

Summary Report - Aug 28, 2013

Survey: Anonymous end-of-semester evaluation of CrCrTh 694 hybrid, Spring 2013

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?

Count	Response
1	My personal goal for this course was to continue to engage in the process as a reflective practitioner and to more specifically continue to challenge myself in dialogue around problems and projects that I am currently working on.
1	I wanted to make a personal statement that combined a synthesis of what I have learned in the CCT program with my strengths and talents that I am not often able to spend time with. The choice to write a play allowed me to work in that direction. I believe I have come close. I am not entirely satisfied with the product, but I am encouraged with the growth and direction that I am been able to coalesce. If I were doing this course again I would have pushed myself toward a presentation narrative earlier in the semester. Also, I deliberately chose a project that was challenging, rather than one easily accomplished. I am satisfied with that decision but it presented more difficulty in the earlier conceptual stages. The personal obstacles I had to learning more in this course involved conflicting commitments on my time, some of which could not be reassigned to another time and involved being more creative with the time I had. These involved moving and accepting a job that involved a 3-4 hour commute daily. Had to be done, just took a lot of energy to figure out.
1	My goal in this course was to have the experience of tackling a large research project that summarized or culminated my work at UMass and in my work life. I absolutely met that goal, and also learned not only have to do large-scale research but that I have a "process" as a writer, that I care deeply about transformation within collaboration, and that CCT was really the perfect match for me. Unfortunately, some personal crises at the end of the semester prevented me from polishing my paper to the degree I wanted, but since I am quite a perfectionist, that may be fine. I think that I need to learn more about research, ultimately - and really, this was not enough time to do a true literature review to the extent that I wanted.
1	My goal was to culminate my master's with a capstone thesis. I also wanted to write a fully researched project. I achieved the goals of researching, writing, editing and creating a thesis. Major personal obstacle--sometimes wishing for more feedback on content without having to ask for it. Not fishing for compliments, but was trying to build confidence when should have just had it.

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

Count	Response
1	x
1	The dialogue process was a great way to ensure that our online classmates were included and their voices heard. I think a structured way to manage conversations so that everyone can have a say is very important.
1	I think it was beneficial for me to experience the course as a distant participant. Even though I chose to come in to class every week, the one week we all met online was helpful to me in understanding how the students who were participating from a distance experience the course. I think if there are any visual materials people can send to the students before the class this would be helpful. CCT has been good at creating a community face to face and I think I have seen it grow to include the students who are participating from a distance. Conventions have been established for communicating online so that the students who are not in the room know who is talking. In addition, people in the face to face classroom have become more aware of the online student's needs.
1	To make a hybrid course stimulating and productive I have to take initiative and reach out to others. I have to ignore the unintended exclusionary comments/actions of face to face students who do not understand how isolated and second class one can feel as online student with the little things. There is a big difference in online versus hybrid, onliners need better prepared for this transition and the potential barriers to feeling like part of the class.

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?

Count	Response
1	This course was really powerful for me, and I found that I learned much more than I expected to. I haven't even fully reflected on it all yet, because we are just wrapping it up now. Mostly, I feel grateful that I was engaged in a research course that engaged me in such a reflective process. I never thought of research as reflective, and yet the marrying of the two was perfect for me. I learned more about myself and about the process of writing through the reflective practices we engaged in (free-writing, thought mapping, etc). It engages us all in a deeper level of thinking about the projects we are working on. It was the perfect way to wrap up my work at UMass: intensely challenging, reflective, culminating, bringing me back to who I am as a professional and what I am most passionate about. It made my entire experience at UMass more meaningful. Suggestions for improvement: I think it was ultimately very difficult to pair 692 and 694, although it worked fine at the start. Peter did a good job knowing when we needed to work separately but I did note the times I felt some frustration because we were not moving forward "fast enough." I also would not have minded some variety in the dialogue process - Teryl's presentation suggested some great modifications!
1	The special piece of this course for me was the writer's workshop. I really felt it was supportive in many ways. Not only did it help me connect with the other students in the class, it also helped me reflect on successes and doubts that I was experiencing during the process. I can honestly say every night I left with an optimistic attitude regarding my project. The process provided the support I needed to boost my confidence and provide a reality check for the work I needed to complete. Honestly at first I was a little disappointed that we were sharing space with 692 students. However, I was pleasantly surprised how much the 692 students' participation in the writer's workshop supported my thinking as well.
1	The opportunity to partner with the others working on their capstones was quite valuable. By working on a final project it felt difficult to pare down my personal expectations for the work I was doing. Although I wanted to write a comedy, there were some definitely unfunny moments in my personal life and it was difficult to work through those with both the creative and research models.
1	The eventual and persistent work in this class did lead to a deeper community so the beginning of the class was not the same as the end. The special aspect of this course was the complementary ideas/work/encouragement we received from each other and instructor. It met expectations to get to the end product with a process that was not just to "get done" but was also enhancing and enriching learning. The basic improvement might be some efforts to talk about some things that might help both sides (online and face to face) become closer at the start of class--what are ways to connect and include everyone that the class itself chooses as solutions. Maybe have some alumni state how they've developed or gone on from this to create own WIP, buddy system etc. after CCT. Really would like ideas on how to do this, even if have to figure out--just to have some last bit of encouragement to take away.

