University of Massachusetts at Boston
College of Advancing and Professional Studies
Critical & Creative Thinking Graduate Program

Syllabus

CRCRTH 618: Creative Thinking, Collaboration, and Organizational Change

Fall 2016 hybrid format (Face-to-face students: register for class #14048; online students register for class #6917)
September 12 – December 12, 2016; Mondays 7:00-9:45pm
UMass Boston, Wheatley Hall 4ᵗʰ Floor, Room W04-170 or online in Google Hangout

Instructor: Jeremy Szteiter
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Office/phone call hours: contact the instructor for an appointment

Key Reference Links

- Course wiki (starting point for all course material): http://crcrth618.wikispaces.umb.edu/
- Google Hangout main link (for online participants): http://tiny.cc/CCT618
- Fall 2016 academic calendar for College of Advancing and Professional Studies: https://www.umb.edu/academics/caps/credit/fall/calendar

Course Format

Hybrid format, with weekly meetings and assignments. All students attend all meetings either on campus (face-to-face students) on through Google Hangout (online students).

This course does not use Blackboard; the wiki is the central location for primary materials and links to all other resources used in the course.

Catalog Description

Through interactive, experiential sessions and structured assignments, students learn critical and creative approaches to working in organizations. Skills addressed include: communication and team-building; facilitation of participation and collaboration in groups; promotion of learning from a diversity of perspectives; problem-finding and solving; and reflective practice. Students apply these skills to situations that arise in business, schools, social change groups, and other organizations with a view to taking initiative and generating constructive change.

Course Overview:

This course is about exploring the relationships between creative thinking, collaboration, and organizational change and finding insight into the connection between theories about these relationships and the realities of how organizations, teams, and communities work (or don't work) in

practice. This course, within the Critical and Creative Thinking program, supports an interdisciplinary perspective, where we can draw upon diverse interests, backgrounds, and types of organizational settings (schools, businesses, government and nonprofit agencies, social organizations, families, etc.). Further, we give attention not only to improving organizations but also seek to expand our understanding of how individual thinking relates to collaboration and organizational work. Through a number of activities, interactions, and readings, the course provides a framework for students to build a body of knowledge that bridges theory and practice and provides tools and strategies around organization change in their own settings.

Preparation Assumed for this Course

This course has no prerequisites. No specific preparation is required for this course, although students will hopefully have developed some perspective around collaboration and creating change in organizational settings. Students may enter the course with some ongoing professional issue or organizational challenge in mind that they hope to address, but such an issue need not be well-defined by the time the course starts. Students should generally expect to spend about 8-10 hours per week on course requirements (including time spent in class meetings).

General Expectations

Students should know their umb.edu email address and password and be prepared to use these to sign in to university-supported systems, including the course wiki. Students are required to check their umb.edu email account for messages once the course begins, as messages from the instructor will be sent there. Students may have their umb.edu account set up to automatically forward messages to a personal email address that they use more regularly, if they prefer, but ongoing communications from the instructor will typically be sent only to the umb.edu address.

Students registered in the face-to-face section attend on campus, and those registered online attend in Google Hangout. Please note that you are required to attend in the format under which you registered (it is not permissible to decide week-to-week if you will come to campus or not).

Students are expected to meet all standards specified in the Student Code of Conduct, available here: http://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/policies/community/code

Course Learning Objectives

At the end of this course, students will have:
1. Clarified the differences between working groups and real, high-performing teams and establish principles that can guide you in understanding your role within teams and the compatibility of personal and team goals.
2. Practiced and assembled a set of tools, strategies, and professional habits that can be applied in schools, organizations, and other workplaces for strengthening communication and team-building; facilitation of participation and collaboration in groups; using systems thinking to address complex organizational dynamics; and developing as leaders around problem-finding and solving and reflective practice.

3. Mapped out a plan for practice that adopts and adapts the tools and skills to your specific concern or environment and prepares you to evaluate the outcomes in support of a learning organization.

Required Texts and Materials

1. Senge, P. M. (1994). *The Fifth discipline fieldbook: Strategies and tools for building a learning organization*. New York: Currency, Doubleday. (ISBN-10: 0385472560, ISBN-13: 978-0385472562). Used copies are often available inexpensively from online booksellers.
2. West, M. A., & Work Foundation. (2012). *Effective teamwork: Practical lessons from organizational research*. Third Edition. Chichester, West Sussex: BPS Blackwell. (ISBN-10: 0470974974, ISBN-13: 978-0470974971). Recommended: available free in ebook format from the UMass Boston library (eBrary database). Use your umb.edu password to download: http://site.ebrary.com/lib/umass/detail.action?docID=10526602&p00=effective+teamwork+practical+lessons+organizational+research
3. Microphone + webcam for students participating from a distance (a headset-microphone and USB webcam, or a laptop with built-in mic. and video camera, for example). Online participants should have a reliable Internet connection (wired preferred over wireless).
4. Students attending the meetings face-to-face are encouraged to bring their own laptops (because of the hybrid format, some activities work best when everyone has access to certain online materials during the class meetings).

