Creative Process UARTS 250-4 credits  
Winter 2010

Coordinator: Stephen Rush, School of Music, Theatre and Dance

Professors:
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Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning (Room 1258)

Michael Gould  
Residential College and School of Music, Theatre and Dance (Room 1006)

Elona Van Gent  
School of Art and Design (Design Lab 1)

Herbert Winful  
College of Engineering (Room 1108)

Class Description:
This is a class where students are encouraged, in an interdisciplinary way, to explore their own creativity. Faculty with training in Architecture, Visual Arts, Music and Engineering will teach students their own approaches to creativity within their fields, and encourage students to find their own approaches (in and out of their current stated disciplines). Students will have short 2-week “workshops” with each faculty member, as well as work on a Final Project, either on their own, or in an interdisciplinary team of their own creation.

Structure:
The class of roughly 60 students will be divided randomly into sections of approximately 15 each. Specific randomness will be used. In other words, “music-oriented students” will not be herded into one section. “Poets” will not be herded into another. Students will be expected and encouraged to explore creativity without thinking about disciplinary boundaries.

The class meets on Fridays with the following schedule:
• 9-11 Lecture/Demonstrations with professors in Sound, Visual/3-D Art, Motion and Language. Professors will demonstrate, experiment and encourage creativity in their fields. This is a “hands-on experience” or workshop, not a dry lecture on the history of their craft.
• 11-11:30 Lunch (brown-bag, students will be encouraged to eat together, and form community).
• 11:30-12:00 Optional meditation session. Meditation will be discussed as a possible means for encouraging creativity. This will not be a “meditation technique class”. This will simply be students (and faculty) sitting in silence. No emphasis on God, TM, Centering Prayer, etc. will be given, but if a student or faculty member wants to approach it that way, it really makes no difference. No one will be pressured to come, and no credit will be given for this. (keep reading)
• **12-1 A Colloquium given by Stephen Rush**, the Co-ordinator and Director for the course, with all students attending. These lectures will attempt to pull together the students under one umbrella, looking at the wider issues surrounding creativity such as inspiration, fear, dysfunction, ego and “open-mindedness”. Readings will be extraordinarily varied, including the Tao Te Ching, Rilke’s Letters to a Young Poet, the Bhagavad Gita and the Four Vias of Meister Eckhardt.

• **1:00-3:00 Play/Exploration/Expansion time.** With tools and supplies provided by the class, students will explore creativity through various media. Words, visual image, sound and motion. These sessions will attempt to be as wide-open as possible, and students will be provided with ample materials (physical, psychological and creative) to “play”, inspired by the lecture/workshop from the morning session. Ideally the afternoon session is a continuation of the free-wheeling explorations from the morning session.

The Overall Structure for the Course could be illustrated thusly:

**Section 2:**

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Week 14 is Final Project Showing

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Outcomes and Grading:

Students will be evaluated based on attendance, class participation as exemplified by creative outcomes, and personal risk-taking. Students who are already “wild and wooly” will be encouraged to explore stillness, slowness and quietude. More internalized folk will be encouraged to push beyond their perceived external shells to explore different means of self-expression or creation. Faculty will need to “track” the students in this journey.

On a more concrete level, students will create 4 “mini-projects” at the beginning of the semester, as well as a final project and a journal. The mini-projects will each be 10% of the grade. The Final Project will be 40%, and the journal 20%. Students are expected to put an entry into their journals at least once a week.

Grading:
4 mini-projects @ 10% each
Journal @20%
Final Project @ 40%

The attendance policy will be strictly observed. Students may not come to the morning 9-11 session, then leave. Each student must come to each class, every Friday from 9-3. The lunch break is open (11-11:30), and the meditation time is optional (11:30-12:00), but students are encouraged to eat with each other at 11, and to meditate with each other at 11:30. Things can be learned and shared in these experiences that are completely different from the rest of the activities planned during the day. Attendance will be taken at the 9am and 1pm sessions. TWO absences are allowed (or one complete Friday) per semester.

All students will also create a final project and a journal.
The Journal will be a multi-media journal in the Course Tools Site, a kind of “Cyber Magic Box” that could include sound files, pictures of sculpture, book references, poems, random number generators, quotes, materials of any sort, even pets or plants on video! The use of a “thumbdrive” for collecting digital files to upload is encouraged. These are not simply a few paragraphs where one archives his/her “creative experiences”. These are objects that archive the actual materials used in the creative process. However, each student is expected to add to their journal once a week, at least.

The Final Project will remain deliberately undefined until after the Mid-term. However, during the first “plenary class” of the semester Professor Rush will distribute 60 (or one per student) ideas. The 60 Ideas are concepts, thoughts, project initiators that can be the focal point for each students’ final project. Students may trade ideas until the 9th week of class. At that point students must focus their final project on their “Idea”. Faculty will track the students’ progress on their Final Project throughout the last 5 weeks of class with an eye for:
• Critical Thinking (did a student “study up” on the idea? was research involved? is
this a clone of a previous idea?)
• Iteration (is this the first thing a student came up with and they “stuck to it”? Did they do 5 sketches? Edit? Delete?)
• Completion (is the idea fully realized? Does the piece do what the student [and to a lesser extent, faculty] hoped it would?)

The 9th “plenary class” (with Professor Rush) will focus on “concretizing a creative idea”. Students at this point will be asked to identify a direction that their final project will take, without predicting what it will look like, feel like, sound like, etc. An attempt to keep the project both open-ended and time-consuming will be made. **Students are encouraged to work in pairs (or even larger groups). This will neither help nor hinder one's grade.**
A showing of all the Final Projects will take place during Exam Week at a suitable location.