

David Kooharian

Spring 2017

Critical and Creative Thinking Portfolio

Entering the CCT graduate program was more of a compulsion than an intellectual decision. On the one hand I have long realized that I do not like being a student or even taking classes. I used to think that this was a fault of mine and that it was something to overcome but I no longer feel that way. It is what I am and it is a strength, not a weakness. I have always explored whatever interests me and I am interested in almost everything. Formal education amounts to only a small part of what I know. As an artist I have developed the ability to be self-critical, self-motivated, and self-reliant. I am sensitive to the gaps in my education. I hate not knowing things and when I am faced with an area that I feel ignorant about I explore the subject and learn enough to feel competent in the subject. As I grow older I find that I have become more efficient in the critical assessment of new information. I often sift through ideas looking for ones that fill holes or answer questions. When I paint a picture, start a project, or even read a book, I am compelled to finish what I started even if it not worth finishing. I hate to leave things unfinished. My education has been unfinished and it has haunted me for thirty-six years. That is the other hand. I need to finish school because I need to know what I do not know. I need to know that I have filled all of the gaps in my education. Finishing this degree makes me feel more confident about myself and that makes me more effective as an artist, an educator, and as a leader.

The process of selecting a program of study was influenced by several conditions. The first condition was the practicality of attending a class in person. This presented enough challenges that I decided that whatever program I chose would have to be online. Price and

quality was also a major concern which narrowed my search to U Mass schools. I had finished my undergraduate degree at the University Without Walls, U Mass Amherst, and that was a good experience. In selecting the exact program I struggled a bit. I wanted to have a degree that would help me advance my path in teaching but I could not find an online Art Education program. I thought about art history but that felt limiting and those programs were also hard to find. Then I found the CCT program and I thought that critical and creative thinking was the course of study that I had set myself on as an artist and just as a personality type since I was in high school. Here was an opportunity to test myself and see what was known by others but not to me. The fact that I could also work on education and leadership made the program seem near ideal. Entering the program I had no clear career goal in mind beyond an interest in teaching art in high school. I am still interested in this but I am also open to other opportunities and directions. I am motivated to make progress but the path is not clear. I am trusting that as I move forward the way will present itself and I will be where I should be.

The first semester was in the spring of 2015 and I took three classes: **Creative Thinking, Holistic and Transformative Teaching, and Dialogue Process.**

602 Creative and Thinking is a foundation course and one I was looking forward to. The instructor was Luanne Witkowski. This class was very intensive and the instructor's effort was clear in every aspect. There was an extensive investigation of the research done on creativity which was interesting in that I found nothing new in it. Learning is more fun when there is new information to digest but it is still meaningful to discover that background in creativity was stronger than I had believed. The highlight of the class was the reading we did on creators reflecting on their process. Academic research is never as compelling to me as getting a glimpse into a creative mind. Throughout this course I tried to be as creative with my assignments as

possible and that was a refreshing and meaningful exercise. The two reflective essays are included at the end of this paper.

615 Holistic and Transformative Teaching, Jeremy Szteiter, Instructor.

In this course we examined approaches to education that were more humanistic than the traditional factory model of education that predominates in our schools. In the holistic and transformative approach one creates relationship and empowers the student to find what they are good at encourage them to use that as a bases to work and expand from. Students become individual people who need nurturing and not raw material that need to be manufactured into productive members of society. Many of the things I had been doing without much thought turn out to be in line with this approach. It was helpful to find out that there was practice and theory behind what I was trying to do. Knowing this has helped me feel more confident in my decisions and expanded the range of what I can do in the class room.

616 Dialogue Process, Olen Gunnlagson, Instructor.

This class explored the process and theory of dialogue. The goal is develop respect for one's self, others, and the meaningful communication between all. The theory explains that we encounter different levels of communication starting from the most basic in which we take in the most basic ideas and hear little else as we are thinking more about what we will say next, to the highest level in which we are so in tune with others that we can anticipate where the conversation is going, enabling us to both anticipate and guide. The text, Theory U was an interesting take on dialogue. It focused on achieving a higher level of consciousness in order to communicate better. While I liked this idea I did feel that there was a business application that

was being forced onto it in a way that seemed to say that this process was only valuable if it had a profitable application.

Summer Semester 2015

612 Seminar in Creativity, Orin Davis, Instructor

I entered this class with great enthusiasm as creativity is at the heart of all that I do but I was disappointed with the instructor. Within the first hour of the first class he had the other two students, both women, in tears. I listened as he manipulated them into divulging traumatic personal information and then he invalidated their experience and pain. I found that I will not remain silent in the face of bullying no matter how “superior or powerful” the person may be. I have come too far and seen too much to except authority as an excuse for abuse. When I confronted this individual and challenged his behavior he did not react well and he demanded I leave the class or he would fail me. I left but I feel great about how I reacted.

688 Reflective Practice, Peter Taylor, Instructor

This workshop was a new experience for me in many ways. The first thing I struggled with was understanding exactly what I was doing. The structure of the workshop was very much like Mr. Taylor’s other classes but I had not taken any of those classes at this point and so I felt a bit disoriented during the process. The second difference for me was the short but intensive format that included working closely with others in a face to face situation. All of my other classes have been on line. I really liked the experience and I learned a great deal about the process of organizing and running a workshop style class. Interacting with the other students was also very meaningful and thought provoking. I think that I would have made better progress on my project if I had previously taken a similarly structured class. One of the hardest parts of the CCT

program for me has been adjusting to the different class formats, web pages, and technologies. Having a project already started would also have help maximize the experience of the work shop. Over all I found this to be my favorite class of the CCT program and I highly recommend it to all students in the program.

Fall Semester 2015

601 Critical Thinking, Peter Taylor, Instructor

Critical Thinking, as the name suggests, is about the process of thinking critically. Through the examination of different issues the class examined the beliefs and assumptions of both themselves and other writers. The practice of staying open minded and examining all of the different aspects of an idea or issue was excellent practice and serves a constant reminder to rigorously investigate the facts and beliefs we use to understand ideas and issues. The format of the class also allowed students to pursue personal interests which I found very helpful and important. In some ways it is hard to tell where the class ended and where my own investigations began. The end result feels a bit like having taken two different classes at once and that is a good thing.

692 Processes of Research and Engagement, Peter Taylor, Instructor

The first thing that comes to mind when I think about this class is that because Peter sets up his classes in a very similar fashion it is both easy to know what one's expected to do but it is also hard to keep them separate in my mind. The project based learning is here again and I learned a great deal from my investigations while also developing better research and critical thinking skills. Again I find it hard to know where the class ended and my own project began. It is another two for one educational feel. The class was focused on the research but my natural inclination is

to apply what I am doing to produce so kind of action. Here I may have exceeded the scope of the class but I personally got more out of it in this way.

Spring Semester 2016

649 Scientific and Political Change, Peter Taylor, Instructor

In this class we used our critical thinking skills to examine scientific/political issues in the world today. Here again I used the class to explore issues that interested me. The Flint MI water crisis was particularly compelling and illustrated to me the connections between science, politics, money and humanity. This work with another project I did for the class wherein I suggested that rather than muster the humanity to save life we should at least honestly admit that the plan is to sacrifice people places, animals and even the planet in an attempt to increase the wealth of a few. I suggested we should have a list of “sacrifices” so we could all see where we were on the list and how long we had till our number came up.

693 Action Research for Education, Professional and Personal Change, Rhoda Maurer, Instructor

This class which was very similar to the Research Process class became very frustrating. My whole life has been involved in having ideas, educating myself and acquiring the necessary skills to carry them out and then actually doing the work and presenting it to someone or putting it into practice for myself. I feel like the concept of action research is one I am familiar with but I presumed there were things I could do better. My project was one I had been working on for a long time and was frustrated by how slow the process was to get it completed. I hoped I would find better ways to do what I had done and then I could redo parts of my project to make it stronger. What actually happened is that I got bogged down in the class by a great deal of things

that I felt did not help move my project forward or even add clarity to it. The instructor insisted that I didn't understand what action research was and while that may be true I could not get an explanation as to what I was missing. In many ways this was my least favorite experience here but I did emerge feeling very confident that I can conceive of a project and bring it fruition, and put it into action without much trouble. And that is a helpful thing to know.

Fall Semester 2016

655 Metacognition, David Martin, Instructor

The idea of metacognition was not immediately exciting but I needed a class and this qualified as a required course. Once I got started I quickly realized just how interesting the field was. Many of the things I had been observing, trying, and using with students and myself were in fact metacognitive in nature and I didn't even know it. Once I began looking at the theory and practice of metacognition I realized how important it was for teaching and self-improvement. In most of these classes I have found that the concepts are not new but thinking about the studies done to support the underlying theories has been very helpful in that I now actively look for and think about these concepts. I find that when I do that I see things that I hadn't before and I can make sense of what is happening and I can then make informed choices.

