

University of Massachusetts at Boston  
Graduate College of Education  
Critical & Creative Thinking Program

Synthesis of Theory & Practice  
CCT 694            Fall 2002  
Syllabus

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Office/phone call hours: M 2-3.30, during class, or by arrangement (e.g., directly after class)  
Email office hours: M & Th 7.30-9am  
Class Time: M 4-6.30  
Classroom: M-2-628S  
General email: Emails sent to cct694@umbmap.cc.umb.edu will go to all students in the course.  
Course website: <http://omega.cc.umb.edu/~cct/synthforms.html> (forms and handouts)

### Course Overview

This "Capstone experience" is an opportunity for you to synthesize your practical and theoretical learning in Critical & Creative Thinking through a project in an area of your special interest. There are many specific options for the Synthesis project, from the development of a traditional theoretical paper to a curriculum or professional development series, to the creation of a web site. One component of each option is a 20-40 page (4500-9000 word) paper or "Synthesis." Through the meetings, activities, and tasks of the Synthesis seminar the instructor coaches you along towards completing the "Synthesis" and you get input and support from other students.

You should spend the summer before the synthesis semester doing reading and research on your project in consultation with your advisor and other readers. Once the semester starts, each CCT694 class meeting will include a check-in on your progress, your buddy check-ins, and your concrete goals for the coming week. **You should be aiming for 6 pages or 1200-1500 words of new or revised material each week.** We will spend time on the theme for the week, which will include reviewing your work in light of the "phases of research and engagement" introduced in the Practicum course (CCT698). This review may lead you to revise what you thought was "finished," but openness to revision is one of the goals of reflective practitioners. In any case, the review of the different tools and practices of research and engagement will help prepare you to coach/teach/support students and/or colleagues. We will also spend time in student-instructor conferences and working with other students in "buddy" pairs or small groups. Students should bring printouts of their latest work to class to facilitate revising. You will have access to computers for research and writing.

Outside class you will be submitting drafts to your advisor and other reader(s) and meeting with them according to schedules/sub-deadlines that you arrange. **Your advisor should be the primary person with whom you work on conceptualizing the topic, identifying appropriate scope and approach, and revising drafts.** Unless you specifically arrange otherwise, the seminar instructor will be your advisor. If not, s/he will serve as a second reader. Allow two weeks for comments on what you submit.

\*\* See **Notes on/for Advisors and Readers** appended to the syllabus

Given the teaching and advising load of faculty members, you should not rely on your advisor or reader(s) to do detailed copy-editing of your writing. Moreover, a copy-editing relationship between student and teacher usually gets in the way of dialogue around the content and overall organization of your synthesis. **Assistance from some outside party, skilled in manuscript-editing, should be arranged by each student. This is well worth the cost.**

## SECTIONS TO FOLLOW IN SYLLABUS

**Requirements**

**Grading**

**Texts and Materials**

**Schedule of Classes**

**Summary of Tasks, Target Dates and Deadlines**

**Goals for Synthesis of Theory and Practice**

**Additional Material (Forms and Handouts) are available via course website**

### Requirements

1. The final Synthesis should be 20-40 pages (4500-9000 word), depending on the option selected, and ready for submission to the CCT Program following Graduate School [Guidelines](#) as distilled and illustrated in M. Liblanc's [Guidelines for Preparation of a Synthesis](#), and handouts distributed from time to time (and linked to <http://omega.cc.umb.edu/~cct/synthforms.html>).

Options for the Synthesis Project include:

Long essay/paper;

Case Study/Practitioner's Narratives;

Curriculum Unit/ Professional Development Workshop Series;

Original Products (with documentation); and

Arts Option (Performance) (also with documentation).

See the Graduate Bulletin and CCT Handbook for further description of these options.

\*\*See also the description of a Combined Practitioner's Narrative and other Synthesis options, appended to the syllabus

Theses and syntheses from previous years can be viewed in the Peter Taylor's Office (W-2-143-09). Abstracts can be viewed on CCT website (<http://omega.cc.umb.edu/~cct/abstracts-TOC.html>).

