

## Critical & Creative Thinking Course #618

### Creativity, Collaboration and Organizational Change

Spring 2009

#### Syllabus/Table of Contents (Online & evolving during Course)

This **Syllabus/Table of Contents** is a stable space where basic course information, how-to guidance, and so forth will be maintained -- a reference place, so you don't have to search for the basics.

#### CCT 618 – Critical & Creative Thinking Course #618

#### **Creativity, Collaboration and Organizational Change: *Theories and Tools for Creating Collective Change in Organizations, Communities and the World***

This course explores the creation of change in organizations and other collective entities. We read, think and dialogue together as a learning community on important themes of creativity, collaboration and change. Meanwhile, as individuals we pursue personally relevant workplace or community projects, using those specific cases of change to refine and enrich our general conversations.

#### Required Books for CCT618 Spring 2009 Online Course

Creativity in Business by Michael Ray and Rochelle Myers, Doubleday, 1989, reissue edition, cover price \$14.95 but available on the web for much less

How to Make Collaboration Work: Powerful Ways to Build Consensus, Solve Problems, and Make Decisions by David Straus and Thomas Layton, Berrett-Koehler Pub, 2002, cover price \$14.95 but available for less

Heart of Change Field Guide: Tools and Tactics for Leading Change in your Organization by Dan S. Cohen, Harvard Business School Press, 2005, cover price \$24.95 but available for less.

Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations by Clay Shirky, The Penguin Press, 2008, cover price \$25.95 but available for less.

When making assignments or otherwise referring to these books, I'll use these shorthand expressions: Ray-Creativity, Strauss-Collaboration, Cohen-Change, and Shirky-Internet.

In addition, there will be more resources available online through the Cybrary.

## The Roles and Uses of Different Spaces in the Learning Center

The **Syllabus/Table of Contents** is a stable space where basic course information, how-to guidance, and so forth will be maintained.

The **Learning Circle** is our virtual classroom. It is here that we will discuss course content and issues as a group. It is our main go-to space as a group. When a new week begins and also during the week, you will first want to check the announcements on the home page but your second stop will usually be the Learning Circle to read, participate, etc. The Learning Circle has a "flat", not a hierarchical or "nested", structure. There are "items" and "responses" to items. So attention to subject or topic naming is important, as is calling attention to whose numbered response you might, in turn, be commenting upon.

The **Workspace** is where you will do your individual work, mostly on a project that you will scout and initiate during the early weeks of the course. But it also includes other content that focuses on you as an individual. This is "public" space but, unlike the Learning Circle which is mostly organized by content, this space is organized by participant. So, for example, you are asked to post your self-introduction here, helping us get our minds around who our virtual colleagues are.

The **Cafe** is our coffee shop, water cooler or lounge. Here is where we can hang out and have general conversation, explore and experiment with stuff that's innovative, and warm-up or unwind with matters that are less centrally concerned with the course content and goals.

The **Cybrary** is, as you might guess, our online library. We will post links and files in this space, so that you can read them online and/or print them out. The instructor will post course readings there, and you can post materials as well.

## Assignments for Reading, Posting & Dialogue

One of the principal visions for the course is that it will be adaptable to the interests and background of the participants, with some content and direction emerging from our conversations.

The course flow is the outcome of interplay among at least three tracks: the readings; the projects, which will help ground our work both as individuals and as a community; and the conversations that take place in our three online venues (Learning Circle, Workspace and Cafe), during our Wimba teleconference sessions, and during phone interactions.

## January 30 / February 8

Please introduce yourself in your workspace. In your initial self-introduction, include what you are currently doing besides taking this course, your major career and life interests (and dreams) at this time, anything else you would like to say about your background and attributes, and - based on what you know now about this course - what you would like to walk away with about 13 weeks from now. If possible, post a photo of yourself.

In the interests of building our group for this course, I ask that each of you respond to at least two of your fellow participants with a comment and/or question. This is more or less a simulation of what you might do at a networking gathering, or if you were meeting fellow course members in face to face environment. In other words, nothing profound. Just meeting, and asking about stuff that comes to mind.

## February 1

Please get acquainted with the four course books as soon as you are able to. Here are the initial readings for each of the books. I'd also like you to skim the tables of contents, etc., of the books. There will be other early readings, drawing on the Cybrary, and I encourage you to scan that domain of the Learning Center. Here are the reading assignments, followed by a quite general and brief written assignment to be posted (below) as responses to this item.

Creativity in Business by Michael Ray and Rochelle Myers -- Please read chapter one.

How to Make Collaboration Work: Powerful Ways to Build Consensus, Solve Problems, and Make Decisions by David Straus and Thomas Layton -- Please read pages 1-14 and 219-229.

Heart of Change Field Guide: Tools and Tactics for Leading Change in your Organization by Dan S. Cohen -- Read page 1-12.

Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations by Clay Shirky -  
- Read chapter one.

Written assignment: As you read through the assigned material, be alert to passages that you find particularly interesting. Select one of those passages, and type a brief excerpt along with a book and page reference. Then comment on what it was about the reading that engaged your interest, and why.

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**Learning Circle Assignment: Describe one or two "changes" you have been familiar with or experienced.**

Think about changes that you have experienced or witnessed in your life so far. The changes could be in an organization you have worked in, been a student in, or been related to in some other way (customer, business alliance, etc.). Changes could include: coping with significant growth or decline, bringing in new leadership or other human capabilities, reorganizing how people work together, introducing a new system, beginning a new organization, etc.