603 Foundations of Philosophical Thought, Arthur Millman, Instructor

I came to this class with a long background in philosophical thinking but I had never taken an actual philosophy class so it was nice to see what that would be like. I enjoy philosophy and I found that the selections we read for class formed a broad and meaningful spectrum of thought. I found it interesting that even when I disagreed with certain writers I valued their thoughtful positions. There were however a few exceptions to this and the common denominator was the

few writings by very conservative authors who created false logic to defend unpopular opinions. I found some of the reasoning so lacking that I wondered why they were included in the selections we read from but then I realized that in an effort to be fair and balanced the editors of the text book had to include that point of view. The problem was that some issues can't be rationally defended without the torture of logic.

Reflective essays

602 Creative Thinking:

David Kooharian

602 Creative thinking

3/15/15

Reflective Diary Review I

My creative process thus far is a combination of the different theories and strategies that we have studied. Starting with background and environment, I come from a creative family but I was adopted and my father was a free thinking mathematician. I was the older of two adopted children and I think this all contributed to my creativity. Being adopted and not knowing about my birth family until I was an adult I always looked at my life as a blank canvas on which to paint my life. My father gave me the example and confidence to find my own path and not care what others really thought. I trust myself to find what I am looking for even if I don't know what it is. When you don't know where you are going there are no wrong turns.

Discovering a creative process has been a journey not a destination. The process starts with interests. I find certain ideas, images, sounds, or experiences compelling and then I explore them to find out what makes them so. I swallow experiences, ideas, emotions, stories, and anything else that seems interesting. I let them mix and ferment. I ask questions, change perspective, combine disparate ideas, and use the mindset of different artistic disciplines to work on unrelated creative ideas. For instance when I think about art I do it as a musician. I find that this helps free me up to see things in a different light.

I find that creativity has a great deal of overlap. I feel like if one is creative then one brings that to everything they touch. I am an artist, painter, illustrator but I am also a musician and composer. I have worked in the theater acting, playing in the pits, building sets, doing tech. I cook and make wine, beer and bread. I have written, Illustrated, and hand lettered two graphic books. I have started a teen-age, co-ed outdoor group and led them for seven years. I have broken with social norms by home schooling my kids, finding creative ways to care for terminally ill

family members and creating home funerals. It all comes from the same place and the only difference is how I move my hands.

Where does creativity come from? We are all creative to varying degrees; it is part of being a living creature on this planet. Some people are just born with more of a creative itch. Biology and environment play big parts but no one knows the ratio. Talent is a concept that I am dubious of but if you have an itch, you got to scratch, and after a while you get good at it. I find that creative people talking about something coming from outside is applicable to inherent ability. The skill to create is in the air as much as it is in the practice. Inspiration comes of its own but one must open the door to let it in and most of us keep our door locked and bolted with a life of busy distraction we call productivity. There are ways to open the mind and we have read about some of them.

Going forward I am looking for new ideas that I can use. Sometimes it is just a new way to talk about an old idea that helps make it new again and that is valuable too.

David Kooharian

602 Creativity

5/1/15

Diary Reviews: 1-12, 7-12

Dear diary review,

Yes it that time of year when we must say good-by but before we part let's take a moment to look back at the time we shared.

Week one began with a look into what it means to be creative. The answers are wide and varied but the basic idea is that it is a process that leads to a new way of doing or thinking. The level of creativity may vary widely but it is all part of that process. It comes from who knows where and it manifests itself in millions of acts great and small.

Week two was about self-actualization. There are many creative strategies that can help us on our journey to our true selves, to self-actualization. For me it has been a central focus of my development. I spent years on that road trying to find the path that would lead me to myself only to find that the path was mine to make and that a path already worn would not lead to me.

My favorite definition of the creative process is from Mazlow, “a lot of mysterious mental stuff goes on”. One of the keys to being creative is simply to decide to be creative. It is so much easier to just do what is expected, keeping it as ordinary as possible. No one ever complains when they are served an ordinary meal. While true, that is not very creative so one must decide to be creative. One must decide to pass up the easy expected answers or ideas and look for something new. New is not always good. A lot of new ideas don’t work and the creative person has to be OK with rejection. I tried to bring a creative edge to all of my school work and while not always successful it was more interesting.

Creativity is linked to personal characteristics. An open minded person is likely to be more creative than a closed minded one. Someone tolerant of ambiguity, risk, and change will find new ideas sooner than those who are rigid and afraid. I spent some time applying creative techniques to personal problems which is something I do naturally and while easy answers are hard to come by, new insights into the nature of the problems can be helpful and eventually lead to positive change.

Locating the source of creative ideas is not easy according to... anyone who has ever looked into it. For me it is a process that takes time. It starts with a vague unfocused unease. I start following my intuition, looking into different things and thinking about problems and issues, mulling it all over. I consume everything I can trying to fill some void and as I do it all starts to mix and ferment until one day an idea starts to take shape. Once the idea has been purged from my system I then try to creatively tidy it up and make it presentable.

Creative traits are identifiable with creative people. Creative people are usually energetic, risk takers who think in divergent ways. They are open and non-judgmental. During this week I talked about leading a student trip to Penikese Island and how I approached the trip in an open creative manner that allowed the students the maximum space to independently follow their own interests. I also commented on my "One Moment in Time" assignment which I thought went very well. I was interested in it as a bit of a performance piece. I always try to think about how the piece is to be seen or read. I make decisions based on the medium or the art. I often make artistic decisions based on what makes the pieces more affective as an experience even if it comes at the cost of the actual assignment. Ideally I get both right.

The arts and creativity in general can be greatly influenced by socio-cultural issues. As Jung observed, there are two kinds of creativity: one comes from a person's experience and the world around them and one comes from the world beyond, from the collective unconscious. In looking at socio-cultural origins for creativity we are looking at the former. The ability to be creative is not the question here for some of our greatest artists and thinkers come from this area of inspiration. Furthermore I believe it is that case that there is a great deal of crossover here. Depending on the issues that one is dealing with the starting point may be more recognizable but in the end if a larger connection is not made then the story is not universal. Understanding the

creative process has been a help to me as I have worked with students who struggle with personal issues.

In week nine we studied analogous thinking and we learned that it can be a helpful and freeing strategy to work on problems by working on problems we already understand. In this way can make connections and see things in a different light. Analogous thinking is something I do all the time. If I think about art I talk about it as music and vice versa. A creative person looks for ideas and inspiration in the works of others. Sometimes just the right missing piece is found in something else. It becomes a scavenger hunt. I feel that our current obsession with copyrights is hurting creativity and it is not natural. Copyrights are important for an artist to have control of an idea but there comes a time when it needs to go so that others may use and add to it.

Ten is when we thought laterally with hats of many colors. We bravely marched into a project of invention to create that which would come. The team of which I was part created a plan for manners. In the schools we thought, three minutes at a time. From videos and books good manners would arise and flowers would bloom.

Sometimes the key to the answer is nearby and one needs to use peripheral vision to see it. Creativity can also be helped by playing different roles in the creative process. It is like wearing different hats, of different colors.

By week eleven I was swimming in final papers which served mainly to mix up all of my classes in my head until I couldn't remember what I had done or said in which one. As I worked on one paper I continually focused on my idea that all of life is based on a story we tell ourselves and the real benefit of creativity is to see, understand, and rewrite this story.

This last week we presented our museum projects and I was happy with what I had created. To me it was something that I could actually imagine possibly being on a wall somewhere as an exhibit. I thought that all of the other students did a great job with their projects as well. If I had a criticism it would be only that most of them felt more like a PowerPoint presentation rather than an exhibit. Maybe that will change in the final versions.

Patterns in my work: I tend to challenge everything which works for me. It can be annoying for others I suppose but sometimes I find new things this way. I think that in some ways I have come to this class set in my ways. Usually we are taught that this is a negative trait but there is nothing negative about taking a life time to work out a process, become self-actualized, and create new things without feeling the need to chuck it all and start over. I stay open to new ideas but in terms of process I find that there are few ideas that feel new to at this point. That is not a bad thing. It just means that I have spent a lot of time working on this stuff before today.

My goal is to maintain my creative output which means constantly changing my situation. I love to paint but I need to explore new things and take on new challenges where I can learn something. I lose interest when I feel like I have learned whatever I was hoping to learn.

615 Holistic and Transformative Teaching:

David Kooharian

615 Holistic and Transformative Teaching

Reflective Journal

Week 1

As I get into this class I find that a lot of the vague ideas I have had about education have been studied and explained in a way that that makes sense which is not always the case. The idea of holistic education for example is something I have been thinking about and observing in small bits here and there. I relate a lot of it to the experience my family had homeschooling our children. There was clearly something going on that transcended the strict back to basics idea of education.