As part of your Synthesis Project, the following are required:

1A. An Abstract of your synthesis, submitted in electronic form for inclusion on the CCT website and publication by the University. (Optionally, you can submit your complete synthesis in electronic form to be linked to the abstract on the website);

1Bi. A 30-45 minute Public Presentation during classtime based on your synthesis project; or

1Bii. A Run-through at the CCT in Practice Open House in the spring of activities and other group processes developed in your synthesis (up to 90 mins).

In addition, the Program requires:

2. A Self-Assessment, which centers on your Synthesis experience, but allows some room for you to review your CCT experience as a whole. A copy will be kept in your CCT file to help document the Program's effect on students.

This self-assessment asks you to reflect on the twenty goals listed at the end of the syllabus. After completing the self-assessment you will be able, with modest input from readers and course instructors, to determine your own grade.

### Grading

At the end of the Synthesis seminar, wherever you are in your project, complete a draft of the self-assessment, but focus on your synthesis work (in contrast to the exit self-assessment for the program, which will encompass the whole CCT experience). Then mark in the left margin beside each goal either

\*\* [= "fulfilled very well"],

OK [= "did a reasonable job, but room for [more development]"], or

-> [= "to be honest, this still needs serious attention"]

You can then calculate your grade as follows:

Start with 80 points. For each OK add 1/2 point; for each \*\* add 1 point. Subtract 2 points for each class you missed over two; 1 point for each week you missed doing a check-in with your buddy and 1 point for each target date you missed. If you are only a point below a higher grade, the instructor will talk with you about whether you were too hard on yourself for some goals and you will decide together whether to bump your grade up.

The minimum grade for A is 95, for A- is 87.5, for B+ is 80, for B is 72.5; for B- is 65; for C+ is 57.5; and for C is 50. Below 50 points you must repeat the course.

## **Texts and Materials**

Required:

Liblanc, M. and P. J. Taylor (2002). Guidelines for Preparation of a Synthesis: Critical and Creative Thinking Program. (xerox)

Recommended as guides to writing and revising:

Elbow, P. (1981). Writing with Power. New York: Oxford University Press.

Turabian, K. L. (1996). A Manual For Writers of Term papers, Theses, and Disertations. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

American Psychological Association (2000). Publication Manual.

## **\*\* SCHEDULE OF CLASSES \*\***

Class 0 (5/20/02)

### **Vision for your projects**

Phase A. Overall vision; Goal: "I can convey who I want to influence/affect concerning what (Subject, Audience, Purpose)."

Topics & Activities:

Free writing (Who do you want to reach? What do you want to convey to them? Why do you want to address them about that? What obstacles do you see ahead?)

In class exercise: Controlling/Thesis question for project

Verbal report on scope of intended project

Establish initial buddy for summer re: plans, progress, or lack thereof.

Recommended tasks for phase A:

After class 0: Review Elbow, chaps. 1-3 & 13 on writing, freewriting, and sharing

For class 1: Submit revised project title and description (2 copies)

Other tasks:

### ***During summer***

#### **Set up tasks**

Read and digest syllabus and requirements, etc.

Read Part I of Synthesis Guidelines

Download template file for your synthesis chapters, make a copy, review and practice inserting your own words; printing out specific pages; inserting page breaks; adding a reference in consistent style; inserting lesson plans & workshop text as single-spaced "figures") -- get peer assistance if need be

Arrange advisor and other reader by 8/31 if you have not already done so.

Submit proposal (by 8/31 or else you will be deregistered from the course)

### **Supplement your sources of information and informants**

Phase B. Background information; Goal: "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."

Phase F. Direct information, models & experience; Goal: "I have gained direct information, models, and experience not readily available from other sources."

Recommended tasks for phase B:

Establish/practice connection to [www.lib.umb.edu](http://www.lib.umb.edu) and use of reference databases (see on-line library tutorial)

Establish your system of recording references/citations

For class 2: Bibliography of reading completed or planned, formatted as for final synthesis.

Recommended tasks for phase F:

Write down your top 5 questions for which you haven't got answers from published literature and so would like someone to answer directly

Arrange interview or other observation; prepare your interview/observation guide; conduct interview/observation

**Process Review of CCT experience to date** (for those planning a Combined Practitioner's

Narrative and other Synthesis options; see description of this option appended to syllabus)

Phase J. Taking stock; Goal: "To feed into my future learning and other work, I have taken stock of what has been working well and what needs changing."

