

Exit Self-Assessment

CCT 694

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

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

A. I can convey who I want to influence/affect concerning what (Subject, Audience, Purpose).

- 1.) I feel that I have a great handle on the educational needs of someone in their college freshman/sophomore year who would be taking my class. I think my material reflects the correct balance that would both address their current status, and challenge them to think deeper, wider, and outwards towards a bigger world.
- 2.) I know that my writing skills tend to be more towards the non-academic rather than the stricter form sought after in academia. It is something I will continue to work towards if needed in the future.

B. I know what others have done before, either in the form of writing or action, that informs and connects with my project, and I know what others are doing now.

- 1.) I spent a great deal of time in the spring of 2016 and before finding out what was currently being taught in on college campuses regarding the field of real-world decision making. Not much has changed since then, but I did hear this fall that Pasadena City College (a 2-year institution) had added a freshman class where practical decision-making was about 1/3 of the semester. This is much more time spent on the subject than the usual 2-4 sessions of a freshman seminar. This gives me hope that my class idea is something truly on the horizon.
- 2.) It might have been worth my time to go and talk personally with those professors who teach any form of decision-making (from the business world to the local Naval War college), but I did not. My other option in this area is to try and contact like-minded professors around the world via email. That might be something I will pursue in the future.

C. I have teased out my vision, so as to expand my view of issues associated with the project, expose possible new directions, clarify direction/scope within the larger set of issues, and decide the most important direction.

- 1.) This I did with great gusto, led not only by my personal drive for my CCT overall project goals, but my desire to exit the program with a complete 32-class agenda.

2.) I had a vision for a new college course, which was informed and altered as new information came along. But, as with all “pet” projects, I may have “blind spots” that I missed. These surely will come to light if the curriculum undergoes the extensive vetting procedure of the UC/CSU accreditation process.

D. I have identified the premises and propositions that my project depends on, and can state counter-propositions. I have taken stock of the thinking and research I need to do to counter those counter-propositions or to revise my own propositions.

1.) I believe I did this fairly well in Section 4 of my final paper: Assembling Information and Establishing Foundations. In this part of my synthesis, I re-looked at my foundational questions, and gave six reasons at length to look at my premises and propositions, and build a case for how these points can be defended.

2.) Knowing that this project will, hopefully, someday be something I have to defend in front of the University of California/California State University curriculum board, I tried to take stock of my line of rational thinking and develop an understanding of the counter-propositions that might come up. But, of course, there are bound to be arguments I haven’t thought of yet.

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

1.) I had clear objectives with respect to the product.

2.) I did not have realistic deadlines to realize these objectives. Yes, I could have squeezed something together (which I did), but although I was satisfied with my preparation work, and very, very proud of my oral synthesis presentation in May, I was not entirely satisfied with my written thesis at that time. Luckily, my UMASS-Boston advisor, Jeremy Szteiter, worked with me, and because I stayed on at UMASS an extra semester to take an additional two classes over and above my CCT Master’s requirements, that allowed me to take the extra time to write a synthesis paper of which I am very proud.

F. I have gained direct information, models, and experience not readily available from other sources.

1.) For the classes that were entirely new to me (including Holistic and Transformative Teaching, Advanced Cognitive Psychology, Dialogue Processes, Biomedical Ethics, Creative Thinking, Collaboration, and Organizational Change, Critical Thinking) everything was an original experience that led me to sources, information, and models I didn’t even know existed. And those led me to other resources, and on and on...

2.) The theme that is taught in the Seminar in Creativity varies each semester, and although I loved and learned a lot about myself as a creative person, I was hoping that I would catch a cycle that fed me new information, models, and experiences that would help me with my long-running work as a professional actor and playwright. This was not to be, so if I want to pursue that end of reinvigorating my creativity, I will have to look elsewhere.

G. I have clarified the overall progression or argument underlying my research and the written reports.

1.) I feel satisfied with what I have done, and my level of research and reporting.

2.) I will continue to keep going with my inquiry into the field of decision making, and in particular, always on the look-out for a better “Story Time” story that might be more relatable to my students, and small group exercises that will make each class topic clearly practiced by the students.

H. My writing and other products Grab the attention of the readers/audience, Orient them, move them along in Steps, so they appreciate the Position I've led them to.

- 1.) I spent two years refining my class session topics so that they would grab the attention of the UC/CSU accreditation committee, along with prospective students looking to take my class. To add to the “Grab, Positive Attention, Orientation” process, I also carefully developed new ways to present homework and a new style of syllabus to millennial students, including font, spacing, coloring, and other suggestions to make my work easily read by coed's with learning disabilities.
- 2.) I will continue to revise and adapt my work so that it is accessible by every student.