**Pick one or two changes and write brief descriptions. Indicate whether you think the particular change was generally successful or unsuccessful, and why you made that assessment. From these expressions of concrete experience, we will begin to shape a shared understanding of what we're dealing with here.**

**Generally, we are engaged with organizational/workplace changes, but this is not necessarily so; i.e., if you want to talk about a more amorphous community or societal change, that's fine too. But it probably makes sense to stay away from "individual change", such as smoking cessation, weight reduction, etc. -- although we will see that there can be useful lessons from that domain, and of course change at all levels ultimately includes individual change as well.**

### **February 18**

**To expand the inquiry about changes, I'd like you to interact conversationally about the change narratives, as instances of organizational change. And I'd also like you to add thoughts, reflections and ideas about "what change is all about" that occur to you. Just let associations flow from the example in question -- or from other sources in your experience and current situation -- and share them with us.**

### **February 23**

**We commence the course grounded in these facets of change –**

**1- experiencing change: what it's like, how people think and feel about it, what associations come up "in the moment", etc.**

**2- engaging and championing change: what goals and passions cause people to become change agents, what do people mean when they say "I want to make a difference", etc.**

**3- individual relationships or "contracts" with collective change initiatives and processes: What individuals assume or choose re what they can or cannot do, how those contracts may change (or not), etc.**

**To explore this aspect of change as a group, I'd like you to post one or both of the following:**

**a) present and comment on an example of a collective or organizational change you are familiar with through studies or your own experience, one where the committed efforts of an individual or group were significant factors in the success of the change**

**b) describe and comment upon a change that you would like to see in an organization, community, situation or "the world"; i.e., something you care strongly about, and would potentially invest your time, attention and energy to bring about**

**My interest here is in having us explore -- have a conversation about -- the idea of the "change agent", and particularly the relevance of personal caring and investment in contributing to a change process (regardless of whether one is a designate change agent or change director). And of course, I welcome your commentaries on what your colleagues have said.**

**There is a reading assignment below that includes a substantial chunk of the Ray/Creativity book -- material that bears on this personal investment. In addition, there is a later piece by Michael Ray from his book, The Highest Goal, that walks through a process of considering your own**

"most meaningful thing." This is in the Cybrary under "Change Agent". I welcome you to experiment with discovering a specific personal "passion for change" through this process.

Readings:

*Please do with this second reading assignment what you were asked to do for the first: find sections or passages that interest and engage you, and bring it and your comments to our attention by responding below. And I also encourage you to converse with one another.*

This is a sizable chunk of reading, and the assignment goes from now until Tuesday, March 3rd, to make time for it.

Ray-Creativity, "Preparation", Chapters 2-5 (pages 13-110) -- Note: This series of chapters is intended to immerse us in considering our personal stake in change, progress, transformation. In part I want to focus on this early, in case some of you want to think actively about what changes you really care about -- as part of selecting a project theme for the course.

Strauss-Collaboration, "Fundamentals", Ch 1, and "Principles" - Stakeholders, Ch 2 (pages 15-56)

Cohen-Change, Step 8, "Make It Stick", and "The Final Module - Change Readiness" (pages 189-225) -- Note: I've taken us to the end of this book to cast attention on organizational attributes that influence not only the process of change, but also general adaptability and the capacity of an organization to "learn".

Shirky-Internet, Chapters 2-4 - "Sharing Anchors Community", "Everyone is a Media Outlet", and "Publish, Then Filter" (pages 25-108) -- Note: you might think positively about the publish-then-filter piece in connection with posting thoughts and ideas here in our course.

### March 9

Please read the article, "Collaboration and Community" by Scott Loudon -- it's in the Cybrary under "Community." (Tell me if you have problems finding or opening it.)

In our course books, please read the following:

**Strauss/Collaboration: Chapters 8 and 9, Collaborative Organizations, and Collaborative Communities, pp 165-203**

**Shirky/Internet: Chapter 5, Personal Motivation, Collaborative Production, pp 109-142.**

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Based on these readings and our conversations, during the next 3 weeks --

We will explore "community" in its various meanings, and talk about what it can mean for us to function as a "learning community" or "community of practice." We will connect the community concept with the idea of "stakeholders" in a change situation.

We will talk in a preliminary way about "communication", with particular reference to two very different instances: "conversation" of a dialogic or deliberative type, such as we want to have in the Learning Circle and in our project Workspaces; and "provocative statements" or "elevator speeches" that capture the essence of a plan, product, change, etc.

We will explore in an overview way "creativity" and "creative thinking", particularly as these concepts link to the generation of scope and alternatives for a particular change - and for our projects.

And we'll consider ways of approaching change and other plans from a positive perspective rather than a problem perspective, in particular a methodology called "Appreciative Inquiry."

#### [March 16 -- Moving forward on the CCT618 course as a class learning community](#)

Here's how I envision our learning community. I see it as a way of thinking about the several tracks of the course that is some synthesis of a rough simulation exercise, a utopian model for one type of ongoing lifelong collaboration, and an umbrella framework that guides and informs a large number of discrete exchanges among our class participants.

Imagine a "center" that consists of two elements: individual (each of us) and class community. The I and the we.

Then around this center, maybe circles or just quadrants, picture what I see as the four tracks of the course. (1) Readings -- the four books, and electronic supplementary readings; (2) Conversations that we have in the Learning Circle, Workspaces and Cafe, and occasionally by teleconference or phone call; (3) Organizations (or other collective entity) and Projects within organizations that we have chosen to work with; and (4) Individual roles that each of us may take on now, and through life, as change agent, helper/advisor, seeker of help and support, etc. Here it is in a simple schematic.