Recommended tasks for phase J:

Collect exhibits that convey key passages of your process of development during your CCT studies.

Draft the narrative that connects/weaves these exhibits into a story.

Class 1 (9/9)

### **Checking your vision for the project**

(Phase A continued)

Topics & Activities:

Verbal reports on progress during summer

Peer exchange on project title, Thesis question and Paragraph overview of project (Check that it's clear: Who do you want to reach? What do you want to convey to them? Why do you want to address them about that? What steps are needed to do so? How will you set the stage for readers to understand why you have chosen this topic?)

Other tasks:

Arrange sub-deadlines with advisor and reader(s) & submit schedule in class 4. (See target dates later in syllabus.) Preferably meet with all parties at the one time.

Arrange essential reading list with reader and include in bibliography submitted in class 2.

Class 2 (9/16)

### **Supplement your sources of information and informants**

(Phases B & F continued)

Topics & Activities:

Peer review on bibliography (Checking formatting and that it addresses and covers thesis Q.)

Peer assistance with library databases

Other tasks:

Read handouts on writing literature review. Plan your own strategies and the form in which you will demonstrate your knowledge of the literature.

Class 3 (9/23)

### **Clarifying your synthesis formulation, Thesis Question, and Component Arguments**

Phase C. Possible directions and priorities; Goal: "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, decide most important direction expressed in revised Thesis Question."

Phase D. Propositions, Counter-Propositions, Counter-Counter-Propositions...; Goal: "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."

Topics & Activities:

Map-making and/or Summarizing the different sub-arguments for your topic and positions regarding each. Map or summary then probed by peers. Refine thesis Q. and separate key arguments from subordinate or dispensable ones.

Class 4 (9/30)

### **Design of Remaining Research and Writing**

Phase E. Design of further research and engagement; Goal: "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 to realize these objectives."

Tasks:

Draft/update research & writing timetable in light of weeks 1-3, and/or  
Strategic personal planning

**\*\*Target date for submission of draft introduction and review of literature: 10/7**

Class 5 (10/7)

### **Preparation for Presentations on Work-in-Progress**

Phase G. Clarification through communication; Goal: "I have clarified the overall progression or argument underlying my research and the written reports I am starting to prepare."

Topics & Activities:

Using preparation of visual aids to aid your on-going clarification of the structure of your overall argument

Tasks:

Before class 6: Practice presentation in front of classmates or other friends.  
Inform instructor of A/V needs.

No class 10/14; but prepare your presentations and keep writing.

Class 6 (10/21)

### **Presentations on Work-in-Progress**

(Phase G continued)

Topics & Activities (start at 4 -- no conferences this week):

Presentations to peers (15 minutes each student + 10 minutes discussion + 5 minutes stock-taking)

Class 7 (10/28)

### **Getting and Using Feedback on Writing**

Phase H. Compelling communication; Goal: "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."

Reread Elbow, p. 141 to end of chapter 13.

Topics & Activities:

Reverse outlining of drafted chapters—working on the development of each chapter, section, and paragraph, including their connection one to the next and to the whole of which they are a part

Class 8 (11/4)

### **Getting and Using Feedback on Writing**

(Phase H continued)

Topics & Activities:

Conferences and peer sharing/editing sessions

No class 11/11; but keep writing & revising

**\*\*Target date for submission to readers of complete draft, 11/11.**

**\*\*Deadline for application to graduate with \$100 commencement fee check, Nov 15.**

Class 9 (11/18)

### **Revision: "Now that I'm finished, I can see what I want to say"**

(Phase H continued)

Topics & Activities:

- Assessing whether the writing "GOSPs" (see Goal H)
- Tools to problem-solve overall flow/sequencing within and among chapters, sections, paragraphs, e.g., SCAMPER
- Peer sharing/editing

**\*\*Target date for submission of one copy of Process Review Portfolio for anyone choosing the Combined option: Monday 11/25, 6.30pm**

Class 10 (11/25)

**"Concluding" synthesis by looking ahead to outreach and further directions**

Phase I. Engagement with others; Goal: "I have facilitated new avenues of classroom, workplace, and public participation."

