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

Syllabus

CRCRTH 694: Synthesis of Theory and Practice

Spring 2018, section (Face-to-face section: class #10329; online section: class #10986)
Thursdays, 4:00-6:45pm ET, January 25 – May 10, 2018

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Course wiki (for all materials and course info.): http://crcrth694.wikispaces.umb.edu/2018JS
Zoom conferences: http://tiny.cc/CCT694

Course Format

Online and synchronous: weekly meetings in Zoom web conferencing

Official Catalog Description

This seminar provides participants with an opportunity to review and reflect on their work in the program and its impact on their current and future professional and personal lives, through a final project that demonstrates knowledge and integration of critical and creative thinking skills, processes, and strategies. To facilitate the synthesis of ideas and the identification of a final project option, the seminar begins with group experiences. Students choosing the same final project option meet in small groups weekly to present their plans and progress notes for support and critique. A three-page final project description is presented early in the course, and all projects are presented during the last four weeks.

Notes about Preparation Assumed for this Course

Formal prerequisites: Students will have completed most, if not all, other courses in their Master's program (usually Critical and Creative Thinking; MEd-LTET and other students may take this course with the instructor's permission and permission from their own program director), and CRCRTH 692, Processes of Research and Engagement, must have been completed. Students also must have no more than one Incomplete left and not be on academic probation.

Through your previous courses, you should have a toolbox of practices for research and writing, ranging from freewriting to annotated bibliographies and have established other research and study competencies. Through courses and other personal and professional experience you should have defined an issue that you now want to write about in a way that synthesizes theory and practice

(both your own and that of other people). (Your understanding of the issue will evolve during your research and writing; that's expected and OK.)

Course Overview

Everyone has a voice that should be heard. Everyone can clarify and develop their thoughts through writing. Everyone needs support to express their voice in writing. Finding voice, clarifying and developing thoughts, and expressing voice in writing are on-going, lifelong endeavors. Nevertheless, preparing a completed synthesis-for-now to meet a defined target date is worthwhile, even when the product is much smaller in scope than originally envisaged. That is what we work on together in CRCRTH 694. We use the following frameworks and creative habits:

Frameworks
1. Taking yourself seriously
2. Phases of Research and Engagement for Pacing of research, writing, and revision
3. Developing as a Reflective Practitioner, including Taking initiative in and through relationships

Creative Habits
1. Daily writing
2. Peer Writing Support meetings (outside of class meetings) for small-group writing support, peer coaching, and feedback (weekly)
3. Writing workshop (during class meetings) with the whole class for reflection in relation to the frameworks above (weekly)
4. Extended one-on-one conferences with an advisor (the instructor) to focus on development toward personal and course goals (at least once every three weeks)

In order to complete the capstone by the end of the semester, students are expected to undertake Daily writing and Peer Support meetings in the weeks before the semester starts (as arranged in an initial class at the end of the previous semester). Short mini-workshops and one-on-one conferences may also be arranged during that period (online).

In addition, each student should establish personal support systems, which include:
- Making space in your lives and domestic arrangements so you undertake writing and peer support starting before and continuing during the semester.
- Establishing and maintaining a bibliographic database for ready retrieval and formatting of references.
- Seeking out guides or advisors in your area of specialization.
- Making use of UMass writing support services
- Arranging an outside editor to help with revision and copy-editing.

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 expense. In case you need extra motivation to get you to establish creative habits and personal support systems, take note in the Contract of various procedures, deadlines, and consequences.

Texts and Materials

Required Texts:
- Elbow, P. (1981 or later reprints). *Writing with Power*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- A guide on technical matters of writing scholarly papers. At a minimum: a condensed guide such as Hacker, D. (5th edition or more recent) *A Pocket Style Manual*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins. Alternatively, a more complete manual for writing scholarly papers is recommended, for example, Turabian, K. L. (6th edition or more recent). *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Taylor, P. and J. Szteiter (2012) *Taking Yourself Seriously: Processes of Research and Engagement*; Arlington, MA: The Pumping Station (Available from online retailers or as PDF from http://thepumpingstation.org)

Required Technical Setup:
- A user account on Google Plus (https://plus.google.com), for attending Google+ Hangout conferences and accessing the class Google Community and shared documents through Google Drive
- Installed browser plugins for Google Hangout (just needs to be done once per browser: see https://www.google.com/tools/dlpage/hangoutplugin).
- Hardware for web video conferencing (webcam, and speaker and microphone setup that prevents feedback – this is usually done automatically when you use either a laptop or a combo headphone/microphone but needs to be checked on computers where speakers and microphone are plugged in separately).
- Reliable, wired Internet connection (computer connected directly to Internet modem rather than using wireless, whenever possible).
- Additional competencies related to using Google Hangout, accessing your student login account for UMB email and other systems, library barcode, and systematic methods around your computer file organization.