[http://learning.gjhost.com/~learn/LIB/ITEMS/486/3/Course\\_Schematic,\\_Mar\\_19\\_2009.ppt](http://learning.gjhost.com/~learn/LIB/ITEMS/486/3/Course_Schematic,_Mar_19_2009.ppt)

Now instead of what actually happened to us as we began this course -- 10 course participants parachuting into the class and beginning to work on all of these tracks -- I am suggesting a different scenario. That we begin now with 10 free-standing individuals. Each individual -- each of you -- has an organization of focus and a project idea he or she wants to define and plan out (where we pretty much are at this time, given recent progress on organization/project selection). And each has decided to combine his/her work on the selected organization and project with a process that will provide relevant learning's about "creativity, collaboration and change" that have lifelong value. The value will include both understanding useful concepts and methodologies, and experimenting with and adopting constructive practices for communicating, gaining and providing support, giving and receiving feedback, etc. from other people on a sustained basis.

\* \* \*

In the "real world", this kind of committed sounding-board support group or community would, I argue, be a tremendous aid to individuals - and to the aggregate potential for change in the world. (Aside: at one point a few years ago I had in my bookshelf three books with the title "Change the World".) As I noted above in the main item text, I don't ask that you adopt this idea but know that it is my mindset and our assignments will make more "sense" if you handle the rest of the course "as if" we are actively functioning as a class learning community. After all, to the extent that the projects you have selected are in fact going to happen sometime, then our course is actually in the real world. We are "advisory" stakeholders in one another's' efforts to change organizations and design/implement projects.

\* \* \*

I invite you to post thoughts, ideas, questions, etc. about the class learning community as responses under this item. Think about these kinds of questions (and add your own):

#### 1. Readings (e.g., using the readings assigned above in the Item 7 text)

What aspects of the readings particularly interest me and/or draw on my background? How can I bring those aspects to the attention of my fellow course participants in a way that will help their learning? Do I know any other reading - or reading-related idea of my own -- that I might suggest to the class, or to a particular individual whose special interests would be served by it?

#### 2. Conversations

In a particular topic or subject area we are exploring, what conversations should we be holding? How can I add value with my response to a thought, question or idea somebody else has posted? How can I stimulate others to get involved with ideas I have put forth; e.g., are there ways I can phrase my ideas and thoughts that are more likely to elicit response?

#### 3. Organizations and Projects

How can I best help others create successful projects? Gain an objective and productive understanding of their organization and its potential for change? What kind of information, help and engagement by others would I most like on my own organization and project? [Project-related suggestions will also be posted under a Workspace item.]

#### 4. Individual Roles with Respect to Change

Thinking about the organization and project I have selected, what kind of role do I see for myself: leader? active participant? technical designer in a "staff" capacity? As a member of a supportive learning community, what am I likely to be good at; e.g., do I usually do well as a forceful advocate for an idea, or as a reflective commentator on what others have put forward? Am I at my best in writing or talking? Do I like to get out there and gather information, or do I like to analyze and synthesize information others have contributed?

\* \* \*

These thoughts -- and this way of thinking about working with "loosely-connected" other people (as we are in this course) -- are in a formative stage. I welcome your critique, additions, suggestions, etc.

#### [March 16 – Collaboration and Conversation/Dialogue](#)

Straus/Collaboration: Please read pages 56 - 142. That is almost all of this book that has not already been assigned. Soon, I will assign a large block of pages in the Cohen/Change book. I have come to believe that mixing and matching small chunks of these books, since they have no organic linkage topic-wise, is less productive than bearing down and digesting major parts of each book during a single period.

**Readings on Dialogue:** Please read the Cybrary items (under "Communication") on Bohmian Dialogue (Wikipedia) and William Isaacs article on Dialogic Leadership -- especially the different roles by participants in a dialogue or conversation.

\* \* \*

Please respond -- present what you found interesting or valuable, your questions or issues, and/or your sense for what's most relevant in a particular segment to our class learning community.

#### [March 21: Not a lot of traffic here! Let's focus on dialogue –](#)

What do you think about Isaacs view of "dialogue", and the different roles participants play in dialogue? Do you feel dialogue, of the very open variety proposed here, is important in a change process; i.e., should stakeholders sit down and have a dialogue about the organization, the proposed change, etc? If it is important, would you convene various stakeholders in a mixed group, or would you convene stakeholders of the same type (e.g., clients, managers, support staff, etc.)? Or would it depend? If you would convene a dialogue(s), would you do this at the beginning? Or later on?

Or -- devise and respond to your own question about dialogue.

#### [March 23: Creativity and Thinking](#)

**Over 4 sessions of this course, I have changed somewhat how I see our course content and role.**

**It seems to me that we want "creativity" in the changes we aspire to, and the way in which we bring them to fruition. Within that desire for creative changes and processes, however, our emphasis is on our own creativity as individuals and collective entities; that is, we want to be creators, not just importers of creativity from outside consultants (for example). We want to think individually and think collectively in the pursuit of sound, effective, creative approaches.**

**While our course title says "creative thinking", I now take that to be a justifiable expression of emphasis - based on the customary historical bias within organizations toward critical thinking rather than creative thinking - but not an accurate characterization of the thinking process we are seeking. Because being creative or creating something requires thinking that has both creative-thinking and critical-thinking elements. At one moment we may strive to suspend judgment and let the possibilities flow wildly. At another, we may strive to make an important distinction that says, say, we should go in direction A rather than direction B.**