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?

Count	Response
1	to be filled out later
1	x
1	This course is very different than my other courses. It isn't content-driven, but rather process-driven. It is ABOUT the process, and about WHO WE ARE as we engage in that process. I think that it would be fantastic to have a parallel to this course at the START of our work at UMass (CCT or LTET) that is reflective in this way, a sort of "where am I as I begin this" kind of course, so that when we get to the end, we have something to compare it to. I would recommend this class to every prospective student. I will admit that I encountered a good bit of frustration in other courses, feeling that they were too simple or that the professor was not requiring enough of us, that the content was not difficult enough... but engaging in this course helped me to pull of those courses together, see their value, and where I have come through the past 3 years. It really "made" my experience at UMass what it is.

- 1 My attitude became much more positive and hopeful as the relationships among peers improved. it was hard to have the 692 with us, yet it did allow us to motivate them and learn from them. I really appreciated some feedback that showed confidence in me by the instructor--that helped. Sometimes people think encouragers don't need encouragement, but it is much needed so the well doesn't run dry. 694 is hard to compare to other courses because it's structure is different and the condensed aspect of such a big project in a short time makes it intense. Overall recommendation to prospective students--start writing before you start and keep to the writing each day. Also, format the thesis early and do the little things (citations) as you go--don't let this go to the end. Finally, use the writing buddy sessions as much as possible--even if you think it is the blind leading the blind, you actually end up getting out of the wilderness together.

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. Course goals: Framework 1. By the end of the semester, the goal of the course is that you no longer need the input of an instructor or the structure of a course to initiate, plan, and carry through projects in your life involving research, writing, and outreach. You will have come to "take yourself seriously"--not in the sense of without humor, but in the sense of not relying on external directions to motivate or reward you. Such inner-directedness is described in the text by Palmer as "letting your life speak" or finding or acknowledging your vocation-but it is recognized that this goal may take more than one semester to achieve! On a more prosaic level, by the end of the semester, for each of the goals listed below, students will be able to identify a) things that reflect what you have achieved well related to this goal, and b) things you have struggled with/ need more help on/ want to work further on. The goals are divided into two sets: Framework 2. "My Project Product Shows That..." (based on the Phases of Research and Engagement) A. I can convey who I want to influence/affect concerning what (Subject, Audience, Purpose). B. I know what others have done before, either in the form of writing or action, that informs and connects with my project, and I know what others are doing now. C. I have teased out my vision, so as to expand my view of issues associated with the project, expose possible new directions, clarify direction/scope within the larger set of issues, and decide the most important direction. D. I have identified the premises and propositions that my project depends on, and can state counter-propositions. I have taken stock of the thinking and research I need to do to counter those counter-propositions or to revise my own propositions. E. I have clear objectives with respect to product, both written and practice, and process, including personal development as a reflective practitioner. I have arranged my work in a sequence (with realistic deadlines) to realize these objectives. F. I have gained direct information, models, and experience not readily available from other sources. G. I have clarified the overall progression or argument underlying my research and the written reports. H. My writing and other products Grab the attention of the readers/audience, Orient them, move them along in Steps, so they appreciate the Position I've led them to. I. I have facilitated new avenues of classroom, workplace, and public participation. J. To feed into my future learning and other work, I have taken stock of what has been working well and what needs changing. Framework 3. Developing as a Reflective Practitioner, Including Taking Initiatives in and Through Relationships (see also "Teaching/Learning for Reflective Practice") 1. I have integrated knowledge and perspectives from other courses into my own inquiry and engagement in social, educational, professional, or personal change. 2. I have also integrated into my own inquiry and engagement the processes, experiences, and struggles of previous courses. 3. I have developed efficient ways to organize my time, research materials, computer access, bibliographies, etc. 4. I have experimented with new tools and experiences, even if not every one became part of my toolkit as a learner, teacher/facilitator of others, and reflective practitioner. 5. I have paid attention to the emotional dimensions of undertaking my own project but have found ways to clear away distractions from other sources (present & past) and not get blocked, turning apparent obstacles into opportunities to move into unfamiliar or uncomfortable territory. 6. I have developed peer and other horizontal relationships. I have sought support and advice from peers, and have given