Initially my wife and I were drawn to homeschool as an experiment because we found that our children were socially out of step with their peers. Classes were so unruly that nothing was getting done and even the teachers were suggesting we try home school. So we did, and for 4-5 years it worked very well. I think that the holistic environment, rather than the academics was the real reason it worked.

As I complete some of the reading I found a quote that “education was about more than just making future employees”. I really liked that. At this point, the end of week 2, I am finding our investigation very useful. I hope to clarify my thoughts and ideas as we move along.

Week 2

The reading this week was invigorating. The holistic approach to education or more accurately, life, is something that I have been unconsciously working towards for many years. In fact I can remember a conversation with my father when I was still in high school back in the

late 70's that dealt with these ideas. I followed the basic tenants of the theory through the homeschooling of my children and I have unconsciously brought some of these elements into the school where I work. It is really nice to see it all explained and validated. I have a much better focus on what I hope to achieve as a teacher.

Week 3

This week's reading was again thought provoking. Last week I read Gallegos about holistic education and I found it inspiring. This week I read the material on transformation and some of it was negative towards the theory. Merriam and Newman both looked at transformation as a theory over sold. Newman was particularly tough but I found his reasoning sound if we accept the definition of transformation as being a total change in identity and consciousness. Then I can see that it might not measure up but that is a tall order for any education theory. I do believe that education, done well, is a potentially a life altering experience. People do change their minds and the direction of their lives but in this case "transformation" is not the high profound change in the theory of that name but the kind of change that alters a person's path in life and opens up new worlds of thinking and possibilities. Maybe we are just quibbling about language and missing the point that education does change people enough so that they may be inspired to work for change in the wider society and that is both needed and desirable.

I still believe in transformative education but I would be less strict when it came to defining it. Education should be transformative. To what degree is subjective and individual.

For my case study I looked at the Mashpee Public Schools and the need to change something in the system because it is currently a negative environment for a lot of students and

staff. The world that this form of education promotes is authoritarian and socially fractured at the same time.

The book I will be working with is *Peripheral Visions* by Mary Bateson. I have only looked through it briefly but I plan to start reading for real this week. I hope to find insights into ways of thinking and seeing that will help me continue to learn from my experiences.

I am in 2 other classes this semester and it is a lot to get through. As a student I find that there is a great difference in how the subjects are presented and what is expected. In this class I like that it has a loose feel and there is time to think about the material and ideas. There is time to let it percolate. I do worry that I may be missing something like an assignment because the difference between this class and one of my other classes is so great. In that class there is a mountain of material to get through and with limited time the goal becomes getting through it, not understand it. Fortunately for me the material thus far has been conceptually very simple, review really, but there is a lot of what feels to me like busy work and that takes up a lot of time. As a student I don't react well to this and as a teacher I am making a note of it and I will use the experience to improve my teaching. I understand that it is a balance and that there are teaching and learning differences but I am old now and I know how I learn.

I changed the idea for my paper. It had been about grading but as I read I came to see that this was only one aspect of holistic learning so I am now going to work on the outline of a class that would be taught in a holistic way.

Week 4

I started reading *Peripheral Visions* last week and I have made it about 1/3 of the way through. The author, Mary Bateson, is an anthropologist and a writer. The book is a collection of

life examinations derived from her travels throughout her life. In each instance she explores and comments on the cultural differences in an effort to learn something from each one. The first recollection is from Iran in 1972. She describes being invited to a goat sacrifice with her young daughter and as an anthropologist she fulfilled her dual role as a participant and as an observer at the same time. She describes the scene in analytical terms and as an observer but the observations come from within the activity as a participant. It is an odd sort of mixture and I feel the hand of the scientist more than that of a participant. This formula is repeated in other locations at other times in her life with similar results. Bateson succeeds in immersing herself without reservation in the cultures she visits. She is genuinely interested in and respectful of these cultures. She makes every attempt to learn the language, customs, and is open to whatever lessons the experiences may teach. She not only strives to understand the other cultures but she also tries to find lessons that she can apply to her own culture and life. At different phases of her life she sees cultures from a new perspective, taking new observations and learning new lessons. As a child she traveled and remarked on the experience. Then as an adult she went forth and discovered new things. Later as a mother there were still more perspectives that unfolded. It is all very intellect driven. Bateson seems to work from the mind towards meaning where as I tend to find resonance and work to understand it intellectually. As a reader I find her descriptions to be accurate, interesting, but still a little cold. I feel that she is writing to us more as the anthropologist who examines cultures than as the English teacher who wants to convey the experience.

Week 5

As I have written elsewhere I have recently become aware of an issue that I feel needs to be addressed by schools and I consider it to be an example of transformative education. The

issue is sexual assault. 1 in 5 women in this country are sexually assaulted and worldwide the estimates are more like 1 in 3. I have spoken to girls in high school who tell me about assaults that have happened to them and their friends. I have heard stories of girls I know that have been violated in class, while the teacher was present, in the 8th grade. I know girls that have been drugged in the 9th grade. I know girls that have been attacked with the intent to rape in all high school grades. And I know girls that have been raped. I have talked to a rape crisis center about this and I am trying to put together a program of education and prevention for the school that I teach in. The truly sad part of this is that the boys do not even consider what they are doing to be assault or even rape. I believe that is because we live in a rape culture and I think the only way out of this, the only way to protect our daughters, is through education.

In another matter, I have been thinking about education s I see its effects on the students in my school. I work in an IB school and the educational demands are very high. I still believe in the school and I feel that it is the best option for students in my area but that does not make it perfect. I see students burning out and breaking down because the work load is just too much. My job is in special needs and I work in many different classes so I see things that other teachers may not. What I see is that the final assessments, the IB exams, dictate teaching to a degree that actual education stops in the senior year in favor of test prep. The test prep starts in freshman year and increases steadily until it consumes the process in the senior year. Everything that is done is to serve the test. Teachers routinely end productive interesting conversations because of the need to get back to test prep. I hear teachers and students lament the process. Teachers say that they wish they could broaden the curriculum and spend more time on spontaneous discussion but there is no time and the administration puts a great deal of pressure on them to return high test grades. Students complain that they are not learning anything. When I was

subbing the students used to get excited and say things like, finally we can learn something. I've even had students ask me if I could teach them something, anything. I don't know what the answer is but this school is one of the best rated in the nation and it is not working to its potential.

Last week a new executive director was selected for the two Sturgis high schools. The choice came down to three candidates. The first was a gig picture style director with a lot of experience, currently working in Brazil. The second was a man with a lot of experience known for his attention to detail and currently living in Japan. The third was the third year principal of our sister school. He has no vision and a small personality. He will be sure to keep everything the same so naturally the board selected him unanimously. Sturgis is a great school but it needs to evolve. It may even need to drop the IB. I don't know but something needs to change in order for the school to remain a leader in education. That requires vision and creativity. The right person can help the school improve. I hope I am wrong but I feel like the man selected does not have the abilities to lead the schools and the result will be stagnation that will take some of the life out of it.

Week 6

This weekend I am leading a group of high school students over to Penikese Island. This is the second trip for the outing club at Sturgis West in Hyannis. On the first trip we went without a plan for instruction. I wanted the student's curiosity to lead them and then I would fill in blanks and answer questions. We left Woods Hole on a Friday afternoon. Woods Hole is a fantastic place and I shared some of its history with the kids. We meet the boat and its captain at the MBL dock. Then we sailed out into Buzzards Bay, following the Elisabeth Islands to the end

and there, a mile from Cutty Hunk, was Penikese. The weather was wet and cold but it was great to step ashore.

The island is 75 acres of mostly grasses. It is owned by the state of Massachusetts and run by the Audubon Society. The woman who runs the program to revive the turn population was on the boat with us and explained what programs were being conducted on the island. The island school was created back in 1973 by a man named George Cadwaller and his friends. They wanted to build a school for incarcerated boys in the hopes of turning future murderers into future car-jackers. So they created an agreement with the state to use the old foundations of the doctor's house to build their school. The doctor was there with his wife for 15 years to care for the lepers who were sent to the island from about 1905 to 1922. Many of the lepers are buried on the island in a little cemetery that the school cares for. Before the lepers there was some farming and sheep herding and also the first home of the Woods Hole Marianne Biological Laboratory. The two aquarium tanks are still standing on the top of the island.

The house was built from old wood and donations. A wood shop and barn were also built along with a chicken coup and tractor shed. Finally a small school house was constructed. For 40 years the island cared for troubled boys. In recent years it has been empty, with only the occasional visitors like us.