**So, to put this together, I now interpret the course title as meaning we are interested in open-minded creativity of the do-it-ourselves variety. We do not seek creativity, in the sense of something different or novel or unique, just for its own sake. But rather, we seek creativity - and we strive to be creative in our thinking and approach - because we believe that an expedition into a very open and wide range of possibilities will almost always improve our understanding and actions.**

**I have also become more clear in my own mind that this is an applied course, insofar as the "creativity" and "thinking" themes are concerned. This is part of the "Critical and Creative Thinking (CCT)" curriculum, and our job here within that curriculum is mainly to provide a vehicle for applying learning's and tools gained elsewhere. So I do not want to bring much of my own creativity sources and resources onto our table -- although I will**

put out some thoughts and content a little later. Rather, I'd like to draw on those within the class who have partaken from the CCT curriculum to offer ideas and suggestions.

By "those within the class", I'm thinking of folks taking the CCT program, those who have had one of the courses or seminars within the program, etc. But if you have not had those experiences, don't exclude yourselves -- draw on other sources and your own natural talents to provide thoughts.

[I welcome your thoughts and suggestions about creativity and thinking here, under this item.](#)

### [March 24: Complexity, Appreciative Inquiry and Climate](#)

Please read and, as requested in previous assignments, seek out and post commentaries on parts that engage or puzzle you --

In the Cohen/Change book, "Creating a Climate for Change", Steps 1-3, pages 11-86

From the Cybrary, Organizational Change - Methods & Applications Section, "A Positive Revolution in Change: Appreciative Inquiry" (30pp)

From the Cybrary, Complexity Section, "Complexity and OD: An Introduction" (14pp)

### [March 30: Previewing the second half of the course](#)

We can say we are commencing the second half of the course or we're working on the first of 6 remaining weeklong assignments. I propose that our highest priorities are twofold:

- To move aggressively forward on the projects so that we can have satisfying, interactive, learning experiences with our projects - not a series of fire drills at the end.
- To increase our collective level of conversational, interactive presence in all modes – website, teleconference, one-to-one and, if we wish to, face-to-face among the Boston area crowd.

#### Groups

During our Wimba conversation last week (Thursday, March 26), several participants suggested that some grouping would be helpful to focus interaction and support on projects. I am happy to comply with three 3-person groupings. But I stress this caveat: CCT618 is a discussion-based course that, given small numbers, needs active online participation and presence by all ten of us – each working with the other nine, in our shared public space. Please do not let the grouping diminish too much the energy you devote to the other participants – and also, please do not move your interactions off-line through 3-way calling or the like. To learn, we all need to share our collective and group conversations.

Here are the groups:

- A. Adrienne, Christine, Kelli
- B. Lorraine, Nina
- C. Maria, Matt, Scott

## Course Content and Schedule

As I have commented before, the conceptual and other course content and the project work are highly interrelated. The content informs our project analyses and choices, and testing ideas against a diverse spectrum of projects keeps us from over generalizing and also provides concrete examples to bolster our understanding. Therefore, much of the flow and the blocks of time I present here apply to the project work as well. Although they are highly interrelated insofar as our thinking/planning processes are concerned, I would define the day-to-day tasks associated with reading-and-dialoguing vis a vis applying-and-conversing-about-projects as "loosely connected."

We have six weeks left, which I will be treating roughly as three 2-week blocks of content and focus:

1. Assignment for March 31 through April 13: Defining, framing and presenting change, and creating a change strategy – including stakeholder identification and analysis, style of participation and collaboration, approach to handling change “enablers and obstacles,” and choosing a personal role in a given project’s change process.

*Readings: The complete Strauss/Collaboration book has already been assigned, and that will be a primary resource for stakeholder and participation issues. Also prepare Shirky/Internet Ch 6, pp 143-160, and one or both of the two Cybrary articles in the “stakeholders” section on stakeholder analysis (the second is thorough, but long – 24 pages – it has graphics and grids worth scanning), and the four fairly short readings in the Cybrary “Enablers-Obstacles, Driving & Restraining Forces” section.*

**Assignment A:** Use your responses under this item to explore generally how changes can/should be defined, framed and presented to maximize likelihood of success. We're concerned with two kinds of statements. One is aimed to assemble and present information so that others can understand the change - the focus is on clarity and completeness. The other is aimed to frame the change in a way that engages others - makes them interested in the change, and/or wanting to participate, and/or wanting to see the change succeed. We have referred to this as the "elevator speech."

**Assignment B:** Use your responses to identify and comment upon segments of the assigned readings (or other sources) on stakeholders, enablers/obstacles, etc., that you find inspiring or problematic.

2. Assignment for April 13 through April 27: Planning the change process from introduction through institutionalization – including more specific plans, and perhaps action, for areas of focus. [This is basically applying the Cohen/Change field guide process to your project and organization, or an adapted project of your choosing.

Please read the remaining unassigned "steps" in the Cohen/Change book (pp 89-206; the final step, involving Change Readiness, has already been assigned). Also, this week (April 13 week) please scan the documents in the Organizational Change, Methods and Applications section of the Cybrary. We've already looked at Appreciative Inquiry, and I would like for us all to be familiar with the basic nature of the Future Search, Open Space and World Cafe methodologies. (Scan is one of those odd terms that can mean look over quickly, but also can mean explore deeply - follow your interests.)

Next week (April 20 week), and also part of this two-week change planning assignment, please look at the Measurement and Evaluation (?) section of the Cybrary and read one of the brief items on the Balanced Scorecard, and look over the briefer and (much) longer items on Logic Diagrams.

