

CRCRTH 602 Creative Thinking

Hybrid format, Fall 2013

Note: lettered responses represent the same individual across the questions, so that all “a)” responses come from the same person, and so on.

1. Start with an evaluation of yourself What were your personal goals in taking this course? Did you achieve them? How would you have proceeded differently if you were doing this course again? What have been your major personal obstacles to learning more from this course?

- a) I didn't have that many goals. It's my first class with the program and didn't really know what to expect but I was excited about the material. N/A I don't really know. There was one point about two weeks ago where I started to fall a bit behind with readings and work on the CE's (during one of the overlaps). I guess I should have foreseen that coming. I don't feel there was that many obstacles, well sort of. The obstacles turned into part of the learning experience for me, being aware of them I felt was helping my creative thinking. Though there was a few more concrete things at the start, I had to get used to and setup with the wiki / google plus etc. But that wasn't really an obstacle, just something I had to do.
- b) I took this course out of curiosity. I was hoping to explore creative thinking and I think the course fulfilled its purpose (and degree requirement). If I was going to take this course again, I think more than anything I would have a lighter course schedule. I had a hard time keeping up with the semester. Perhaps if there were one fewer CE I would have had an easier time.
- c) My goal was an in-depth exploration of creativity -- either the study of it (the psychology, sociology, science of creativity) or how to become creative yourself. I didn't achieve this. If I had known how this class would go, I would have taken it elsewhere, or at least at a later semester. Would have been better if 602 was a separate class instead of combined with 630.

1. Self-evaluation (continued) What have you learned about what you have to do to make an online course stimulating and productive?

- a) It's really dependent on me and I was afraid of that with this being my first course. But I did well in that regard. Keeping up with readings, doing some extra readings and just being more aware to relevant radio programs conversations etc. Mind you this was all easier because the material was interesting.
- b) This course in particular, I took in the "in person" format.
- c) This course format did not work for me. Many of the very formulaic, very scripted exercises that Peter and Jeremy really seem to love, seem very constraining to me. I understand that other people have commented that they like them, but they don't work for me: freewriting, jigsaw dialog, plus-delta, dialog hour, and other exercises from their book "Taking Yourself Seriously." Different people learn in different ways and it would have been better if the course would allow for a variety of types of learners.

2. General Evaluation of course What was special about this course (+positive and/or -negative)? How did the course meet or not meet your expectations? In what ways do you think this course could be improved?

- a) I really liked that the instructors were learning as we went along, I felt that gave them an understanding of what the students were experiencing. Didn't have that many expectations. I think some sort of free-writing exercise or anything intended to free people's mind from the stresses of the day they are coming from would be valuable.
- b) I really liked how this course was a bit more open to interpretation. It made it challenging, but I was often pleased with the kind of challenge that it posed.
- c) The only good thing was that the 3 main assignments were left open enough that we had the freedom to work on whatever we wanted. They provided a prompt and allowed us to experiment with creative responses (not counting the last CE, which was a different kind of thing).

2. General evaluation (continued) In what ways did your attitude to doing the course change through the semester? How does it compare with other graduate courses? What would be your overall recommendation to prospective students?

- a) I got much more comfortable (and appreciative) of any ambiguity in the course. This is the first graduate course I've done. To absolutely take it.
- b) Go in to this course with an open mind, just like if you were to watch an independent film. This is my first and only "in person" graduate course to date, so it's difficult to say, but I enjoyed the class time immensely. The CE work from home was a bit more difficult, but only because I felt like I lacked direction at some points. (This could be improved by streamlining the wiki, perhaps?)
- c) I would not recommend this course. It was neither analytical/scientific study of creative thinking nor an experiential course in developing one's personal creativity. We spent a lot of time doing little exercises that kept everything at a superficial level. There was too much attention on trying to keep track of the rules, the syllabus, the wiki and all those kinds of requirements, and we could never get deeply into any topic (except our own CE projects, which we worked on at home). The readings were hardly discussed at all, except "The Girl With the Brown Crayon" which was Peter's personal favorite.

