

Annual report to CAPS & Graduate Studies, 2015-16
Critical & Creative Thinking Graduate Program
(including Science in a Changing World graduate track)
by Peter Taylor, Program Director, 20 May 2016

Information requested by Graduate Studies is indicated by ()*

Preamble

CCT is a small graduate program with matriculated student numbers hovering in the mid 30s. It has always been able to offer a wide range of electives by enrollments of students from other programs (typically around half of CCT enrollments). Partnerships require continuing cultivation yet have been subject to being discontinued for reasons beyond CCT's control. (*) Budget cuts may increase the teaching load of the core faculty and administrators (in other programs as well as CCT) and thus render partnerships harder to sustain.

Overarching Goals for '15-16

- A. Support the intellectual, professional, and personal development of CCT and other students, through teaching, advising, mentoring, a coherent program of study, and community building that extends to include alums.
- B. Attract applicants to CCT and advise them through to matriculation.
- C. Establish sustainable, non-exploitative operations and planning, which includes cultivating and sustaining registration-enhancing partnerships with other programs.

Numbers

Since the last annual report (i.e., from June '15 – May '16):

The Program has served 32 matriculated students (28 M.A., 4 Certificate), including 10 new M.A. matriculants and 2 new Certificate matriculants. 6 M.A. student graduated; 4 others have completed all course work but not their capstone; 2 graduated with a Certificate (including one student who had been an M.A. student). 2 students lapsed as active students, leaving 30 continuing students.

Through regular, online, other CAPS, and cross-listed sections, CCT instructors served 173 course registrations in CCT and SICW courses, including cross-listings, amounting to a 6% decrease from the previous year.

Notable changes or successes

- A. An experimental version of the core course in Critical Thinking was offered using a Problem-Based Learning format with goals, among others, of investigating a) how much well-worn sources from the 80s and 90s have been superseded by more recent research and writing; b) how much the critical thinking process needs to involve individuals seeking or creating supportive "context," e.g., arranging sounding boards or establishing one's surroundings as a "studio" to make a space where critical thinking comes easier?
- B. –
- C. CCT courses have begun to be taken by PhD students from new programs and by matriculants who would have joined the LTET program. The decline in overall student registration due to phasing out of previous partnerships (see below) was kept small.

Challenges

- A. Continue to innovate in core courses.
 - B. Promotion for a new BA-MA (accelerated Masters) program needs to be re-engaged.
 - C. Enrollments from Learning, Teaching, and Educational Transformation (LTET) continued to phase out (given that the Chair of Curriculum & Instruction closed admissions to LTET in March 2015. The 50% faculty member has not been able to have the expected presence in program promotion. For this reason, and because the GPD had to attend to personal family matters, promotion of a new BA-MA (accelerated Masters) program (approved last year) and of CCT to other new graduate programs, as well as progress on a proposed doctoral program in partnership with MassArt, have been limited.
- * A+B+C. Budget cuts may increase the teaching load of the core faculty, thus reducing time for course review and revision, for program promotion, and for sustainable, non-exploitative operations and planning.

Other Program Successes

1. The Inter-college Seminar on Humanities and Sciences resumed in the spring, hosted by CCT with support from CAPS, <http://sicw.wikispaces.umb.edu/ISHS>.
2. * CCT Assistant Director Jeremy Szteiter recently participated in the U.S. Department of State's International Information Program as a visitor to the U.S. Embassy in Amman, Jordan. He presented workshops to teachers on the topics of integrating critical thinking into the curriculum and the use of critical thinking and reflective practice in support of teacher professional development. During the trip, he was also interviewed by the Jordan Times about the opportunities for development of critical and creative thinking in local schools, participated in a panel discussions at the Shoman Foundation and local universities, and led a discussion with representatives from the Ministry of Education about the role of critical thinking in Jordanian education.
3. Peter Taylor prepared entries for a new edition of the book *Taking Yourself Seriously*, which will include tools and processes for “Connecting, Probing, and Reflecting” workshops and collaborative explorations.