For both the change methodologies (large group methods) and the measurement/evaluation material, I will ask in the Workspace that you ponder and post (in your workspace) a comment about applicability to your change and organization.

I encourage you to look over the unassigned parts of Shirky/Internet during this two week period for specific applicability to your project, if you think there might be some. If not, we'll deal with the rest of that intriguing book during our final two weeks.

I urged a revival of "course community" over in the workspace assignments, and I also do so here.

The ideal flow from several perspectives -- e.g., individual learning, helping relationships between two or among a few participants, collective dialogue about concepts and practices -- would be for each of you to study an assigned reading that has appeal, post plus/minus and idea/application reflections about the reading under this item, post in your own workspace how it might apply to your project or organization (or why it doesn't fit), and then post a similar application commentary in somebody else's workspace about that person's project.

3. Assignment for April 27 through May 13: Creativity, Collaboration & Change in organizations, communities and the world – including (a) anticipating future change agenda and change methodologies for the organizations or collective entities studied in our project work, (b) exploring diverse alternative mindsets and methodologies for change and changing, and (c) articulating choices for personal change roles in larger domains and perspectives.

We have about two weeks left in the term, the week beginning Monday, May 5, being the last in the term. I am going to declare midnight on Wednesday, May 13, as the effective last day for the activities of the CCT618 "course community"; i.e., group posting, interaction, dialogue. The website, learning circle, cafe, etc., will remain open but you shouldn't assume your colleagues will be reading what you post.

You may take additional time to complete your project work; i.e., the specific change you have addressed, and the additional issues regarding your organization and personal reflection that are posted in "final phase" Workspace items. The final deadline for project work will be midnight, two days before grades are due. I do not yet know when grades are due - I will let you know, but in the meantime assume that the deadline is midnight on Tuesday, May 26, 2009. In any case, please let us know in your workspace when you submit your final project materials; i.e., "declare" your completion.

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In the Learning Circle, I would like during this period to emphasize two related conversational initiatives.

First, I'd like to give all a chance to post and dialogue about all ideas that matter to our shared interests -- especially for those of you who have not posted as much as you would like up to now. I will be retitling previous Learning Circle items to make them more topical, and posting my own thoughts in many of them. Feel free to join in.

Second, I want to frame and stimulate posting/dialogue in new items (below) for topics within each of our three course "pillars" -- creativity, collaboration and change. Feel free

to join in here as well. I will also make some more directive assignments -- like "post at least one ..." -- aimed at those who have fallen behind in participation. If you have posted on one of these topics elsewhere, you do not need to do this directed posting.

## Individual Projects: a Specific Change, an Organizational Agenda & Personal Reflections

The basics of this course requirement are as follows:

-- the default project topic is (1) an analysis of a particular change and the collective setting (usually but not necessarily an organization) within which the change will take place, and (2) a plan for designing and implementing the change in a way that is thoughtful, creative and collaborative.

-- another option is basically any topic on which you'd like to invest time and attention, provided it fits within the scope and themes of the course -- and can add value to the learning experience of your course colleagues.

-- we will post regularly in our workspaces, once or more times per week, on issues and inquiries that connect our course readings and Learning Circle conversations with your project application.

-- the final product will be a written synthesis and elaboration of those ongoing postings, and comments about them offered by your colleagues, along with selective expansion or additions to create a cohesive whole. (The idea is that if you do a thoughtful job on an ongoing basis, the final product will not require a great deal of time and effort.)

### March 31 – Additional guidance on project selection and discussion of project handling

An individual's project should examine change in a particular situation or setting, including the individual's role in change. A given project should do this by defining a specific change within a specific organization (or other collective entity) and exploring our various readings and conversations in relation to that change and organization.

Our conversations online, on telephone calls and during the first Wimba session have considered whether the selected change should be "real" or hypothetical, whether it needs to happen during the period of the course, whether a given change is "too small" or "too big", etc. For the most part, I think we should work this out in the context of a given project – in the "project owner's" workspace. But I will make the following general remarks.

I for one will be delighted if what we do in the course has direct and immediate real world impact. But this is not the main thing – the main thing is building understanding and working with ideas for future roles and actions in a world that is continually changing. And the understanding and working knowledge is both your own – the project owner – and the rest of us who are in your community of collaborators. So if you were faced with a choice between wrestling with interesting ideas and concepts in a planning mode, or implementing a needed but fairly simple change, my advice would be to do the wrestling.

“Real” is generally better than hypothetical, but I can imagine a setting where exploring a hypothetical change with very significant pay-off could be a better exercise and learning experience than exploring a more practical real-world possibility.

The matter of “too small” or “too big” again comes back to what the exploration process yields in the way of interesting challenges, working with ideas, etc. One good way to make this choice less significant is by covering both small and big “pictures”. For example, if there is an immediate real-world need and opportunity to engage a small group, or even one stakeholder, to create agreement on an issue, then plan for that – but explore how this could be what the Cohen/Change approach calls a “small win” on the path toward a defined larger change. And conversely, if you were describing a major step involving communication to a large number of people in a hypothetical plan, this could be brought into focus and grounded by describing how you think it would play out with one specific individual or group.

\* \* \*

The end product of each project will be a written report, delivered in individual workspaces within a “response” and/or as a link to a Word file. The written report is the final edited - and perhaps enhanced and reorganized – version of content that you have drafted, discussed, etc., in your workspaces. Some you have already posted. A lot will be generated during the next several weeks.