Topics & Activities:

- Prepare and practice before classmates the opening 5-10 minutes of a workshop presentation, e.g., for 12/4 Open House
- Sketch a final chapter on outreach and further directions to pursue

Class 11 (12/2)

**a. Public Presentations to CCT, advisors, and readers**

(Phase H continued)

Topics & Activities (start at 4pm this week):

Presentations

**b. Finalization of Synthesis I**

(Phase H continued)

Topics & Activities:

- Writing Abstracts
- Formatting review

12/5

**Public Presentations ("exit performance") as a mini-workshop for CCT in Practice Open House (4.30-9pm), place TBA, date to be confirmed**

(Phases H & I)

Topics & Activities:

Mini-workshop Presentations (45-90 minutes)

**\*\*Target date for submission of one copy of Synthesis on normal paper for checking and go-ahead by PT or NG to make archival copy: Monday 12/9, 6.30pm**

Class 14 (12/9)

**a. Public Presentations to CCT, advisors, and readers**

(Phase H continued)

Topics & Activities (start at 4pm this week):

Presentations

**b. Finalization of Synthesis II**

(Phase H continued)

Topics & Activities:

Proof-reading, including checking title page and other formal material

**c. Taking Stock of the Course & Program: Where to go from here?**

Phase J. Taking stock; Goal: "To feed into my future learning and other work, I have taken stock of what has been working well and what needs changing."

Recommended tasks for phase J:

- CCT evaluation process and GCOE course evaluation
- Sharing ideas about Self-assessment

**\*\*Absolute deadline for submission of one copy of Synthesis on normal paper for checking and go-ahead by PT to get signatures from advisors and readers and make archival copy: 12/20. If a student misses this deadline, graduation is deferred until June.**

**12/30 Deadline for: Self-assessment**

**Electronic version of abstract (on disk or by email attachment)**

**Submission of copies for binding this semester (one on archival paper, others as desired; with check & completed distribution/pickup arrangements form)**

**\*\*SUMMARY OF TASKS, TARGET DATES and DEADLINES\*\***

Soon after 5/20	Establish buddy and check-in schedule during summer re: progress.
Before 8/31	Arrange advisor and other reader if you have not already done so
Before 8/31	Submit proposal and get it approved.
For class 1 (9/9)	Submit revised project title and revised description (2 copies)
For class 2 (9/16)	Bibliography of reading completed or planned, formatted as for Synthesis
Before class 4 (9/30)	Arrange sub-deadlines with advisor and reader & submit schedule in class 4.
10/7	Target date for completion of draft introduction and review of literature
Before class 6 (10/21)	Practice presentation to buddy or other friends.
Class 6 (10/21)	Work-in-progress Presentations to peers (15 minutes each student + 10 minutes discussion + 5 minutes stock-taking)
11/11	Target date for submission to readers of complete draft
11/15	Deadline for application to graduate with \$100 check for commencement fee.
11/25	<b>Target date for submission of one copy of</b> Process Review Portfolio for anyone choosing the Combined option
12/4	Mini-workshop Presentations as part of CCT in Practice Open House, 4.30-9
12/2, 12/9	Other Presentations on Synthesis Projects to CCT Forum
12/9	Target date for submission of one copy of Synthesis on normal paper for checking and go-ahead by PT or NG to make archival copy (by 6.30pm)
12/20	Absolute deadline for submission of one copy of Synthesis on normal paper for checking and go-ahead by PT or NG to make archival copy
12/30 Deadline for	Electronic version of abstract (on disk or by email); CCT Self-assessment; Submission of copies for binding this semester (one on archival paper, others as desired; with check & distribution-pickup arrangements)

## **Goals for Synthesis of Theory and Practice**

The goals are divided into two sets:

- I. "My Synthesis Product Shows That..." (adapted from the "Phases of research and engagement" in the Practicum course); and
- II. Developing as a reflective practitioner, including taking initiative in or through relationships

### **I. "MY SYNTHESIS PRODUCT SHOWS THAT..."**

(adapted from the "Phases of research and engagement" in the Practicum course in the expectation that these are also relevant goals for students' work in moving towards the synthesis product)

- 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.