General Course Logistics and Schedule

Course materials are organized on a week-to-week schedule. Materials for the week are made available on the course wiki by Monday evening (when we have our class meetings), and in general, assignments for that week are due the following Monday by the end of the day. Some other assignments may extend beyond a single week. All times referenced in course materials and by the instructor should be regarded as Eastern time zone if not otherwise noted.

Assessment & Requirements

GRADED REQUIREMENTS:

Written Assignments and Class Participation (93% of grade)

- Reading Reflection postings (15 points)
- Completion of weekly homework assignments (and revisions, as necessary) (20 points)
- Key Concern Log (5 points)
- Prepared class attendance, including completion of readings and contributions to discussions (15 points).
- Papers (2 short papers + 1 final Plan for Practice paper) (30 points)
- Presentation on Plan for Practice (4 points)
- Peer commentaries (2 points)

- Mid-semester self-assessment and conference (2 points)
- Optional: Permission to share pieces of your work as examples for future generations of the course (up to 2 points).

Quality Contributions Rubric (7% of grade):

Beyond the points achieved for the written assignments and participation, additional points come from the following rubric based on the instructor's own evaluation (total points divided by 2):

2 = did this quite well; often exceeded expectations
1 = usually met the minimum expectation, but with some room for improvement
0 = not a particular strength of mine for this course

Quality Statement	0	1	2
1. Assignments submitted by the due date (no more than one written assignment missed and where the combined total days late of all other submissions is <= 10)			
2. Reading Reflections that shows thoughtful attention to the connections between the readings and your own experiences and with the development of your own thinking as it builds over the course of the semester. You seek to make your own reasoning clear and avoid broad or general statements that don't include supporting explanations.			
3. Initiative taken in keeping up with the course, making up for missed sessions, submitting any needed revisions in a timely way, and seeking out clarification around the course process and expectations in a timely way when you are not clear about something.			
4. Commitment to supporting others in the class; includes contributing to the class as a community of learners and offering substantive peer commentary (during class meetings or through written assignments) that stimulates thinking beyond superficial praise or reactions.			
5. Plan for Practice that is well-structured, organized, and serves as a foundation for practical extensions beyond the course term.			
6. Written work is almost entirely free from mechanical, grammatical, formatting, and spelling errors, uses consistent academic standards, and is presented professionally.			
7. Participation in the course shows a constructive spirit toward helping us understand how to improve the running of a hybrid course, and participation includes some willingness to experiment with, and patience for, new or imperfect technologies as we engage in-person and virtually.			

A = 93+, A- = 88-92, B+ =82-87, B = 76-81, B- =70-75, C+ = 64-69, C = 58-63

ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION POLICY

All work must be submitted as a digital file in either Microsoft Word or PDF format (no printed pages, please, without prior arrangement). Please see specific instructions on the wiki for online submission of files (and note that work should generally **not** be sent as email attachments).

Late policy: Formally, there are no extensions granted for late work. Instead, please submit work as soon as you can if you cannot submit it on time (and note that this affects final grading as indicated by the rubric above). The exceptions are the weekly submissions of the Reading Responses and the monthly submissions of Key Concern Log, which will not be accepted late.

Weekly Schedule

Over the term, the course addresses three key themes (approximately once each month):
1. Moving Toward Real, High-Performance Teams
2. Chaos, Creativity, and Systems Thinking
3. Connecting Individual Purpose and Organizational Change

Every week, a set of activities and assignments is planned to extend our learning as we attend to the current theme. In many weeks, we introduce activities to practice in class, but in some weeks, we don't meet, so activities and assignments are still released that week but are completed individually and independently. Note that we only meet on 9 of the Mondays throughout the semester:

- Meetings on Mondays at 7:00pm ET:
  - September 12, 19, 26; October 3, 17, 24, 31; November 14, 21; December 5, 12
- No Meetings:
  - October 10, November 7, and November 28

Week	Date	General Topics or Activities
Theme: Moving Toward Real, High-Performance Teams		
1	**September 12** Meeting: 7:00-9:45pm ET	Course Overview and Introductions, Thinking in Teams
2	**September 19** Meeting: 7:00-9:45pm ET	Team Learning and the Role of Listening Well
3	**September 26** Meeting: 7:00-9:45pm ET	Teams, Leadership, and Relationships
4	**October 3** Meeting: 7:00-9:45pm ET	Team Challenges and Deep Change
Theme: Chaos, Creativity, and Systems Thinking		
5	**October 10** *NO MEETING*	Chaos and Influence on Change
6	**October 17** Meeting: 7:00-9:45pm ET	Chaos and Creativity in Organizations
7	**October 24** Meeting: 7:00-9:45pm ET	Overview of Systems Thinking
8	**October 31** Meeting: 7:00-9:45pm ET	Systems Thinking and Interconnectedness
Theme: Connecting Individual Purpose and Organizational Change		
9	**November 7** *NO MEETING*	Exploring Individual Purpose