We walked into the house like we were walking back in time. The wood stoves were quickly lit and the cook stove also sputtered back to life. Outside the rain was falling gently but the kids didn't mind. They ran out the door to explore the island. The other leaders and I started lighting the kerosene lamps. The old house glowed with warmth and the world was at peace. Off in the distance we could see the lights of New Bedford and the dark outlines of the Elizabeth

islands. The kids spent the weekend taking turns cooking, doing dishes, hauling water, carrying wood and adjusting the flames in the lamps. They also explored the island, played games, read ghost stories, played music, pool and Ping-Pong. They stayed up late talking and laughing and enjoying a break from life. There are not many places one can go where the world stops turning and lets you catch your breath. Penikese is one of those places and I believe that all of the students learned something valuable from the experience – something a lesson could not teach.

I do not know what will come of the island school. If it is not used for at risk kids soon, the state could take the lease back and the house and other buildings will be lost forever. The state will not put the money into maintaining the buildings so nature will reclaim it. I am thinking of a plan to keep the island functioning and helping heal all those who go there. Instead of finding one group to come in and run the place as they have tried before, I think they should have a bunch of different programs. I think the summer should be run in conjunction with an existing agency that helps at risk youth. The organization would bring its own people to run the program and the island would supply an island steward to run the island. In the off season there could be programs for school to bring students for the weekend like I do or even for a week and have classes in the school house. Yearlong projects could be planned that involve conservation, sustainability, the arts, marine biology, farming, birding and so forth. It could even be marketed to private schools internationally. They have the money and it could support the summer program. There could also be programs for adult retreats and artist workshops as well as corporate gatherings. The island is calling out to be used and it is bursting with potential if only someone can bring the vision forward and make it happen. I don't know what I can do but I will try to get something going. It is my defining example of a holistic and transformative place.

The Martha's Vineyard Charter School is an amazing example of what I think of as a holistic school. This little charter school sits on the island of Martha's Vineyard in the town of West Tisbury. The school has about 120 students in grades K-12 all in a relatively small post and beam school building. Class rooms line the central great hall where all the students and staff meet for the morning assembly. During this time any school announcements take place and then birthdays are announced and celebrated. On a rotating schedule each class performs a morning song or skit. All are made to feel welcome and personally cared for by the community. Lunches are made fresh with real ingredients. There is plenty of time to get outside and play. Classes are often combine grade levels and the big kids help the little kids. The school follows all of the state learning frame works but it encourages students to find and explore their own interests. The most obvious difference in the school as compared to traditional public schools is the absence of stress. The atmosphere is relaxed and supportive, not tense and regimented like an incarceration program.

The school seems to strike a good balance between being student driven and assuring that everyone gets a well-rounded education. Some of the studio schools that we looked at feel a little too loose and I wonder if students aren't missing important information, skills and ideas just because they are not interested or unaware of it. I think it is important for students to have a say in the direction of their education but I do not feel that they are in a position to know what they may need to know in the years to come. Some basic skills may not be fun or easy but they are important. Even in a subject like art or music there is an extended period of skill acquisition that leads to the freedom of creation. I think that the MVCS has the balance about right and they do it in an environment that is truly loving. I wanted to send my daughter there but the commute

is almost 2 hours each way and includes a car ride, a ferry and a bus. It just seemed too much for her.

Week 8

Reading further in my text, *Peripheral Visions*, I am interested in Bateson's way of seeing cultures with an open mind. She continually makes the effort to see and understand the differences in people and cultures. The chapter on multiculturalism made the point that although we humans seem drawn to monocultures there is a great deal of richness that comes from the mixing of peoples. At the same time there remain echoes of what made the people distinct and this and another layer of depth to the culture. This is certainly an important lesson for the world today. As population increases around the globe there are fewer places that will remain isolated. People are moving and mixing which can create disruption but if it can be embraced and seen as a positive there is a great deal to be gained from it. Change is hard and people become frightened and resistant. Over time however, the new becomes old, the strange familiar, and people relax and the mixture becomes the new norm from which people are afraid to move.

Week 9

Chapter 12 of *Peripheral Visions* is called "Limited Good". In this chapter Bateson examines the role of the defining story that a society is built on. She notes that hunting and gathering peoples had to act cooperatively for them to survive. Indeed this has been noticed before and it is extremely important as a vision for how people can exist together. That old idea was replaced by the competition paradigm created through the agricultural revolution. The division of land and the accumulation of agricultural commodity crops creates division between the haves and the have not's. This story of competition is still the basis of our culture today and

in many ways it is no longer serving us. The competition for more, on a planet of finite resources is not going to last forever. The idea of foundation stories is area of investigation for me. I believe that humans need a story to give them an identity and a purpose. As a sentient being we have forgotten what we are and where we came from. And we have no idea what we are here for or where we are going. These questions haunt us and we search for answers. Finding none, we invent answers in the form of stories. These stories guide us on such a deep and important level that we do not even realize that our entire world is built on nothing more substantial than a handful of stories. We had the story of cooperation which we now deny. The new story is one of competition, retroactively applied it to the cooperative hunter gatherers. Changing that story meant losing something valuable. Human beings are not the biggest, fastest, or strongest. We don't have fangs or claws or any kind of defense capabilities. We survived and flourished because we were supremely cooperative. We could do that because our brains expanded to allow language and complex social interaction. Yes there was competition of a sort, between species and different human groups, but the groups depended on all members working together for the success of the whole. That is a story we need today as we face a world increasingly overcrowded and running out of resources. What we have is a world built on competition and we as a species are losing.

The agricultural revolution is viewed as a giant leap forward for man. The story is that it represents security and culture. Certainly there have been benefits from agriculture: monumental building, large populations, the arts, and so forth. But there were negatives as well. Monumental building was often accomplished with large scale slavery. The domestication of animals created diseases like smallpox and mumps. Close living in filthy feted cities created the conditions for epidemics like the plague. Land became vital for wealth and competition for it caused conflicts

big and small. Standing armies and absolute rulers developed. Pollution and desertification destroyed once arable land, forcing the inhabitants to move which often brought about more conflict. This story of competition is used to justify the inequities that come from the societies which it creates. We believe that some people deserve or have earned wealth beyond any reason. Today we have something like 40 people controlling the equivalent wealth of the world's poorest 3 Billion people. Bill Gates is worth \$87,000,000,000. If all of that is invested at say 10% annual rate of return, he makes \$8,700,000,000 a year for doing nothing. Meanwhile back in the third world we find 1.2 million people working themselves to death for a dollar a day. Capitalistic competition works so well... at making peasants.

Some years ago I came across a story that said there was actually no evidence that the Jews had ever been held as slaves in Egypt. The whole story of Moses was made up. There is said to be no Egyptian record of the Jews being there or their exodus. I have done a little looking into this and what I found backs up that story. Who knows? The interesting thing to me is that if the story is false then what was the purpose of it other than to show that God was great? Could it be a parable about the evils of the agrarian city state? Could it be a reminder to the people of Israel to remain nomadic herders instead of farmers? There is another story I read about an anthropologist who studied a primitive tribe in Africa. After spending several months with these people he wanted to thank them for their hospitality so he went and bought them the biggest fattest cow he could find and presented it to the tribe for a feast. Well the response to this gift was not what he expected. Instead of being happy about it they all made fun of him and told him that the cow was skinny and worthless, barley worth the effort to kill and cook. After a bit the man became very dismayed. He felt terrible. Then one of the other outsiders, who had enjoyed watching the suffering, explained that in this tribe, to keep harmony, the great hunter returning

with a prime kill had to be humbled so that balance would be restored. They were honoring him as a member. This tribe survived by cooperation, not competition.

Are there advantages to creativity in a competitive world? It seems that there is. The western world's version of competition supported the individual over the group and we have a history of creative advancements in all areas. In the East which is more of a cooperation style mindset, the individual is downplayed and the community is nurtured. This works very well for many things but there are fewer creative breakthroughs. This is all a vast generalization I know but the basic point I believe is sound.

Week 10

This week we presented our class project. My group, Sabrina, Sinem, and I put together a scenario about an important topic that affects all of us whether or not we care to admit it. We wanted to see how the issue might be handled by a holistic and transformative institution. The situation we chose was about an alleged sexual attack that happened at the end of a school dance. We wanted the issue to be as charged as possible so we had the football star and class favorite attack a minority student from the Metco Program. We created two schools with different personal characteristics. The hope was that we would touch on a variety of viewpoints and that they would oppose each other so we could see what could happen. I was hoping that we would see some kind of basic plan but what happened probably reflected the reality in that a lot was said but nothing came from it. To be fair to all involved this was a difficult problem and 15 minutes is not enough time to do much more than get used to the idea. I do think that this issue needs to be addressed as I have said before and I believe that it is an opportunity for holistic and transformative teaching.

Week 11

As we close in on the last week of class I find that the need to reform our education system in a holistic and transformative way is critical. If we hope to change the world, than we need to start with the children. We live on a planet with limits but we have a mythology of business that demands endless growth. That is not going to work but we are stuck because we lack the imagination and the will to change. When Pete Seeger was blacklisted and unable to perform he went full subversive. He sang at elementary schools all over the country and when those kids grew up they became the change makers of the sixties.