That workspace content, in turn, will consist of –

- Your project-related responses to questions and suggestions raised in assignments
- Your own freely-generated observations, analyses, ideas, plans, etc.
- The outcome of interactions with other course community collaborators

What the final reports look like will depend a great deal on the nature of the projects and organizations, the particular issues and activities emphasized, and individual presentation and writing styles. Guided by assignment questions and suggestions, the reports will cover issues and possibilities around “change” in your chosen organization or other collective entity, the story of the specific change that you have focused on, and your views about your personal engagement in change in the aforementioned areas – and more broadly.

The following guide is intended to help and support, but not to unduly constrain, your work in applying course concepts and tools to a specific change and organization.

### CCT618 GUIDE FOR WORKING & REPORTING ON CHANGE IN ORGANIZATIONS

This is intended to help bridge our Learning Circle issue/topic conversations, the course readings, & individual project reports developed in your workspaces. It is divided into treatments of the specific change you are focusing on, the organizational or other collective setting within which the change takes place, and your general reflections about change and your role in making change happen.

## THE CHANGE

**March 21 Assignment:** In the Learning Circle, where we are discussing "dialogue", I asked -- "that you think about dialogue as a style of conversation, and apply that style over in the Workspaces to offer comments to others about their projects, and elicit comments from others about your project."

I would like each of you to please do the following --

- 1) In your own Workspace, choose an aspect of your proposed project that you would like comments, ideas, inputs, feedback, etc. about. In a response within your workspace, state that desire in a way that demonstrates your receptivity, and encourages others to provide support.
- 2) In the workspace of at least one other fellow participant, create a response that offers support in a way that encourages receptivity and further interaction.

**March 24 Assignment:** In Learning Circle Item 9 we are discussing creativity and thinking. Here, please apply your ideas about creativity and thinking to projects -- how can we define projects in a creative way? How can we frame a project in a way that enables creativity to flourish as the project evolves?

I would like each of you to please do the following:

- 1) Think about how you define your own project in the beginning phase. Write a brief description that, in your view, invites creativity.
- 2) Think about the project of at least one other participant, and post a response asking question(s) or making suggestion(s) that support the project owner's efforts to be creative.

### March 30 Assignment

Over in the Learning Circle, we now have defined groups of three (LC 12), provided further treatment of project expectations (12:1) and made a reading/content/conversation assignment for this week (LC 13:1).

**Assignment A:** In your workspace, please go about defining your project in the two ways described in the Learning Circle; i.e., one information/analysis oriented, the other more engagement/motivation oriented.

**Assignment B:** In others' workspaces -- focusing first on your group colleagues, but not limiting your attention just to them -- raise questions, give feedback, provide ideas, comment, etc. about their projects; i.e., engage in the kind of constructive conversation that befits a community of collaborators.

### April 6 Assignment

Please post feedback, comments, ideas and support in the workspaces of your assigned groupmates, and others as well, by no later than Monday, April 13.

The following template is intended to guide, as noted, and to establish some categories (A-F so far) we can use in assigning where to address other questions that emerge during our conversations.

The illustrative questions provided are intended to prompt and stimulate. Please feel free to create and respond to better, more imaginative questions. Pass over questions that don't speak to your need.

ISSUE / PHASE / TASK	<i><b>ILLUSTRATIVE GUIDING QUESTIONS</b></i>
<p><b><u>A. Organization:</u></b> What is the organization or “collective system” you are working with?</p>	<p>Describe the organization or system you have chosen as the focus of your project. What do others need to know as context for possible changes in your organization? How do you fit in the organization?</p>
<p><b><u>B. Change:</u></b> Frame your change project in two ways -- (a) in a factual/analytical statement that will help collaborators understand and provide support, and (b) in an “elevator speech” statement that will engage and motivate others.</p>	<p>What is the nature and scope of the specific change you are addressing? What can be the significance of this change, and of the process used to introduce and implement the change, for the organization? What, if anything, do you find interesting and exciting about the change and the process?</p>
<p><b><u>C. Changemaking Roles:</u></b> What role do you see for yourself in making this change?</p>	<p>Do you see yourself as the lead change agent? Are there other existing or potential change agents present in the system? Can you be a catalyst for change-oriented conversations? Do you want to be an advocate for the change(s) you have identified? Or do you see yourself as a facilitator who does not declare a strong personal position?</p>
<p><b><u>D. Stakeholders and Collaborators:</u></b> Who is or might be affected by this change? Who might be actively involved in making the change?</p>	<p>Who are the stakeholders in the organization and for the kind of change(s) you are thinking about? What relationship(s) do they have with the organization? Are there particular stakeholder attributes that make a difference? To what extent is each stakeholder or stakeholder group likely to support or oppose change? How influential are they in the organization? To what extent are they in the communication loop?</p> <p>Which stakeholders should be active participants in the change process? Which are candidates for membership on a team(s) working on the change?</p> <p>What data might you collect from collaborators and other stakeholders to get more information and ideas about your change? Who could you interview, individually or in groups? What questions could you ask? Would a survey be useful?</p>

