for children, teens, or adults
- Manifesto related to creative lifelong learning

Key questions to be explored may include some of the following:

- How does the reading/viewing of literature and the arts have a potential to inspire our own creative thinking (perhaps as it relates to broader areas of our work, education, and lives)? How can art and art criticism provide a basis for broader creativity of others, especially those who don't strongly identify as creative professionals, skilled artists, or other "creative types"?
- How does the creation of literature and the arts have a potential to inspire our greater potential in work or life? (Consider both our examination of the creative process of others, or our own creative process).
- How does the development of "story" engage storytellers and observers to see creative potential – to open up paths of development, learning, and purpose not previously acknowledged?
- How might the integration of literature and the arts provide a complementary source of creative thinking in teaching (especially in cases of subject matter where this is not obvious)? How might teachers and non-teachers alike support others (including young people) in the design of their lives, and lifelong learning?

Texts and Materials

Readings for the course will be provided, although students will need to identify one or more pieces of literature for use toward independent projects, to be discussed during the course.

Online students will also need a technology setup for online meetings (microphone and speakers/headphone, and webcam).

Key Links

Course wiki (central source for all course materials; requires login with your umb.edu account):

<http://crcrth630.wikispaces.umb.edu>

The link to join the Google+ Hangout session for online students will also be available here. The wiki will open to students by the first day of class.

Academic Calendar (for courses offered through Critical and Creative Thinking/College of Advancing and Professional Studies; please note registration/drop/withdraw deadlines):

<http://www.umb.edu/academics/caps/credit/fall/calendar>

Learning Objectives

By the end of the semester, you will have:

1. Identified key principles from theory and research that connect literature and/the arts to the personal creative process.
2. Produced a collection of writings and creative products that exemplify the key principles and established possibilities/plans for adapting these key principles to one's own personal, professional, or educational practices.
3. Developed an understanding of issues that arise in project-based learning and established tools for addressing ambiguous, ill-defined questions that come up in this approach.
4. Analyzed and assessed efforts to use literature and/or the arts to extend critical and creative thinking around issues of personal, professional, and social change.

Weekly Schedule

This course is a hybrid format, meaning that there are on-campus meetings where those enrolled in the online section participate via web conference (using Google+ Hangout) during each meeting. Our class time is Thursdays, 4:00-6:45 pm ET. Even so, this class uses a blended format, meaning that we don't actually meet every week. Our meeting schedule appears below; attendance at meetings is a required part of the course. During the other weeks when we do not meet, all work for that week is completed independently (materials and assignment instructions are provided on the course wiki). Meetings often involve activities that help us to both discuss the readings for that week and explore other aspects of the current topics, as well as short presentations or demonstrations.

Meetings are on Thursdays, 4:00-6:45pm on these days only:

- September 17
- September 24
- October 15
- October 29
- November 12
- December 3
- December 10

Week	Date (Thursdays, 4:00-6:45pm ET)	Summary of Topic/Themes
1	September 17 <i>Meeting 4:00-6:45pm ET</i>	Course Orientation, and Introduction Exploring Personal Relationship with Literature/Arts and Creativity Introduction to Theme 1: Everyone Can Be a Creative Thinker
2	September 24 <i>Meeting 4:00-6:45pm ET</i>	Key Questions around Criticism and Creativity
3	October 1 <i>NO MEETING – independent work only</i>	Observing and Creating in Literature and the Arts toward Creativity
4	October 8 <i>NO MEETING – independent work only</i>	Ways of Seeing
5	October 15 <i>Meeting 4:00-6:45pm ET</i>	Theme 1 Work-in-progress presentations Introduction to Theme 2: Stories to Scaffold Creative Learning
6	October 22 <i>NO MEETING – independent work only</i>	Stories, Metaphors, and Identity
7	October 29 <i>Meeting 4:00-6:45pm ET</i>	Mid-semester assessment Understanding Stories and Complexity, Diagramming/Mapping
8	November 5 <i>NO MEETING – independent work only</i>	Stories, Problem-finding, and Problem-solving
9	November 12 <i>Meeting 4:00-6:45pm ET</i>	Theme 2 Work-in-progress presentations Introduction to Theme 3: Designing for Life
10	November 19 <i>NO MEETING – independent work only</i>	Literature and Arts as Preparation/Imagining Life
11	November 26 <i>NO MEETING – independent work only</i>	Literature and Arts in Support of Creative Thinking and Social Change
12	December 3 <i>Meeting 4:00-6:45pm ET</i>	Preparation for final presentations Manifestos for Thinking
13	December 10 <i>Meeting 4:00-6:45pm ET</i>	Taking Stock, and Extending the Course, including Theme 3 Presentations