Week 12

I am working on my final project and I hope it is OK.

616 Dialogue Process

David Kooharian

616 Dialogue

Blog Post

3/8/15

Awareness of the body

I find that I live both inside my body and outside at different times. I try to pay attention to my body every day. It starts in the morning with a quick assessment of health as I get out of bed. If all systems are go then I will get up and walk unsteadily into the bathroom to check the mirror for further damage. After showering I pay attention to how my cloths fit (sometimes they shrink

in the closet if I haven't worn them for a while) and how the fabric feels against my skin. I can be almost autistic sensitive to the feel of the fabrics. As I move through the day I notice how I walk and I try to even out my gait. I try to sit up straight and to look people in the eye when they are talking to me. I always pick an eye so I don't bounce back and forth. After work I like to stop at the gym. I jog for a half an hour and I try to do it in a meditative state; running smoothly, breathing little and allowing the miles to slip by. Then I lift weights. I love the feel of the muscle as it handles the weight. No matter how tired I am going into the gym I always leave energized. At night I wait for sleep to come, I look forward to it. I love the feel of lying down in a bed.

Awareness of Breathing

Breathing is good. An important part of my morning health assessment is to note whether or not I am still breathing. I tend to be a slow breather. My heart rate is slow and I assume they are connected. When I feel stressed I will catch myself taking a deep breath. Sometimes I just sit and see how few breaths per minute I can take. When I exercise I try not to get winded. I breathe in through my nose and out from my mouth. When I lift weights I will often exhale as I exert but not always. Too much of this makes me light headed. When I talk with people I try to pace my speaking in such a way that I never get caught short of breath. When I am feeling under pressure I breathe more slowly than most. I tend to constrict, to tighten. I feel like there is a weight on my chest preventing deep breaths. I focus on relaxing and breathing normally as a way to deal with the stress. I love the way the fresh air feels in my lungs when I take a deep breath outside. I feel nourished by the air.

Awareness of Emotions

My emotions are always in flux but I doubt if anyone really sees a difference. I keep it all pretty well limited to an internal experience. My emotions, when obvious, usually cause a problem. Too happy, too down, frustrated, or sad it is not allowed. It becomes a trigger for others and I rather not deal with that. I often feel melancholy and I rather like that. The weather is a huge factor in my emotions. Dark and wet is got good. I do best in the summer but I also like the cold and dark as it provokes depression more easily and that is comforting in ways. I find it good for introspection and deep thinking. I like the calm that comes with being alone but I find great joy in being with people exuding positive energy. I get excited by new ideas and that really brings me to life. I love to be creative. When I am under pressure from personal relationships I feel a tightness in my chest that makes me wish I would have a heart attack but of course I don't and then I have to deal with the stress some other way. The important thing is that I am the same person day after day. The emotions come and go but I accept them as a natural part of life and I am always assessing how they affect those around me. I don't want my emotions to get in anyone else's way. I don't find that helpful and it often becomes much more stressful than it is worth.

Awareness of Thought

I spend a lot of the day in my head thinking. I am always observing and analyzing, looking for deeper understanding. I pay attention to how I feel about what I see and hear. I do not usually look for things in a conscious way. I try to take it all in until something jumps out at me and then I grab it and try to find a place for it in some way. This is how I read. I never take notes, it is too distracting. I read and I wait for an idea to excite me and then I focus on it and remember it. I may go through a whole book and really only grab a few ideas, not because the rest wasn't well done or interesting but because those few lines may have been new to me while the rest was

either known to me or just not connecting to my present psychic stage. I always try to understand where people are coming from and how best I can communicate with them. There are a million different factors in understanding a situation and finding the best way to interact. So much of it is unconscious. Recently a lot of my thoughts have revolved around school. I am taking three classes right now and that is a challenge when added on top of work, children and all the other stresses of modern life.

688 Reflective Practice

David Kooharian

688 CCT Workshop

6/12/15

Process Review of Growth during the Workshop

Coming into this year's workshop in Woods Hole I had no idea what to expect. I had never been to a workshop before and I wondered how my ideas would fit with the theme of critical thinking in a time of crisis. I do not have a background in science and it seemed that the workshop had a science foundation. Never the less I felt comfortable going in as I tend to be a quick study and I have wide knowledge base. I seldom find that conversations are beyond me and I look forward to finding opportunities to learn something new.

The first thing that struck me was that the topic of critical thinking in a time of crisis was not really a dominant focus of the workshop. Personally I was a little disappointed by this as I would have liked to explore that idea. I believe that we are in a time of crisis. I know that there has always been a times of crisis in the past but I think what is different now is that unlike past

crisis's which were localized, the current crisis is worldwide and potentially threatens the future of human civilization if not the existence of mankind its self. I believe that one of the keys to facing a problem of this magnitude is to understand what changes we are likely to see and what we might do about them. This is more than just a technical discussion of how to cope with climate change for instance. It necessitates a perceptual change in how we see and understand our places and purpose in this world. One can see the need for this shift in the world we live in today. The brutal capitalism that we are living with today is tearing away the veil of societal order from which we create our self-identity. As capitalism heads into a kind of death throw it begins to eat the sources of its own existence. Capitalism depends on the exchange of money for goods but as we watch the disappearance of the middle class and we see that half of the world's population has dropped off the economic table earning about a dollar a day, we must wonder who will be left to pump cash into the blotted top heavy capitalistic system we have inherited? The answer is already being answered. Tax payers are now giving banks subsidies of one kind or another in an amount that interestingly matches the profits reported by these banks. In other words the game is over. We the people who have been increasingly abandoned by capitalism are never the less being asked to fund their profits not by an exchange of wealth for goods but by direct taxation. The story we are then told is that we do not work hard enough or that we are all slackers looking for a hand out. Or that we need more education. For the most part we believe the story because that is the one we were brought up with. But is it true? Is it true that the growing difficulty of the 99% of Americans not seeing great gains in personal income is all due to personal failings? What if we rewrote the story? What if we weren't here on this planet just to work for the profit and ease of a small group of world elites? What would that look like? We will

never apply the cumulative pressure needed to create real change until we come together and we will not come together until we redefine ourselves as something worthy of better.

Something that I enjoyed from the workshop was the process of dialogue. I had just finished a class in dialogue process and while the concepts were simple enough I had never actually experienced some of them in practice. I liked how everyone had a voice and that there was a very high degree of respect among the participants. I will certainly use some of the techniques in the future. I also felt that there were some limitations to the process. At times it moved too slowly for a dynamic exchange of ideas. A topic that seemed on the verge of gaining energy would fade because of the pace of conversation. I also felt that there was not enough space given to constructive questioning. Having ones ideas challenged can be a very helpful thing for all involved if it is done with care and in an effort to help bring clarity to a concept. I understand how this can quickly become a negative situation if the participants are not sensitive to the feelings of others but that can be worked on as well.

An area that I found surprising was how vague some of the projects seemed. Maybe this was more a result of my own inability to understand what they were about but I felt that there was a universal difficulty with creating a question that was focused enough to work on. One of the things that I tried to do during the workshop was to help others define their question. Mostly I did this so I could understand what they were trying to do for my own sake. I found that I was much more interested in other people's problems then in trying to find help for my own project. I like trying to make connections for people. I find that with my background I know enough about enough things that I usually have something to add to any conversation and when I don't it prompts me to learn more about it.

I find it interesting that when I am around well rounded educated people I feel more capable than when I am around those with limited interests and knowledge. I probably had the least amount of formal education of anyone at the workshop but I never felt out of place or unprepared. That is the kind of little self-esteem boost that we all need from time to time. It is funny to me that while I comment on the lack of focus in some of the others project question I am struggling with my own lack of focus with what I want to do and where I want to go in my career. Maybe that is why lack of focus bothers me in others. I am seeking clarity of vision for a way forward. I like teaching and I very much enjoy the situation I am in now, except for the money, but I know myself well enough to know that I will probably get board at some point and want to move on to something new. What that might be I have no idea. I think that one of the things I did try to get from others at the workshop was an idea of where to go from here in bigger sense then just what to do about my project which I don't really need any help on.

In that same vain I think I finally got over my idea that more education was really what I was missing. I have always been self-conscious about my lack of formal education. Now I no longer feel that way. As I have talked about before I believe that we are the stories we tell of ourselves and those stories can change, usually slowly, but sometimes they can change in an instant due to a sudden revelation. My story is always evolving which does not mean that the current version is not correct but that it is not stagnant. As I grow and change the story that I need must also change and grow. Sometimes I tend to hang on to old stories past the point of usefulness and often unaware that I am doing so until something happens to reveal to me that I have outgrown the old story and it is time for a new one. One of my stories was that I needed more formal education and that I was in some ways faking it. I know that I don't know it all but I now believe that I do not have the gaps of knowledge in areas that I care about that I thought I

did. Again, that is not to say that I am an expert in any area but what I do not know is not a problem that requires more formal education to fix. I can fix any shortcomings by my own efforts. Most of what I know was learned that way to begin with. If I am to continue with my career path in education then I need to earn a master's degree and that is why I am in the CCT program in the first place. I hope to make it a meaningful experience.