3. Evaluation in relation to the course description Read the course description/goals below. Comment on how well the goals expressed in the syllabus were met. Make general and specific suggestions about how these could be better met.

By the end of the semester, you will have:

- *a set of tools, experiences, and knowledge of publications, and an enhanced disposition to self-directed lifelong inquiry around creative thinking, i.e., creative problem solving in complex, real world situations;*
- *a set of tools, experiences, and knowledge of publications, and an enhanced disposition to self-directed lifelong inquiry for what is needed to teach or guide others re: the above in ways that might depart markedly from your previous schooling and experience.*

- *a critical understanding of collaborative explorations and allied approaches to project-based learning in relation to participants re-engaging with themselves as avid learners and inquirers.*
- a) I think all these goals were met and the life-long inquiry has proved to be most important for me.
 - b) I feel like the description is generally true. I enjoyed the PBL approach to the CEs, and I feel like they gave me a "critical understanding of collaborative explorations". I feel like I would have liked to have developed my "set of tools" a bit more, though. When talking about the manifesto, I was unsure if I was proceeding in a way that would please, so I was wading in uncertain waters for a while. I had a similar problem with CE2 about scaffolding, but I think that one I may have done less well on, because I had a hard time understanding what was needed of me.
 - c) The course didn't cover what the course description said it would, not even a little bit.

4. Synthetic statement (1 or 2 paragraphs) Building on your comments from Qs 1-3, compose a synthetic statement (1 or 2 paragraphs) evaluating this course. (Imagine readers who might not be willing to wade through all the answers to Qs 1-3, but are willing to read more than simply the numerical averages of standard course evaluations.) Please make comments that help the instructor develop the course in the future and that enable some third party appreciate the course's strengths and weaknesses. Among other things you might comment on the overall content and progression of classes, the session activities, and the use of mentors to support the learning in the course.

- a) This course will teach you teach yourself. It focuses around four projects designed to expand how you think about and apply creative thinking. It was great at inspiring people to peruse their own inquiries into varying aspects of creative thinking, in large part through the support provided by the instructors.
- b) I really enjoyed most parts of this course. I thought that the discussions were really phenomenal. I would have loved to have seen a less structured discussion model (i.e. people could jump in as long as the speaker allowed it), but I think it was generally well done. The wiki would have benefitted me a lot more if it were streamlined or simplified somehow, even if there was a "you need to read this and understand it right now!" page, I think it would have helped me. I definitely got lost in the wiki. The CEs were a great way to incorporate PBL in to this course. I enjoyed them, but they added a bit of a "fear" to the class, because they were so ambiguous by design. I was generally okay with this, but I struggled with CE2 specifically. I would love to see this class done with one fewer CE, so that more depth could be attained with each, and it wouldn't be such a scramble to get them in while they were all overlapping on to each other. That really threw me. Overall, I really enjoyed the class times we spent together, and I think if anything, I would make the CEs either more open (without consequence to the student if they passed in something completely unexpected, and maybe not what was being looked for) or clarify them more so that students knew what was being asked of them.
- c) Previous answers were not so long. Please just read them.

Using the scale below, overall, how would you evaluate this course? [1. Very Poor, 2. Poor, 3. Average, 4. Good, 5. Excellent]

(AVERAGE = 3.33)

- a) 5
- b) 4
- c) 1

Using the scale below, overall, how would you evaluate this instructor? [1. Very Poor, 2. Poor, 3. Average, 4. Good, 5. Excellent]

(AVERAGE = 3.33)

- a) 5
- b) 4
- c) 1

Course Evaluation, Critical and Creative Thinking, UMass Boston
CRCRTH 630 Criticism and Creativity in Literature and the Arts
Hybrid format, Fall 2013

Note: lettered responses represent the same individual across the questions, so that all “a)” responses come from the same person, and so on.

1. Start with an evaluation of yourself What were your personal goals in taking this course? Did you achieve them? How would you have proceeded differently if you were doing this course again? What have been your major personal obstacles to learning more from this course?