10	**November 14** Meeting: 7:00-9:45pm ET	Purpose, Mastery, and Informal Leadership
11	**November 21** Meeting: 7:00-9:45pm ET	Purpose and Community
12	**November 28** *NO MEETING*	Extending Personal Vision and Purpose; Large Group Creativity
13	**December 5** Meeting: 7:00-9:45pm ET	Reflecting on Course Process and Individual Development; Emerging Metaphors for Organizational Change
Theme: Course Reflections, Extensions, and Evaluation		
14	**December 12** Meeting: 7:00-9:45pm ET	Course Evaluations; Future Directions; Dialogue Process

Course Evaluation

At the end of the course, you will be asked to complete an anonymous, online course evaluation (http://bit.ly/CCTEval) as required by the Critical and Creative Thinking program and the College of Advancing and Professional Studies. No personally identifiable information is captured from this evaluation; at the same time, the comments made benefit the program as a whole and wider university in continuing to develop the course, and so evaluation responses may be made viewable to faculty, administrators, and future prospective students so that all may learn from the experiences of past students. No responses will be released to instructors until final course grades have been posted.

Reflective Practice Portfolio

This only applies to students in the Critical and Creative Thinking MA Program: the Plan for Practice assignment is appropriate and recommended for inclusion in the program's required Reflective Practice Portfolio. Other options might also be acceptable.

Accommodation Statement

Sections 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 offer guidelines for curriculum modifications and adaptations for students with documented disabilities. Students may contact the Ross Center (617-287-7430) for assistance. The student must present any recommendations to the professor within a reasonable period, preferably by the end of the Drop/Add period.

Instructor Background and Experience

Jeremy Szteiter is a graduate of Carnegie Mellon University (Cognitive Science) and University of Massachusetts Boston (Critical and Creative Thinking) and now serves as the Assistant Director of the graduate program in Critical and Creative Thinking at UMass Boston. His work has centered on program and organizational development, particularly in adult education in community-based human services and has involved managing, developing, and teaching programs to lifelong learners, with an emphasis on a learning process that involves the teaching of others what has been learned and supporting the growth of individuals to become nonformal teachers of what they know. Jeremy's work draws upon principles and practices of social change pedagogy, technology-enhanced collaboration, instructional design, and participatory theater.

Extended Bibliography

Some readings will be provided and drawn from the following list.

- Brookfield, S. (1986). *Understanding and facilitating adult learning: A comprehensive analysis of principles and effective practices*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Cockell, J., & McArthur-Blair, J. (2012). *Appreciative inquiry in higher education: A transformative force*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, a Wiley imprint.
- Elbow, P. (1981). *Writing with power: Techniques for mastering the writing process*. New York: Oxford University Press.
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- Kaner, S. (2014). *Facilitator's guide to participatory decision-making*.
- Komives, S. R., & Wagner, W. (2012). *Leadership for a Better World: Understanding the Social Change Model of Leadership Development*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons.
- Lipmanowicz, H., & McCandless, K. (2014). *The surprising power of liberating structures: Simple rules to unleash a culture of innovation*.
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- Staples, B. (2013). *Transformational strategy: Facilitation of ToP participatory planning*. Bloomington: Iuniverse Com.
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- Stroh, P. D. (December 01, 2000). Leveraging Change: The Power of Systems Thinking in Action. *Reflections: the Sol Journal, 2,* 2, 51-66.
- Taylor, P. (2012). *Taking yourself seriously: Processes of research and engagement*. S.l.: Pumping Station.
- Taylor, P. J., Fifield, S. J., & Young, C. C. (March 01, 2011). Cultivating Collaborators: Concepts and Questions Emerging Interactively from an Evolving, Interdisciplinary Workshop. *Science As Culture, 20,* 1, 89-105.
- Wenger, E., White, N., & Smith, J. D. (2009). *Digital Habitats: Stewarding Technology for Communities*.
- West, M. A. (2012). *Effective teamwork: Practical lessons from organizational research*. Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons.
- Wheatley, M. J. (2010). *Leadership and the new science: Discovering order in a chaotic world*. San Francisco, Calif: Berrett-Koehler.

Syllabus Version

September 2016; This syllabus is subject to change and updated versions may be distributed at the beginning of the course term if adjustments become necessary, but the workload expectations noted above will not be increased after the course starts. Course curriculum based on the original design by Allyn Bradford and amendments by Jeremy Szteiter.