Overall I am glad that I participated in the workshop. It was very nice to interact with other people in person instead of through the computer which I find very uncomfortable. The conversations I enjoyed the most were the ones that happened outside of the proscribed discussion times. That is probably no surprise to anyone but when there is not outside of class time then one never has those conversations. Having time away from other responsibilities was wonderful. I think that the single best part of the workshop for me was just to have time free from the constant pressure of daily life. One of the things that makes Penikese so special is just that affect. It is the same for a vacation. It is special because you are free from the weight and anxiety of daily obligations and concerns.

I don't know if I can say that I experienced growth during the workshop but I certainly feel better for the experience and I hope I was able to contribute to the other members.

601 Critical Thinking

Critical Thinking Manifesto CE3

David Kooharian

U. Mass Boston

Critical Thinking

601

Peter Taylor

November 29, 2015

Critical Thinking Manifesto CE3

Critical thinking can be an individual exercise. People have spent years working on ideas, theories, and research without the thought of sharing it but for the most part critical thinking is done with the idea of engaging an issue with a wider audience in mind. No matter what the purpose or audience of the thinking is; the process is the same. The difference comes when one considers how to use the thinking to influence or change minds. This part of the process involves some degree of selling ones idea to a wider public. Understanding how to sell one's idea is another form of critical thinking. A good salesman can sell you your own shoes I have heard it said. Advertising changes minds and creates wants where no need exists. Politicians appeal not to thinking but to emotions to sway public opinion. On the other hand there are well documented peer reviewed scientific papers about important issues that go unnoticed or are thrown into doubt by those determined to undermine the evidence by highlighting elements still in question or by using false logic and appeals to emotion. The examples that come to mind include the negative health consequences associated with smoking, global warming, and the dangers of chemicals in our environment. The point being that it is not enough to think critically and publish the results.

That is the first part of the process. For that thinking to really have an effect it must be sold to the appropriate audience in a manner that is equally as powerful as the thinking.

The following are the steps that I recommend to think critically about an issue and present it to a wider audience.

Part I

1. Find an idea or issue to investigate. For this class I chose to look at the economy and how well it serves the people.
2. Identify a question. Is the system of capitalism working for all and if not are there alternatives?
3. Check facts and assumptions. A relatively quick search for economic figures revealed to me that there is a growing inequity in our economic system. The story of hard work leading to reward is not a given and there is evidence that for a large portion of the population it has not correlated over the last 40 years.
4. Find out what work has been done in this area. The subject of the capitalist economy has been explored in great depth by economists and historians. The subject is so vast that my research has only scratched the surface. I have found powerful supporters of the system and persuasive critics. I have also found a growing number of alternatives to the system. So suggest minor changes and regulation while others believe in a fundamental change in the way we design our economy.

5. Evaluate the validity of the original idea or issue. After looking into the issue as best as I could given my limited time and the enormity of the subject I have come to the conclusion that our capitalistic economy is serving a smaller and smaller segment of the population. I further believe that the system is not immutable, it can be changed.
6. Create a counter argument. My argument is that the capitalistic economy has some very good aspects and with proper regulation can function in a reasonable equitable fashion providing wealth in a rough relation to productivity but when regulations are abandoned the system becomes decoupled from effort and concentrates wealth upward to a small number of people leaving a growing number of hard working people behind.
7. Examine possible objections to your ideas. Counter arguments center on the notion that hard work and entrepreneurship is rewarded and those who are not benefiting from the system have only themselves to blame. The system is defended as the only way to structure an economy, it has created great wealth and there are no alternatives that can do better.
8. Create responses to possible objections. The counter-counter is that economic figures tell a different story. Many hard working people have seen their income stagnate even as their productivity rose steadily for 40 years. The economy is not a law but a story that developed over hundreds of years. As a story it can be rewritten and others have thought of alternatives that, on a smaller scale, have proven successful. There are alternatives.
9. Prepare final argument. At this point all of what has been outlined above can be expanded, cited and explained with a specific audience in mind.

Part II

1. Identify the audience for your analysis. Picking up where part I ended, we need to determine who the intended audience for this work is. The first option is that it is for self-illumination only in which case the project is likely done. However, the audience could be for those that are favorable to your way of thinking. If that is the case then the job of convincing others is relatively easy as they are ready to agree. The goal would be more about preparing them to spread the word to others. One may want to address those that are unsettled in their thinking with regards to this issue. That will require addressing some of the issues and beliefs that this group will likely have. The last group to consider is that of the committed and convinced capitalists. While it may be tempting to address this group it may not be possible to convince them of the worthiness of your ideas. In this case it may not be worth the effort.
2. Ways to present to a favorable audience. As mentioned above, this group is likely ready to listen and want their own ideas to be validated through your work. They also need enough of an argument that they can use it to spread the ideas.
3. Ways to present to a questioning audience. This is not a receptive audience but they are likely not hostile either. They need to see how the ideas resonate with their reality. They need to see how their life would be improved in some way if they sift their thinking. This group needs to be sold on the argument not just provided with it.
4. Ways to present to a hostile audience. This is a tough task. When I think about approaching this group I imagine a friend of mine who will never agree with anything I may say. His personal identity is created through his beliefs in conservative politics and the capitalist economy. For him to change his mind about these issues would be like discovering that he was adopted and that he was of some kind of minority heritage. Still, that is the voice I hear when I

start to put the argument together. In addition to all of the things I did for the other audiences I need to explore the often cited sources of the hard right and be able to counter them. I also need to understand what values he has and customize my argument to speak from that perspective and with that voice. In the end I never feel that I have fully met the challenge but thinking about him makes me more careful with my efforts in general.

Here is a brief look at my argument.

Most of the world's economies are capitalistic in some form or another. Even China is partly capitalistic. Productivity and wages used to be linked. They would rise and fall together which according to capitalist theory is what should happen. The harder and more productive one is the more money one should make. It does not get much more basic than that. But is that a reality? According to the Economic Policy Institute, this is how it worked for a while. The report monitors that economy from 1948 to 2012. It shows that the wages and productivity did correlate until 1973. This is when, for various reasons, the two decoupled. Since then productivity has increased by about 250% while median wages for the 90% of the countries wage earners only saw a 10.7% increase. Males in the work force only increased their wages by .1%. The top 1% experienced a 59.9% increase and the top .01% received 365 of the gains. A system that cares for those according to their effort this is not (Mishel, 2012).

After identifying an issue one must give some thought to what the purpose of the investigation will be. Is it just for personal awareness or is it to find a better way to proceed? For my CE it is to question the assumption of capitalism as the best way, the only way, to organize an economy and to show that it is not an immutable law of nature but rather a story that we tell ourselves. It is a story told for so long and so well that for most people in this country at least, there seems to be

no alternative. My research indicates that capitalism is not a “law” as in the sciences or even inevitable. It was created over time to solve problems of exchange in expanding societies and like any good story it has been mythologized over time. The story of the birth of money, debt, and capitalism says that societies started out with systems of barter and then moved into money when the complexity of society demanded it. The reality is that no evidence for this exists. It is a story (Graeber, 2014, Chapter 2). If it is a story then it can be rewritten if it is needed.

The question then becomes, does our economic story need rewriting. As noted above, there is evidence that it is not working for the majority of Americans and when one looks worldwide one sees an even grimmer picture. According to Oxfam there are now 85 people on the planet that own the combined equivalent wealth of the 3.5 billion poorest ("Oxfam," 2014, p. 1). There is also evidence that this economic story is costing more than money, it is costing lives. Every social problem is exacerbated by extreme wealth inequality according to Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). Wilkinson and Pickett go on to show that in the more unequal societies, even the wealthy suffer from shorter lives. There is also a disturbing new trend of suicides among middle age white men. Princeton economist Angus Deaton and Anne Case wrote a report showing that this demographic is experiencing a spike in suicides even as all other demographics are doing better. The researchers point to economic dislocation which has hit white middle age workers hard as a cause (Kolata, 2015, p. 1).

This is all part of the research one needs to do to fully understand the problem. The next step is to find what is available for answers. In a subject like the economy one can be sure that there are many others who have looked at the issue and offered alternatives. The most well-known early critic was Karl Marx. His works *Das Kapital* and the *Communist Manifesto* examined the nature of capitalism and offered an alternative. Henry David Thoreau was another early critic who tried

to live an alternative life style for a period of time detailed in Walden. Most of the solutions to the excesses of capitalism involve regulating the system to eliminate the extremes and provide a more equitable playing field for all. Not everyone was agreed that the system needed fixing in this way. There have been and are many who believe that any government interference with the capitalist ideal is a problem. Of these critics the best known may be Milton Friedman of the University of Chicago. He believes in unfettered capitalism and the privatizing of public entities like schools. The journalist Naomi Klein wrote about the effects of this approach in her book, *The Shock Doctrine*. Her reporting exposes the consistent record of failure that these policies create. Still there are a great number of people, mostly those benefiting from the system, that support the status quo.