support and advice to them when asked for. 7. I have taken the lead, not dragged my feet, in dialogue with my advisor and other readers. I didn't wait for them to tell me how to solve an expository problem, what must be read and covered in a literature review, or what was meant by some comment I didn't understand. I didn't put off giving my writing to my advisor and other readers or avoid talking to them because I thought that they didn't see things the same way as I do. 8. I have revised seriously, which involved responding to the comments of others. I came to see this not as bowing down to the views of others, but taking them in and working them into my own reflective inquiry until I could convey more powerfully to others what I'm about (which may have changed as a result of the reflective inquiry). 9. I have inquired and negotiated about formal standards, but gone on to develop and internalize my own criteria for doing work--criteria other than jumping through hoops set by the professor so I get a good grade. 10. I have approached the course (and the program I am a student in) as works-in-progress, which means that, instead of harboring criticisms to submit after the fact, I have found opportunities to affirm what is working well and to suggest directions for further development.

Count	Response
1	to be filled out later
1	x
1	I think these goals were all met very well, despite their grand vision! I think that our writing group could have used more support - we struggled to meet, to get work together, etc. I really enjoyed working with them, but with busy lives and living far apart, some "push" would have been good there. I especially appreciate #9 just above: "I have.... gone on to to develop and internalize my own criteria for doing work - criteria other than jumping through hoops set by my profession so I get a good grade." I think that part of the reason that I worked so hard and achieved so much in this class is that the bar was not set low or high - it was set by ME, and therefore my project's quality was all of my own determining. I worked hard to meet my own standards and I appreciate that. Ultimately, yes, I think I am much better equipped to engage in process of research and writing without the guidance of a course - though I will miss this structured reflection time and the people in it!
1	The goals listed above were met in general and focused on giving us internal strength, motivation to see us through the project and beyond. The reflective practioner portion was a necessary component for Synthesis so that the thesis has meaning, has "us" in it.

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.

Count	Response
1	to be filled out later
1	x
1	The 694 Synthesis class is a culminative course that requires attention to personal and professional development expressed in a final project thesis to share as a contribution to the learning of others. The process of research, of peer dialogue and support as well as systematic structuring of ideas and goals is a fractal experience leading to this repetition in life practice. The strengths of the course include self directed learning, scaffolded thesis development in a logical progression and dynamic discussions that enhance the reflection of the changes happening throughout the class individually and as a group. The weakness at first might seem to be the fears and doubts of finishing or even of success, but these become challenges to embrace and work out through the written word and the discipline of believing in yourself as you find who you are and who you want to become.

- 1** This course leads students through a multi-step process toward developing research and writing skills. Carefully-crafted exercises in brainstorming, thinking clarification, developing arguments, clearing the space for creative practice, presenting to peers, and more, are implemented with the ultimate aim that you will embody these skills without the guidance of a teacher or class. This course aids the participants in the development of a final project that expresses their passion as students, professional, and people. Focused more on process than content, it will challenge you to step up and meet your own highest expectations.