<p><b><u>E. Enablers/Obstacles to Making Change:</u></b> What will determine the success or failure of this change project?</p>	<p>What are the enablers and obstacles that will determine whether this change succeeds or not? What strengths will help you? What weaknesses will hinder your project? What are the “driving” and “restraining” forces at work here</p> <p>What are the biggest obstacles/ weaknesses/ restraining forces that could get in the way of success? How might you deal with those?</p> <p>What could make the change more likely to succeed? How might you leverage that opportunity?</p>
<p><b><u>F. Strategy &amp; Design:</u></b> What is your overall strategy and design for creating, introducing and implementing the change?</p>	<p>Do you have creative ideas for defining the change, and/or for the change process, that can stimulate and sustain success? What approaches and methods do you think will work well (a) given this particular organization, and (b) given the particular change you are working on? What is most likely to enable action by the stakeholders whose participation is critical?</p>

## THE CHANGE

**April 13, 2009**

**This is a continuation of the guide and assignment for analyzing, interacting about and documenting work on your change and your organization.**

The second of the three chunks is, basically, the rest of the Cohen/Change process or your own adaptation. There is also useful thinking in Straus; e.g., about mapping the process you plan to take. I'd like you to comment, in the body of your project work or as a separate response to the topic, about the large group methodologies and their potential application to your project; i.e., are the Appreciative Inquiry, Future Search, Open Space and/or World Cafe methods that you feel would be suitable for your chosen change -- or more broadly, to your organization as it deals with change? (You may choose to discuss the applicability, or not, of all of them, or pick one that interests you and respond for that one.)

A few further thoughts about the template guidance. The G. Introduction set of questions is there for the same reason as the F. Strategy & Design section. It may cause some of the same confusion. Among our books, only the Cohen/Change resource directly addresses the shepherding of a change through an organization. It does so pretty much by assuming that our challenge is implementing a predetermined change through a relatively large, conventional (corporate) hierarchy. I think most of the book's values and sensibilities are in the right place, but it can't help but be an awkward fit for changes like those of our course projects; i.e., changers that cover a very wide range of applications, types of organizations, starting points, etc.

Consequently, in the Strategy & Design section I hope that folks will capture the fundamental approach to the change being examined; e.g., is it to communicate it to the whole organization and get everybody at all levels involved at the same time? Or is it to pilot the change in a very controlled environment, and then move it to other parts of the organization in a series of iterations? Or something else?

In the Introduction section, I hope project owners and helpers will consider where the change and change process stand at the point where we are now - the project's "present time." Is the change fully specified (often the case in traditional organizational change efforts), or will it evolve and be shaped during the process? When, to whom, and in what form will the initial announcement of the change be made? Or has that happened already? And if it has, was the communication effective or does it need to be reset?

Of the other two sections, the H. Process Map/Schedule/Plan section encompasses however many of the Cohen/Change process steps (or modifications) you decide to apply to the implementation of your change. The final I. Measurement and Evaluation section often deals with challenging content but I think it is pretty clear.

<b>ISSUE / PHASE / TASK</b>	<b><u>ILLUSTRATIVE</u> GUIDING QUESTIONS</b>
<p><b><u>G. Introduction:</u></b> What will be your first/next steps?</p>	<p>How will you get started? How will you introduce or “launch” your change project to the organization? Or, if the project is in midstream, what will be your next step to take it in the direction you want to move?</p> <p>What is your early communication plan; e.g., what will your press release look like, or your blurb in the organization’s newsletter? (Will it be more like the factual/analytical project description, or the elevator speech?)</p>
<p><b><u>H. Process Map/Schedule/Plan:</u></b> What are your change process, timeline and plan? How will you portray, display, communicate it to the stakeholders?</p>	<p>What will happen as the project moves forward (assume less detail further out in time)? How would you map this project on a timeline over the next month/ quarter/ year?</p> <p>Do you have different scenarios for the project that depend on what you learn at the beginning? If so, what are they?</p>
<p><b><u>I. Measurement &amp; Evaluation:</u></b> How will you assess progress?</p>	<p>How will you know whether or not the project is working (or has worked)? For example, what information will you seek to determine whether your project plan needs to be modified; i.e., tracking measures and criteria? If you had a “dashboard” for your change project, what would some of the dials be about?</p> <p>What does success look like at the end? What are</p>

	your main indicators for successful completion of the change?
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## THE ORGANIZATION

### April 28 Assignment

Up to this point we have been dealing with a specific change within a particular organization (or community or other collective entity). Now we are addressing issues at the organizational level, using the same organization.

<b>ISSUE / TASK</b>	<b><i>ILLUSTRATIVE</i> GUIDING QUESTIONS</b>
<p><b><u>J. Need &amp; Readiness for Change:</u></b> Assess this organization’s overall need and readiness for change. This may stem from observations you made earlier, when contemplating the specific change you are addressing. And/or it may reflect what you have learned about the organization as you worked on the specific change.</p>	<p>In what areas – and why -- might this organization or system have opportunities or needs to change? Do you envision your change project opening a gateway or paths to further change? Did the process of thinking through your specific change reveal other needs and opportunities for change in this organization? If so, what are they?</p> <p>In the larger picture of this organization, what are the drivers of change? Internal, within the organization itself? External -- in the customer/ client base, or in other parts of the environment? To what extent does it <u>need</u> to change -- what case can be made for “urgency”? To what extent do you feel the organization is ready to change?</p>
<p><b><u>K. Creative Possibilities for Change:</u></b> Speculate about one or more changes that could be highly beneficial to the organization and its stakeholders, besides or in addition to the specific change you have been addressing. Use this as an opportunity to be creative and, especially, to identify how the organization/ stakeholders might be prompted to think collectively in creative ways.</p>	<p>What are the possibilities? What change(s) would make a significant difference in the organization? What small changes might have big effects? How would the organization be different if you succeeded in making these changes? What’s your vision for the changed organization?</p> <p>How do you think the organization should address its prospects for change; e.g., how can this organization – this array of stakeholders – “think” constructively about change? If you were in charge, would you use one of the “large group change processes” in the readings (Future Search, Open Space, World Café, Appreciative Inquiry)? If so, which one do you think would best suit this organization, and why?</p>
<p><b><u>M. Change Agent Role:</u></b> Consider how you might be involved as a change agent in this organization’s future.</p>	<p>Going forward, how might you personally be involved in this organization’s evolution? What can you do to inspire change and/or an interest in change in the organization? What part(s) of being a</p>

	change agent are easier or more difficult for you? How would you <i>like to be involved</i> in making the potential future change(s) you have identified?
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## REFLECTIONS