  Note: it is recommended that you do not use iPads or other tablets for Google Hangout meetings, since some features such as written Chat often do not work well in these devices.

Recommended:
- Palmer, P. (2000) *Let Your Life Speak*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Daniel, D., C. Fauske, P. Galeno, and D. Mael. (2001). *Take Charge of Your Writing: Discovering Writing Through Self-Assessment*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Bibliographic software for references (e.g., Endnote, or for free Endnote Web or RefWorks)

Key Reference Links

Course wiki (central source for course materials; requires login with your umb.edu account):
http://crcrth694.wikispaces.umb.edu/
(and then on the right menu, go to "Jeremy's section for 2018")

Online students: Google+ Community (you'll need to accept the email invitation to join when it comes):
[link]

Academic Calendar (for online courses offered through Critical and Creative Thinking/College of Advancing and Professional Studies; please note registration deadlines):
http://www.umb.edu/academics/caps/credit/spring/calendar

Graduation Planning (deadlines, forms, and other administration related to applying to graduate):
https://www.umb.edu/registrar/graduation

Learning Objectives

The learning objectives for this course are met by addressing the three frameworks related to the synthesis of theory and practice in a program of study (such as in the area of critical and creative thinking or some other). The following descriptions help to show how these frameworks point to the kinds of goals involved:

Framework 1: Taking Yourself Seriously

By the end of the semester, the goal of the course is that you no longer need the input of an instructor or the structure of a course to initiate, plan, and carry through projects in your life involving research, writing, and outreach. You will have come to "take yourself seriously" -- not in the sense of "without humor", but in the sense of not relying on external directions to motivate or reward you, where you (re)discover your capacity to the leader of your own effort to develop change. Such inner-directedness is described in the text by Palmer as "letting your life speak" or finding or acknowledging your vocation, but it is recognized that this goal may take more than one semester to achieve (and may be one that gets renewed at many stages of life)!

On a more prosaic level, by the end of the semester, for each of the goals listed below, students will be able to identify
a) things that reflect what you have achieved well related to this goal, and
b) things you have struggled with/ need more help on/ want to work further on.
The goals are divided into two sets:

Framework 2: "My Project Product Shows That..." (based on the Phases of Research and Engagement)

   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.

Framework 3: Developing as a Reflective Practitioner, Including Taking Initiatives in and Through Relationships

1. I have integrated knowledge and perspectives from other courses into my own inquiry and engagement in social, educational, professional, or personal 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 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 course (and the program I am a student in) 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.

Summary of Weekly Schedule

Under the Topic/Theme, the noted Phase indicates how that week's material aligns with the phases of research and engagement, from Taking Yourself Seriously.

Week	Meeting Date (Weekly on Thursdays, 4:00-9:45pm ET, but note exceptions below)	Summary of Topic/Themes
0	**Pre-semester meetings on December 19 (and 30-minute check-ins on Jan. 11th at 4:00pm ET**	Establishing a Vision for your Project (Phase A) + Setting up technical and research systems/habits.
1	**January 25**	Project Vision (Phase A)
2	**February 1**	Supplementing Sources of Information and Informants (Phases B, F)
3	**February 8**	Models of Engagement; Organizing and Managing Research Material (Phase B)
4	**February 15**	Clarifying Synthesis Formulation and Governing Question (Phase C)
5	**February 22**	Clarifying Component Arguments (Phase D)
6	**March 1**	Design of Remaining Research and Writing (Phase E)
7	**March 8**	Preparation for Work-in-progress Presentations (Phase G)
	March 15: No meeting – Spring Break	*Continue writing/prep. for presentation.*
8	**March 22**	Work-in-progress Presentations (Phase G)
9	**March 29**	Getting and Using Feedback on Writing (Phase H)
	April 5: No meeting.	*Work on completing your full draft.*
10	**April 12**	Revision: "Now that I'm finished, I can see what I want to say" (Phase H)
11	**April 19**	Looking Ahead to Outreach and Further Directions (Phase I)
12	**April 26**	Preparation for Public Presentations (Phases H, I)

Week	Meeting Date (Weekly on Thursdays, 4:00-9:45pm ET, but note exceptions below)	Summary of Topic/Themes
13	April 30 and May 1 (Monday and Tuesday)	Public Presentations (in coordination with CCT Network/community open house series) (Phases H, I)
14	May 10	Taking Stock of the Course (and Program); Next Steps (Phase J)

Contract (Assessment and Requirements)

Project Options

The Synthesis project can take many forms, 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. The form of the project may mean that the paper and other components complement each other. Some of these may include the following:

- Long essay/theory paper
- Case Study/Practitioner's Narratives
- Curriculum Unit/ Professional Development Workshop Series
- Original Products (with documentation)
- Arts Option (Performance) (also with documentation)

Grading

The final course grade comes from two main sources: a) 50% is based on the instructor's evaluation of the synthesis (incl. final capstone product, presentation, and self-assessment); b) 50% is based on the student's process, participation, and peer support efforts along the way. (Note: This means that the grade for the course is not the same as evaluation of the synthesis products.)

a) Evaluation of Synthesis Rubric

For each item below, the instructor and another reader (often another CCT faculty member) provide an evaluation based on this rubric over the main elements of the synthesis:

2: "fulfilled very well"
1: "did an OK job, but room for more development/attention"
0: "needed a lot more development/attention"

Presentation:

A 30-60 minute oral presentation, given at a public event late in the semester, demonstrates how the student:
... has, through a project in an area of their special interest, synthesized their practical and theoretical learning in critical thinking, creative thinking, and reflective practice.
... is able to facilitate new avenues of classroom, workplace, and public participation.

The written synthesis (technical matters)
... Appropriate length (20-40 pages; 4500-9000 words).
... References complete, correct, and in a consistent format.
... Professionally presented, making no, or very few, errors in spelling and format.

The written synthesis shows that the student:
... can convey clearly who they want to influence/affect concerning what (i.e., Subject, Audience, Purpose).
... knows what others have done before, either in the form of writing or action, that informs and connects with their project, and knows what others are doing now (i.e., "incorporates... references to relevant scholarly [and other] work in its field").
... has gained direct information, models, and experience not readily available from other sources.
... has clarified the overall progression or argument underlying their research and the written product (i.e., "incorporates an appropriate theoretical/conceptual framework").
... writes in a way that Grabs the attention of the readers/audience, Orients them, moves them along in Steps, so they appreciate the Position they've led them to.
... has facilitated new avenues of classroom, workplace, and public participation.
... has, in order to feed into their future learning and other work, taken stock of what has been working well and what needs changing.
... has integrated knowledge and perspectives from CCT and other courses into their own inquiry and engagement in social, educational, personal, or professional change (i.e., "demonstrates knowledge and integration of critical and creative thinking skills, processes and strategies").
... has also integrated into their own inquiry and engagement the processes, experiences, and struggles of previous courses.

The exit self-assessment (completed near the end of the course) shows:
... that the student has noted for each of the 20 goals "a) something that reflects what you have achieved well related to this goal, and b) something you have struggled with/ need more help on/ want to work further on."
... deep reflection on student's development through the synthesis project and Program as a whole.

The items above are totaled for each of the two evaluators, and the average of the two is taken. This number is then multiplied by 50/32 to get the points for the first 50% of the course grade.

Additionally, based on that average, the following scale is also used to indicate achievement through the capstone toward a student's graduation:

- Pass with Distinction = 28 or more
- Pass = 21-27
- Low Pass = 16-20
- Needs to be revised = less than 16 (in this case, it's not possible to complete the course or graduate until work is done to raise the quality of the project)

b) Course process, participation, and peer support

Participation in weekly class meetings (coming prepared, and being attentive in the two parts of each meeting) [28 points = 14 weeks x 2 points per meeting]
Class workshop (1 point per meeting)
Peer group writing/feedback (1 point per meeting)

Submitting installments of the written project [12 points]
At least every three weeks (= at least 4 times during the semester x 3 points for each installment)

Daily writing (practice of 15-30 minutes, at least 5 days per week of writing *new words*) [14 points]
as documented through weekly submission of log (minutes per day + brief plus-delta statement on your progress) (1 point per week)

One-on-one conferences with instructor [4 points]
At least once every three weeks (=at least 4 conferences x 1 point each)

Work-in-progress presentation [2 points]
During week 8, includes submitting brief written feedback for other presenters

The total of the items above, multiplied by 50/60, gives the points for the second 50% of the course grade.

c) Overall Grade

Sum the points from a) and b) above, and convert a letter grade as follows:
minimum grade for A is 95 points, 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 points.

Notes on final due dates for synthesis materials

- An oral presentation happens by the next-to-last week of the semester. The synthesis paper is submitted for evaluation by the last session of the semester. The exit self-assessment and an abstract page is submitted by a week after the last session.

- If the course is not passed, it must be retaken. If the course is passed, but the capstone work is evaluated as above with a result of "needs to be revised", the course can be retaken, or a completion contract can be established. Under the completion contract, the synthesis grade is not submitted until the revised capstone gets a passing evaluation, a year goes by, (or, for CCT students, the student graduates with a Certificate), whichever comes first.