- a) In taking this course, I did not have very specific goals. I hoped to be able to look at literature in a different way, recognizing the creativity present in them or in the creation of. I think I did end up achieving that goal, but almost by accident. I lost sight of it throughout the course. I would have done more mapping of my thought processes and goals to keep me focused. A personal obstacle was finding the time to have that kind of focus.
- b) My major obstacle was the writing. English isn't my first language, I was able to communicate and express myself but had a hard time doing assignments. I thought the course would be more focused on how to be creative and how people do applied it to their lives. I'm happy how I re-discovered the mean of creativity.
- c) My personal goals in taking this course were to enhance my own creative thinking, become a more empathetic educator, and have a broader understanding of how and why a person thinks creatively. I think, for the most part, I was successful in enhancing my own abilities to think creatively. I learned to trust my judgement and instincts when pursuing lines of inquiry that I believe will translate into other areas of my life. In regard to having a broader understanding, I'm probably leaving with more questions than I started with because I have now read so many texts on the subject (still, probably not enough). If I was to retake this course--which, in a sense, I will do because 602 is a requirement-- I think I will do a better job preparing my thoughts prior to class, because sometimes I would find myself caught up in what other people were saying and trying to process their thoughts and would forget my own and not participate as much as I'd like (especially during the dialogue hours). My major obstacles in learning more from this course were time constraints and prioritizing my own time. I did not anticipate events that occurred in my personal life that would impede upon my work in the course and I could have better planned for that. Otherwise, as my first course I would say I got a lot out of it.

1. Self-evaluation (continued) What have you learned about what you have to do to make an online course stimulating and productive?

- a) I have learned that I need to find ways to hold myself more accountable for deadlines and work done outside of class. It feels different submitting something online after the fact than walking into a class empty handed.
- b) I believe the hybrid course is a good strategy to when it comes to online course. You got to participate to a class with real people. You can share ideas and concepts.

- c) In order to make an online course stimulating and productive, I need to engage myself completely. I need to focus primarily on the course itself and have no distractions around me. I also need to feel confident in my own work and willing to share my thoughts with other members of the class without fear of being judged.

2. General Evaluation of course What was special about this course (+positive and/or -negative)? How did the course meet or not meet your expectations? In what ways do you think this course could be improved?

- a) This course was special in that there was so much freedom. That was really disconcerting at first, trying to figure out what was expected of me for the course, but very conducive to creative thought!
- b) This course has a special meaning to me. It was beyond my expectations in many different ways. It could be improved with less CE, giving the chance to work deeply on maybe one theme.
- c) I loved having the ability to interact with the other members of the class through the Google hangout. I really liked the format of the G+ community and found it far more accessible than Blackboard/Wimba. I also got a lot out of the class discussions and the format of the CEs was really beneficial to me, personally. I thought the CEs were fantastic and really inspired me to do some interesting work that translated into my occupational life. I would take the information we'd talk about in class and work it into my lessons with my students which I loved. Honestly, I met with technical issues at time (not being able to hear someone, experiencing a lag) that detracted from my experience but overall I would do it again without reservation. In terms of improvements, I would have appreciated more discussion surrounding the texts we read and more time devoted to the logistics of what was expected of us for the CEs. The dialogue hours were fruitful but did not always pertain to specific feedback and input regarding our own work. However, I could have made more of an effort on my own part but was usually reluctant to do so. The dialogue hour was challenging for me.

2. General evaluation (continued) In what ways did your attitude to doing the course change through the semester? How does it compare with other graduate courses? What would be your overall recommendation to prospective students?

- a) I became more engaged and motivated for the course after the first few weeks when I felt more comfortable. I enjoyed it because I could alter the assignment to fit my interests. Being able to pursue what you find fascinating makes doing the work much easier!
- b) Take your time and take it seriously. My attitude was do not let my frustration stop me from my goals, from keep trying.
- c) Another student said this on the last day of class, but I completely agreed and had a similar experience: I started off thinking primarily of myself and my own relationship with creative thinking, but it gradually morphed into my role as a teacher, and then finally into thinking how I could help other people think creatively. I have only taken one other grad course so I really don't have much to compare it to; I really enjoyed both. My overall recommendation to prospective students would be to ask as many questions as possible and advocate for oneself.