Assessment and Requirements

GRADED REQUIREMENTS:

Written assignments and presentations (60% of grade):

- **W1(a, b, c):** Written/Creative Products (3 items, 8 points each).
- **W2:** Work-in-progress presentation corresponding to Written/Creative Products (3 items, 2 points each).
- **W3(a, b):** Critical Reflection journal connecting literature/arts to personal experience with weekly entries (2 items, 8 points each: a. Mid-semester, b. End of Semester).

- **W4:** Reflective self-assessment (based on examination of overall progress made through journal entries) (1 item, 2 points)
- **W5:** Manifesto for Creative Living and Lifelong Learning (1 item, 12 points).

Total possible: 60 points

Certain written items may require revisions based on instructor feedback to be considered complete.

Participation Items (33% of grade):

- **P1:** Prepared class attendance, including completion of readings and contributions to discussions (during class meetings) or through discussion posts (weeks with no meeting) (15 points).
- **P2:** Completion of brief weekly homework assignments/exercises (8 points).
- **P3:** Peer commentaries (3 items, 2 points each).
- **P4:** Instructor conferences (2 items, 2 points each).
- **OPTIONAL P5:** Permission to share pieces of your work as examples for future generations of the course and preparation for sharing (up to 3 points).

Total possible: 33 points (+ 3 optional for P5)

Quality Contributions Rubric (7% of grade):

Beyond the points achieved for the written assignments and participation, additional points come from the following rubric based on the instructor’s own evaluation:

2 = did this quite well; met expectations consistently

1 = generally met the minimum expectation, but with some room for improvement

0 = not a particular strength of mine for this course

Quality Statement	0	1	2
1. Assignments submitted by the due date (no more than one written assignment missed, no more than two individual participation items missed, and where the combined total days late of all other submissions is ≤ 10)			
2. A critical reflection journal that shows thoughtful reflection on your actual experience and strong attention to the development of your own thinking as it builds over the course of the semester, where you seek to make your own reasoning clear and avoid broad or general statements that don’t include supporting explanations. Includes evolving the journal in response to feedback given on the mid-semester submission.			
3. Initiative taken in keeping up with the course, making up for missed sessions, and seeking out clarification around the course process and expectations in a timely way when you are not clear about something.			
4. Commitment to supporting others in the class; includes contributing to the class as a community of learners and offering substantive peer commentary (during class meetings or through written assignments) that stimulates thinking beyond superficial praise or reactions.			

5. Written/Creative Products that are well-structured, organized, and serves as a foundation for practical extensions beyond the course term.			
6. Written work is almost entirely free from mechanical, grammatical, formatting, and spelling errors, uses consistent academic standards, and is presented professionally.			
7. Participation in the course shows a constructive spirit toward helping us understand how to improve the running of a hybrid course, and participation includes some willingness to experiment with, and patience for, new or imperfect technologies as we engage in-person and virtually.			

GRADING

Overall points are converted to letter grades as follows: The minimum grade for A is 93 points, for A- is 87, for B+ is 80, for B is 74; for B- is 67; for C+ is 61; and for C is 50 points.

Reflective Practice Portfolio

This only applies to students in the Critical and Creative Thinking MA Program: The Critical Reflection Journal or Manifesto are appropriate and recommended for inclusion in the program's required Reflective Practice Portfolio. Other options might also be acceptable based on directions taken to fulfill your project.

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. Note that the question in the evaluation referring to a statement of synthesis about the course as a whole may be shared widely, so that the instructor, the program, and other parties may appreciate the course's strengths and weaknesses and contribute more effectively to continued development.

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.

Syllabus Version

September 2015; This syllabus is subject to change and updated versions may be distributed after the course begins, but the workload expectations will not be increased after the semester starts.