- The synthesis products of CCT students who get a "pass" or a "pass with distinction" for their capstone may printed and bound by the Program (subject to confirmation), once additional front matter has been added, including an abstract written by the student. It will also be made available online via UMass Boston's ScholarWorks site and the CCT website (with any private or sensitive material removed at the student's request).

Additional descriptions of expectations around participation and assignments:

Within each **weekly course meeting**, the meeting time is divided in half, and then two formats are used to support interaction during these periods: 1) the **Class Workshop**, which involves a dialogue or reflective process among the whole class in support of development toward the three frameworks, and 2) **Peer Writing Support**, which involves meeting separately with your peer group (established at the beginning of the semester and continuing for the duration) and exchanging feedback on written installments of work along with addressing some specific activities together that relate to some of the processes of research and engagement. The requirements are that each student participates in both segments and comes prepared, which may include bringing pieces of your writing to share with your peers, having completed readings (such as background on research phases), and others, depending upon the week.

The **Daily Writing** requirement involves a consistent, disciplined practice of writing for 15-30 minutes each day, free of distraction, for at least 5 days of the week. The writing should focus on ideas that have a direct impact on your project and move you toward getting clear about what you need to say. The process should produce "new words" in the sense that you are getting ideas down into written form, although these might be the words that end up in you final paper. Think about this writing practice as the creative process that helps to transform your inner voice into a tangible form. Separately, and perhaps later, you'll then give attention to other activities such as editing, revising, formatting, cleaning up the mechanics, and adding subheadings and citations (i.e. the kinds of things that turn writing into a formal paper can get done later). You do not need to submit the output from the Daily Writing, but on a weekly basis, you'll submit a log that indicates number of minutes spent writing per day, plus a very brief plus-delta evaluation of your own progess (which can help you to organize how to focus the discussion during upcoming Peer Writing Support meetings and instructor conferences).

By submitting **Written Installments** of your work, you give yourself a chance to make progress toward the written capstone, establish a source of feedback from peers and instructors, and take stock of what has been accomplished and what is needed at several points throughout the semester. Each installment builds toward your draft and might very well come about through a process of combining some of what you've done during the Daily Writing with the organizing and sequencing that is needed to making things more cohesive and readable to an outsider. An installment should, ideally, be in prose form (full sentences and paragraphs), but it is ok for some parts to be sketched out less thoroughly or to put in placeholders that show that you need to go and find a reference or save a mental note for yourself.

One-on-one instructor conferences give you a chance to explore your progress more directly, receive additional instructor feedback, and seek help with resources and connections. Aim for a conference at least every three weeks during the semester (about 20-30 minutes each time).

By giving a **Presentation on Work-in-progress** in class to your peers, you support your work by articulating your work and creating a clear opportunity for additional feedback from others to help you to move forward. Specifically, this presentation supports the goal of Clarification Through Communication ("I have clarified the overall progression or argument underlying my research and the written reports I am starting to prepare."). At least one class meeting around mid-semester will involve these presentations, and each student in the course will give a presentation to peers and received verbal and written feedback. This presentation may be somewhat less formal than the final public presentation, but it should include some form of visual aids and should also involve prepared, practiced delivery (not ad-libbing or extemporaneous speaking, but also not reading word-for-word from a written script). Some time will be set aside during the previous class meeting to work on preparations. During the presentation, you may use part of your time to ask the audience to participate directly, such as trying an activity or responding directly to part of a lesson plan, for example. In short, use the presentation to get what you need to move forward in your project.

Reflective Practice Portfolio

This only applies to students in the Critical and Creative Thinking MA Program: by now, students will have established their Reflective Practice and Metacognitive Portfolio (see http://cctrpp.wikispaces.umb.edu/) and may find it helpful to refer to this as they develop their synthesis work and look back on their experience in the program and its contribution to your development as a reflective practitioner (especially in support of Framework 3 above).

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. Note that the question in the evaluation referring to a statement of synthesis about the course as a whole may be shared widely, so that the instructor, the program, and other parties may appreciate the course's strengths and weaknesses and contribute more effectively to continued development.

Accommodation Statement

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

Code of Conduct

https://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/policies/community/code

The University's Student Code of Conduct exists to maintain and protect an environment conducive to learning. It sets clear standards of respect for members of the University community and their

property, as well as laying out the procedures for addressing unacceptable conduct. Students can expect faculty members and the Office of the Dean of Students to look after the welfare of the University community and, at the same time, to take an educational approach in which students violating the Code might learn from their mistakes and understand how their behavior affects others.

Syllabus Version

January 2018; This syllabus is subject to change and updated versions may be distributed after the course begins, but the workload expectations will not be increased after the semester starts. Students are advised to keep a copy of this syllabus in their personal files.