## **II. DEVELOPING AS A REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER, INCLUDING TAKING INITIATIVE IN AND THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS**

1. I have integrated knowledge and perspectives from CCT and other courses into my own inquiry and engagement in social and/or educational 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 the 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 CCT synthesis course and the CCT program 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.

## **Combined Practitioner's Narrative and other Synthesis options**

(Version 3/14/02)

In the Synthesis Project students review and reflect on the integration into their professional lives of critical and creative thinking skills and strategies and demonstrate mastery of competencies and skills appropriate and relevant to their disciplines. Students have a number of options to choose from, which are listed in the Graduate Bulletin.

As an experiment, the CCT faculty has decided that students may combine a practitioner's narrative related to your development during your CCT's studies (option 2b) with a reduced length version of any of the other options. The practitioner's narrative "is an occasion for the writer to think deeply about his/her own practice—its origin, dynamic nature, influences, commitments, and future directions—to yield useful insights and discoveries."

The recommended way to undertake this kind of practitioner's narrative is to prepare a "process review portfolio" consisting of exhibits with one-page annotations and an overall introduction, afterword, and a paragraph overview (to be included with your synthesis abstract). These exhibits should be selected to convey your process of development during your studies, not only your best work or your final products.

Ideally you would have been saving material for exhibits all through your studies. We recognize that it will not be an easy task to reconstruct and review your process after the fact. To help warm up your thinking about whether to pursue this option and about how to select your exhibits and compose the accompanying narrative, we recommend that you start by doing an early draft of part II of the exit self-assessment. This is structured around ten goals related to "developing as a reflective practitioner, including taking initiative in and through relationships." For each item, you should identify and describe:

- a) something(s) that reflects what you have achieved well related to this goal, and
- b) something(s) you have struggled with/ need more help on/ want to work further on.

(This two-part structure relates to the goal of the CCT Program that graduates are life-long developers, not a completed "product" at the end of the Program.)

Any given exhibit can speak to more than one of these goals. It is recommended that multiple exhibits relate to the first two of the ten goals, namely those about incorporating knowledge and perspectives and on processes, experiences, and struggles from CCT and other courses.

Models and additional rubrics will be distributed as the CCT faculty gains experience in helping students complete this form of Practitioner's Narrative. (The "12Rs of the CCT experience" at <http://omega.cc.umb.edu/~cct/12Rs.xls> may be helpful.) If you think you might wish to pursue this option, talk about it with your advisor as soon as possible. Once you have settled on the expectations for the two parts of this hybrid option, you will need to provide plans, outlines, and drafts of the Practitioner's Narrative for your advisors to comment on, just as you are doing for the other part.

## Notes on/for Advisors and Readers

Except when a special arrangement is approved, the primary advisor will be the regular CCT faculty member teaching the synthesis seminar. The reader(s) may be anyone experienced in the student's area of specialisation and, in general, possessing a Master's degree or higher. The synthesis seminar instructor is either the student's advisor or one reader.

The responsibility of the **advisor** is to be the primary person with whom the student works on conceptualizing the topic, identifying appropriate scope and approach, and revising drafts. If the advisor does not have expertise in the student's subject area, it is the student's responsibility to get the necessary specialist input from a reader and others.

The advisor should be aware of the technical requirements of submitting a Synthesis to the CCT Program, but the student should also consult with the Synthesis seminar instructor and use the seminar to fulfill the requirements. During the last three weeks of the semester finishing synthesis students will make presentations on their work, which the advisor should attend. There is no formal defence of the syntheses.

The responsibility of a **reader** is to convey to the student before the second week of the semester (preferably earlier) the areas and material that should be addressed, to comment on a complete draft, and to review and comment on changes made between that draft and the final draft. If the reader specializes in the area of the student's project, their comments may stem primarily from their special knowledge or experience. Otherwise, readers should simply think of themselves as intelligent people who want the student's distinctive ideas and accomplishments to emerge as powerfully as possible from the written Synthesis. The reader does not have to focus on the technical requirements of submitting a Synthesis to the CCT Program; for this, the student, advisor, and the instructor for the Synthesis seminar are responsible. During early May or December each synthesis student will make a presentation on their work, which the reader should attend. There is no formal defence of the syntheses.