When the research is complete and both sides of the argument are understood then one can construct an argument for change. In my case I believe that we need to expose and acknowledge that the economy is a story and that no one should be made to feel a failure when the story is flawed. We need to find ways to life without growth. The planet cannot sustain continual growth. We could start by banning advertising. There was a time before advertising when one bought only what was needed. We could do that. We could reorder the work place and make it democratic by creating coops for instance. There are many ideas out there but we need the will to change.

Now comes the part where one must change hats and go from the critical thinker to the advocating salesman. The first group to like to is the one that already agrees with the need for change and is sympathetic to one's basic ideas. If one cannot win those people over then there needs to be more thinking done. The next group is those that are questioning the situation and are starting to look around for explanations and perhaps alternatives. These are people who will

likely give you a chance to lay out your case for diagnosing the situation and offering alternatives. The last group is the hardest and they may be beyond reach. These are the true believers in the economic system. They may be part of the small group that is reaping great rewards from the system or they may be those who are convinced that those rewards are just beyond reach but still obtainable. It would not be in their perceived benefit to accept economic change although as Wilkinson and Pickett have shown, a fairer system would be good for their health; good for their fellow man and women and still most likely leave them among the wealthiest people in the nation. The plan then should be to secure ones base and then branch out to those on the fence. In this way one can build support and create a critical mass that can tip the scale in favor of change.

This is my plan for critical thinking leading to change.

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692 Processes of Research and Engagement

David Kooharian

12/13/15

692 J Self-assessment

I. My project shows that...

A. Overall Vision

Goal: "I can convey who I want to influence or affect concerning what (Subject, Audience, Purpose)."

Plus: I feel that I was able to clearly state my subject, goal, purpose, and audience in part because I had a clear vision in my mind about the project.

Delta: I feel that I should focus on a more specific audience like school administrators. My approach was a bit broad.

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."

Plus: Based on recommendations from people in the field and my own research I felt that I have read enough of the available material to be reasonably well informed about my issue. I have also learned a great deal from my interviews.

Delta: This is such a large field that I feel I have only scratched the surface. An entire graduate program could be built around my subject.

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 or scope within the larger set of issues, and decide the most important direction.”

Plus: I have looked at my issue from a number of directions and settled on an approach that I feel is within my ability to contribute.

Delta: I still feel like a fraud when I think of all that one could know about my subject and my solution. More study is needed but some of that should be through trial and error.

D. Component 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.”

Plus: I have looked at the counter arguments for my project and found that most are based on false arguments or information.

Delta: I have dealt with strong opposition to my initial assessment of the problem and as I am not an expert in the area I do not have the knowledge to refute false arguments based on discredited reports off the top of my head. I need to research the accusations to discover the validity if any.

E. Design of Further Research and Engagement

Goal: “I have clear objectives with respect to product—both written and practice—and process—including my personal development as a reflective practitioner. I have arranged my work in a sequence (with realistic deadlines) to realize these objectives.”

Plus: I have clear goals with regard to my project and I am on schedule to make them happen.

Delta: The element beyond my control is experience. That will only come as I try to implement this program.

F. Direct Information, Models and Experience

Goal: “I have gained direct information, models, and experience not readily available from other sources.”

Plus: Through research and interviews I have gained enough information and a feeling for the experience of implementing the program that I feel reasonably confident that I know what I am doing.

Delta: I do not know what I do not know but I know they are there. I look to solve those issues as they arise.

G. Clarification through Communication

Goal: “I have clarified the overall progression or argument underlying my research and the written reports.”

Plus: I have explained the reasons for the research in a way that makes sense and incorporates comments from others.

Delta: I still feel as though I could clarify this progression better.

H. Compelling Communication

Goal: “My writing and other products grab the attention of the readers or audience, orient them, move them along in steps, so they appreciate the position I've led them to.”

Plus: I feel that I have done this very well. I do not think that there is any confusion about what I see as a problem or what direction I believe the solution lies.

Delta: While there may not be confusion I think there are ways to be clearer and still more powerful. I am looking for ways to improve this.

I. Engagement with Others

Goal: “I have facilitated new avenues of classroom, workplace, and public participation.”

Plus: My project is about engagement in the classroom, work place and requires public participation and incorporates this in the plan.

Delta: It remains to be seen if that engagement will be effective or if I need to do a lot more work in this area.

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.”

Plus: I feel that the foundation of my project is strong and that the basic outline for a solution is good.

Delta: My project needs revision and refinement based on comments for it to be effective and useful.

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

Goals

1. “I have integrated knowledge and perspectives from my current and past courses into my own inquiry and engagement in social or educational change.”

Plus: I have used my experience in this as well as other CCT classes to inform my work in this class. Both content of classes and the construction of the classes themselves have been useful.

Delta: It has been a process of learning how to make the most of a class. I feel I could have gotten more out of it had I been for familiar with the format.

2. “I have also integrated into my own inquiry and engagement the processes, experiences, and struggles of previous courses.”

Plus: Every course I take is a learning experience that I use in in all subsequent classes.

Delta: There remains much that I have missed or just that need to percolate more before I can fully incorporate them.

3. “I have developed efficient ways to organize my time, research materials, computer access, bibliographies, etc.”

Plus: I have followed the suggestions made about organization and have noticed improvement in that area.

Delta: It is an ongoing process and I still have room for improvement.

4. “I have experimented with new tools and experiences, even if not everyone became part of my toolkit as a learner, teacher-facilitator of others, and reflective practitioner.”

Plus: a number of new processes and tools learned in this class have been helpful and become part of my way of working.

Delta: As with most things I still have more to learn and make part of my natural process of working.

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 and past) and not get blocked, turning apparent obstacles into opportunities to move into unfamiliar or uncomfortable territory.”

Plus: I have a well-developed ability to focus when I am at work.

Delta: Time is a constant pressure which forces me to work faster than I wish which causes me to be sloppy at times.

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.”

Plus: As part of this class I have done more productive peer review than I have been used to and it has been helpful. I have tried to be helpful in turn to others.

Delta: I have a ways to before I can make the most of this.

7. “I have taken the lead, not dragged my feet, in dialogue with my advisor and other readers. I did not 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 did not understand. I did not put off giving my writing to my advisor and other readers or avoid talking to them because I thought that they did not see things the same way as I do.”

Plus: I have tried to make the most of comments from others and I have not waited to be prompted. I have never shied away from expressing myself when I feel it is needed.

Delta: I can be unmovable when I feel an issue is a matter of principle or great importance. This may not be the best way to solve issues.

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).”

Plus: I have taken all comments seriously and with gratitude. I have done my best to revise based on these comments as I can.

Delta: I have not always understood how best to comply with revision ideas but I only realized this upon further comments were received.

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.”

Plus: This class was designed to respond to comments as opposed to just jumping through hoops. When working outside of school I have always held myself to self-created standards. In school I have taken my cue from the instructor. If the course is about creating my own standards then I am comfortable with that. If it is about hoop jumping then I can do that. All classes have requirements and I try to meet them as best as I can.

Delta: Creating self-assessment goals is a process when acquiring new skills.

10. “I have approached this course and the program of studies as a whole 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 in the course or program and to suggest directions for their further development.”

Plus: I do view this course as a work in progress and I have had opportunities to comment.

Delta: In thinking about what was working for me I found that difficulties were more a matter of my own learning process than something to do with the course.

693 Action Research

David Kooharian

693 Action Research

D5

Process Review

By nature I am a reflective person. My life has been one long internal therapy session. As an artist (I am never comfortable using that term but I don't know what else to call it) I am continually trying to understand what I am seeing and experiencing so that I can digest it and grow from it and perhaps have it re-emerge in a creative form that can speak to others. In a sense everything I do is a form of action research. My process of acquiring new information is to trust my response to material. It is like working on a jigsaw puzzle and I am searching for the right pieces. When I find the right piece I plug it in and keep searching. With each new piece the image becomes a little clearer and I have a sense of what the final image will be but it is only a sense. As I move through pieces there are thousands of other pieces from other people's puzzles

and while they are all good pieces and important to other people they are not my pieces so I rapidly discard them. I may save a few pieces that I think may be helpful and only later discover that they are not helping and I may also pass on pieces I need only to look for them again later but that is part of the process and over time I have gotten much better at it. I trust myself to discriminate between pieces for my puzzle and those of others.