3. Evaluation in relation to the course description Read the course description/goals below. Comment on how well the goals expressed in the syllabus were met. Make general and specific suggestions about how these could be better met.

By the end of the semester, you will have:

- *a set of tools, experiences, and knowledge of publications, and an enhanced disposition to self-directed lifelong inquiry around creativity in literature and/or the arts;*
- *a set of tools, experiences, and knowledge of publications, and an enhanced disposition to self-directed lifelong inquiry for what is needed to teach or guide others re: the above in ways that might depart markedly from your previous schooling and experience.*
- *a critical understanding of collaborative explorations and allied approaches to project-based learning in relation to participants re-engaging with themselves as avid learners and inquirers.*

- a) Revisiting the goals now, I can say how they were addressed and met throughout the course. While in the midst of participating, I feel that I become more focused on my own project than on the big picture. This worked for me - the goals were met - but I wasn't as intentional about meeting them as I may have been.
- b) To me the goals meet the syllabus. The CEs could be better explained in other to the student have an idea on what he/she would be working on.
- c) a set of tools, experiences, and knowledge of publications, and an enhanced disposition to self-directed lifelong inquiry around creativity in literature and/or the arts; I think this goal was met fairly well. I would have enjoyed an emphasis on creativity in the arts as well. a set of tools, experiences, and knowledge of publications, and an enhanced disposition to self-directed lifelong inquiry for what is needed to teach or guide others re: the above in ways that might depart markedly from your previous schooling and experience. Yes, completely, this course seemed extremely self-directed to me. It reminded me very much of my undergraduate experience. a critical understanding of collaborative explorations and allied approaches to project-based learning in relation to participants re-engaging with themselves as avid learners and inquirers. * Well met.

4. Synthetic statement (1 or 2 paragraphs) Building on your comments from Qs 1-3, compose a synthetic statement (1 or 2 paragraphs) evaluating this course. (Imagine readers who might not be willing to wade through all the answers to Qs 1-3, but are willing to read more than simply the numerical averages of standard course evaluations.) Please make comments that help the instructor develop the course in the future and that enable some third party appreciate the course's strengths and weaknesses. Among other things you might comment on the overall content and progression of classes, the session activities, and the use of mentors to support the learning in the course.

- a) This course is not one for a student who is prepared to listen to lectures and take an exam on the material. You will not be spoon fed information. You must go out and find it! If you are prepared to embrace this creative spirit, this course is for you! Each of the four collaborative explorations began with a topic, inspirational text, and leading questions. That is all you are given to go on. Any question that you can come up with that relates to the theme is yours to explore. The academic experience of

researching and synthesizing was very valuable, but maybe not as much as the personal experience. The work being done is meaningful to the individual - it is just the excuse you've been looking for to rededicate time to your creative self!

- b) Creative thinking is a course that will enhance your knowledge about creativity helping you keep your mind open to what is related to it. You will challenge yourself through this semester to become a better critical and creative thinker. You will be free to use your own experiences as examples in the class which make the environment in the classroom a whole new learning experience.
- c) This course was unlike any other I have ever taken before. I am very glad of that and will take the format and themes (the four Rs, jigsaw activities, plus delta) and apply it to my own work. I felt very inspired during my time in the class and really enjoyed thinking of new ideas and concepts. This course made me glad that I was accepted into this program and I liked how ambiguous it was in terms of content. The instructors were always thoughtful, kind, and insightful while the format allowed for me to engage with other members of the class on a personal level. The free-writing was also very helpful and I would urge the instructors to continue using that practice in their future courses.

Using the scale below, overall, how would you evaluate this course? [1. Very Poor, 2. Poor, 3. Average, 4. Good, 5. Excellent]

(AVERAGE = 4.67)

- a) 4
- b) 5
- c) 5

Using the scale below, overall, how would you evaluate this instructor? [1. Very Poor, 2. Poor, 3. Average, 4. Good, 5. Excellent]

(AVERAGE = 4.67)

- a) 4
- b) 5
- c) 5