### May 4 Assignment

Finally, please wrap up your personal engagement in course content and projects by reflecting on a couple of topics. This goes beyond the specific change and organization you have addressed in the course. It asks you to reflect about change in general and your role in making it happen, and about the key themes of creativity, collaboration and change we have explored in the course. Then please capture the essence of these reflections in statements that can be as brief or as lengthy as you wish.

<b>ISSUE / TASK</b>	<b><i>ILLUSTRATIVE</i> GUIDING QUESTIONS</b>
<b><u>N. Reflections about Change and Your Role in the Larger Scheme</u></b>	<p>Do you aspire to “make a difference” or “change the world” in a direct and personal sense (as opposed to living a good life and being supportive of others’ efforts to make a difference/ change the world)?</p> <p>If so, what change or changes would you focus on? What form(s) might your participation take?</p> <p>If not -- if you see your role more as supporting others -- what form might that support take?</p>
<b><u>O. Closing Reflections on Creativity, Collaboration and Change in Organizations</u></b>	<p>Stepping way back, how has your thinking about creativity, collaboration and change developed over the semester? What, if anything, surprised you? Note an insight or understanding that you feel is worth carrying into the future.</p>

## **Grading**

The main grading considerations will be participation and contribution within the group (the virtual, collective class learning process) and completion of a project/report on a change situation of your choice. These are interrelated, because we enrich our ideas and issues partly by exploring how they fit and work within the specific change situations you are engaging.

Grading will be based 2/3 on participation in the Learning Center and other modes (frequency of checking-in, volume of posting, quality of posting), and 1/3 on

projects. Obviously, our interactions will cross back and forth from project to reading to topic - so the proportions are a guide, not an algorithm.

I assume you all are taking this course out of interest and desire to learn, not for grades. Grades are not that important, but it is important that they be fair. I will try to make them so. This is not a toughly-graded course. One would have to work at it to earn a low grade – or perhaps that should be “persistently not work at it.”

The course extends through the first full week of May. I'll keep it open, so to speak, until a few days before grades must be submitted. So you have that time to complete projects or, perhaps in some instances, post “make-up” work. (I recognize that this kind of time extension is a mixed blessing.)

## **Website Navigation Advice, Communication Norms, etc.**

About how this website works, and ideas & lessons learned from the past --

1 -- The Caucus mechanism will send you emails when there is activity anywhere on the Learning Center site. When you go to the site and click on various spaces, you will see "new" icons flagging where the new postings are. You will continue to receive reminders until you "clear" the new postings by opening them. (If you open them without reading them, you will lose a valuable indicator of what you've taken care of and what you haven't - - although you can click to recategorize them as "new" if you want to flag something you want to come back to.)

2 -- Almost always go to the Learning Circle first, both because that's where the most action is and because many important directions and assignments will first appear there.

3 -- When you are posting a response (and we will assume you can figure out how to do that) of any length, pause and enter it from time to time -- and then return in an edit mode. It is easy to lose information with an inadvertent "click". (Take it from your hapless and sometimes furious instructor!)

4 -- Use "rich text" rather than "plain text" in all your work. It gives modest word processing features that are useful and sometimes important.

5 -- Be very clear about whose posting you are commenting on or using as a point of departure. State the person's name and the Item/Response number. It makes it a lot easier to follow the conversation, given that this discussion environment is flat rather than hierarchical/nested.

6 -- When you are opening a reading in the Cybrary, or other links in item responses, you may be able to simply double click on the link. But sometimes that doesn't work. If so, try depressing control while double clicking, or use "right click and open"; i.e., place the mouse over the link, right click on the mouse, and then choose 'open' from the menu.

7 -- Last but certainly not least: the course thrives or trudges depending on the amount and quality of participation. There are not that many of us and asynchronous conversations like this need to develop a sense of pace and momentum. Ideally, I would like everybody to

**check in DAILY. It is easy to miss something important, and it is easy to accumulate a lot of unread messages that are hard to deal with. If you can't do daily, then make a point of being online on the site at least every other day.**

## **Other**

**At the beginning of the course ...**

- enter your profile information where specified on the website, including a photo for thumbnail use if you are OK with that (it helps in a virtual environment)**
- order the course books, if you haven't already, and obtain the earphones needed for the WIMBA teleconference sessions**
- go to the Workspace and read the introduction and assignment guidance. Create an Item labeled as yours (e.g., "Wally's Workspace", or some other designation if you like), and introduce yourself as the first "response" under that item.**
- go to the Learning Circle, read the introduction and assignment guidance, and write your responses under the appropriate items.**
- check out your computer and software at the Blackboard/Vista course website, and follow the WIMBA instructions for checking out your system**
- send me ([wclausen@comcast.net](mailto:wclausen@comcast.net)) any questions you have or problems you encounter, and I'll do what I can to help.**