Most of the tools in this class have been geared towards helping people define their question. My father was a mathematician and used to say that defining the question was the hardest and most important aspect of solving a problem. I spend a great deal of time in my own head trying to define the question. As Alice said to the Cat, “which way should I go?” and the cat answered “where are you going?” Alice said, “I don’t know”. “Well then,” said the Cat, “it doesn’t matter which way you go”. The tools in action research seem designed to help one determine where they want to go.

The process of education has been less than great for me. I have never in my life thought to myself, “I wish I knew how to do (whatever) and thought, I should take a class”. I have always just researched it on my own and taught myself. I may not have mastered the thing to someone else’s standard but I have always learned what I needed to know. My father used to say that everything you want to know has been written down in a book. I think that is mostly true. The trick is to know what the question is. Once that is defined it is not that hard to look it up. The art of learning is to see how it all connects and forms a picture of something new and unique. In the end what one creates is a self-portrait that fits into a puzzle much larger; a puzzle that is part of a living universe. These are the thoughts that I set aside to try and construct my clock and reflect on my growth in the class.\

603 Foundations of Philosophical Thought

David Kooharian

603 Philosophy

Millman

12/4/16

Week 13 Paper

Metacognition Assignment

The study of philosophy is a questioning of how one thinks about different subjects. Certain ideas are accepted without question and become a background of our identity and understanding. How many of those ideas are ever identified as ones that can be examined? A great deal of our life is ordered and guided by ideas we never notice or examine. A good philosophical inquiry should identify the background ideas and bring them into the light so that one may understand the role they play in one's life and whether those ideas are correct, useful, or even harmful or repressive. In the following pages I will look at one of these ideas and ask the questions: where did it come from, is it helpful, and what alternative ideas might we consider.

The first idea I will look at is the notion that it is desirable to have a good work ethic. Most of us have at some point in our life had our work ethic assessed. To be judged as having a

good work ethic is often a point of personal pride but why? What is a work ethic anyway?

Dictionary.com defines it thus:

noun

1.

a belief in the moral benefit and importance of work and its inherent ability to strengthen character.

work ethic. (n.d.). Dictionary.com Unabridged. Retrieved December 4, 2016 from Dictionary.com website <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/work-ethic>

The work ethic is also known as the Protestant work ethic because of the Protestant belief that God's grace can be seen in one's prosperity. Right at the start we need to understand what is meant by "work" and what is "Prosperity"? Work is generally defined as the following: 1. exertion or effort directed to produce or accomplish something; labor; toil. 2. Productive or operative activity. 3. Employment, as in some form of industry, especially as a means of earning one's livelihood. Prosperity is understood as a "successful, flourishing, or thriving condition, especially in financial respects; good fortune." These definitions also come from Dictionary.com.

A good work ethic then involves exerting some effort that is considered productive which helps one succeed and flourish in a manner that is rewarded by money. This is done not only to gain wealth but to gain the good graces of God or perhaps to demonstrate that God has already selected one as a recipient of his grace, depending on one's protestant beliefs. In the reasoning of Max Weber, Protestantism changed the way worshipers earned God's grace. In the Catholic tradition one needed to accept Christ as one's savior and participate in the rites of the religion.

Following the reformation one could no longer earn a place in heaven by doing this alone. One now had to serve God by working at one's given vocation, be it shoe making, stone cutting, or baking. There was also the idea that simply meeting one's needs was not necessarily enough. Working half days may create all the wealth needed but that was not fully serving God. The implication here is that humans are born with an obligation to work at some vocation determined by God and that the more prosperity one acquired the more favored one is in the eyes of God. Weber suggests that this idea became a foundation of capitalism and as capitalism has spread around the world it brought the protestant work ethic with it. Other scholars have argued with this idea but there is agreement that whatever the origins of capitalism may be, the idea of the work ethic has supported capitalism around the world.

Not all capitalists are religious and for some of them the only reason to do anything is if there is profit in it. People who have accumulated great wealth often adhere to this way of thinking and generally they are respected for their tough stance on profit for work. Even without a religious connection it is not uncommon for extremely wealthy people to justify their wealth by declaring that it was all a result of hard work due to a good work ethic. Those of meager means are considered lazy, lacking a strong work ethic regardless of how hard they actually work. One of the positive aspects of a work ethic is that people do work and the standard of living can improve for all. This is not in any way a guarantee. There are currently around 3.2 billion people on the planet who earn less than \$2 a day. Most of those people are working very hard in the most difficult circumstances. This does present a problem for an ethic that says hard work is rewarded by God with prosperity. Capitalism is supposed to be the economic system that turns all of one's effort into wealth. For some people it does but what about for the others? Capitalism has become a form of religion itself, based more on beliefs than on actual facts, so the reasoning goes that the

problem is not the system. The problem therefore must lie with those who do not prosper. It must be that even if they are working hard, they are not right with God and to offer them help in any way is actually against God's wishes. If those who struggle receive help they will not have to face their shortcomings and will therefore never earn God's grace. The Irish potato famine was an example of this kind of thinking. The protestant Irish and governing English governments had enough food to feed the starving catholic peasants but to do so would only encourage them to hold on to their false religion and never find their way into God's good graces. This is a vast oversimplification of what happened but the basic point is accurate.

It seems that what may have started as a way to serve God has become a way to serve capitalism or rather, money. Money it could then be said has become the God of capitalism and all true believers in capitalism now worship money. The transformation can be seen in old cities where once the tallest building was the church, then came the state house, and now the tallest building in a city is the sky scraper usually owned by an insurance company or some other large business. But is this all there is? Is our brief time here on this planet only to produce things for money? Is that the real meaning of our lives? Who benefits from this idea? God? Maybe; capitalists, certainly; but what does that say about the place of humans on the Earth? Is it true that of all the life forms on the planet that have ever existed, humans are the only ones who must work, beyond even what is needed just to live? If that is the case than humans are born into slavery and that is what separates us from the animals. But who is our master? Is it some god looking down on us as we toil on this planetary plantation? Maybe; the story of Adam and Eve would explain how this happened but sighting a fairytale as an explanation for the perpetual enslavement of a species is not very convincing to me. If we do not serve God then do we serve capitalism and by extension

capitalist elites? If that is the case then who appointed the elites there status of masters? Was it God or was it the elites themselves?

Some of these questions have been addressed by greater thinkers than me. Henry David Thoreau Pointed out the tension between living as a servant of production and living as though were indeed as free as any other animal when he observed that if a man went into the woods to cut it down he would be applauded for his industriousness and work ethic but when he goes into the woods to marvel at the beauty of nature he is criticized for laziness. I am beginning to see the idea of the work ethic as nothing more than a form of cultural control with no basis in reality. And so I let go of it and with it goes a thousand shoulds, shalts, and musts.

655 Metacognition

David Kooharian

655 Metacognition

Martin

10/6/16

Lesson Plan

Purpose:

1. To help students understand how prior exposure to images helps them recognize and understand what they are seeing.
2. To help students understand that prior exposure to images may make us see things that are not actually there.

3. To help students understand how the metacognition of visual imagery can be used in one's own work.

Expected outcomes:

Students will be aware of how they are seeing, identifying, and understanding what they are looking at and be able to explain how prior exposure to images improves or impedes understanding.

Materials and Media: For this lesson I will be using 2 images: the Rubin Vase Illusion and "Vegetables In A Bowl, Or The Gardener" by Giuseppe Arcimboldo, and a computer, projector, and screen to display images.

Procedural Steps:

1. I will present students with the image of Rubin's Vase Illusion and ask them what they see.
2. I will ask them to look again and see if they now see the other illusion. It will either be a vase or 2 faces.
3. Ask students to see both images at the same time. Is that possible? Discuss.
4. Ask students not to see either image. Is that possible? What is actually on the paper?
5. Analysis: why do we see images that are not there? Why can't we see both images at the same time? Why is it hard to un-see something? How does that help us understand what we see and also prevent us from seeing what is in front of us.

Step 2

1. Present the image of the “Vegetables in a Bowl” to the students.
2. Ask them to analyze the painting. What is happening? What is the painting about?
3. Then turn the paint upside-down.
4. Students will then look at the painting again to reinterpret the image.
5. Questions: What did you see the first time you saw the painting. What do you see now? Does the orientation of the painting change what the student sees? If so, how does the orientation of the painting change what the student sees? What does this tell us about how our brain sees images and understands them?

Accommodations for Special Needs: Students with slow processing speed would be given more time. Deaf students would be provided all instructions in writing. The visually impaired would be encouraged to move to better seating in order to see the images. They could also be provided with separate images that they could inspect up close.

Assessment Procedures: Students will engage in class discussion and write a 1 page summation of what they noticed.

Follow-up Steps: For the following class students will be required to find one similar image, illusion, or some other object or image that changes when the viewer looks at it from a different perspective or after gaining new knowledge.