I. I have facilitated new avenues of classroom, workplace, and public participation.

- 1.) I tried my best.
- 2.) Since I was not working full time outside the house during my two years as a UMASS student, I have tended to do far too much from my desk chair via the internet, and not as much as I would have liked in person. Starting next month, I will be back full-time in the workplace, and I will make sure that I keep myself open to new avenues of participation in my continued research and goals.

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

- 1.) Of course, I have tried to do this throughout my classwork. I have been successful in getting each assignment in virtually on time... except for my thesis...
- 2.) I wanted to finish my synthesis/thesis on time, but because I wanted to take additional masters courses, I asked to put off my finished written project until I had gotten more out of my educational avenues. In the end, I felt I was actually more prepared to turn in the synthesis thesis that I did when I did because of the edge the extra two classes gave me in experience and time. Was that unfair? Maybe. But for me, that edge meant a level of confidence I didn't have after 11 courses.

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

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

A.) This is a huge, YES! For me, personally, this came through the wonder of being in a program that had hybrid classes – where some were on campus with the instructor, and others, around the world. Hearing viewpoints from fellow students talking from time zones around the world gave a global perspective to every situation that we discussed.

B.) This real-time international perspective is something I want to make sure I tap into. As an American, it is easy to see the world from a narrow perception, even if you think you are hip to what is happening elsewhere. Our “world news” does not come from a true global perspective. I will make sure I keep the email addresses of my favorite world alumni, and contact them when I need a real international reality check!

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

A.) My struggles started on day one, when I couldn't seem to figure out taking a class on-line. Getting into Blackboard and Google Hangouts was entirely new to me (and also to my husband who is a computer guy, but had never done work in those programs.) It was VERY frustrating the first few weeks, trying to figure out how to disable things to open pages, how homework would not paste into spots with a left click, etc. It was driving me literally to the point where I thought of quitting. But I persevered, and in future courses, even acted as a mentor to new students who were as frustrated as I was at one time.

B.) I need to push through the times when I struggle with new technology. Just keep on trying, and ask for help as many times as you need to!

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

A.) I figured out my own methodology.

B.) I should have taken the time to learn the bibliography shortcuts better. But, I made excuses.

4. I have experimented with new tools and experiences, even if not every one became part of my toolkit as a learner, teacher/facilitator of others, and reflective practitioner.

A.) I had never done a power point presentation before working on this Masters. And my Word experience was limited to the fields that I had been working in for years. This degree forced me to expand my familiarity of tools I had worked with in limited ways, and in knowing them better, had time and patience to use them in reflective ways.

B.) Again, I couldn't get my bibliography tool to work intuitively, so I skipped over the tutorial, and did it piece by piece, which was not a good use of my time.

5. I have paid attention to the emotional dimensions of undertaking my own project but have found ways to clear away distractions from other sources (present & past) and not get blocked, turning apparent obstacles into opportunities to move into unfamiliar or uncomfortable territory.

A.) I put everything but my acting career on hold during my Master's work. This gave me the time to read and read and read, in addition to my assigned work and book study. This was a huge emotional and educational gift to myself. I read over 80 books cover-to-cover, hundreds of academic articles, and hundreds of other pieces of source material. For me, it was heavenly.

B.) Financially, it was tough to put my other sources of income on hold, but my husband and I talked about this once in a lifetime chance, and we worked it out.

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.

A.) Developing peer and other horizontal relationships has been an amazing adventure through the CCT program. I hope/believe/think that I gave support with a free and open heart, and I know I was the lucky recipient of such in return.

B.) I want to find the time in the new year to send a personal thank you note to my favorite fellow students, making sure they know they are always welcome to contact me in the future.

7. I have taken the lead, not dragged my feet, in dialogue with my advisor and other readers. I didn't wait for them to tell me how to solve an expository problem, what must be read and covered in a literature review, or what was meant by some comment I didn't understand. I didn't put off giving my writing to my advisor and other readers or avoid talking to them because I thought that they didn't see things the same way as I do.

A.) I don't think this was a problem with me. I felt free to contact my professors and advisors via email whenever I had a question or problem.

B.) I can be a little shy when it comes to setting up teacher conferences, but I never felt that I was avoiding them or other readers for any reason.

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).

A.) As someone who has been in the world of professional writers since high school, I am used to editorial feedback, long and short, kind and tough, silly and thoughtful. It is part of being a working writer. I have learned how to deal with critique, and respond in ways that always make my work better. I know change is a huge part of the writing process. Also, as an actor, when working with a director, making adaptations to my work is a daily process.

B.) This is my wheelhouse, so very little phases me. I have learned that even if I strongly disagree with a critique, I should look at what caused a red flag for the reader. A good critique is a signal, and signals must be noticed. The only time this did not work well was in the 693 class, where I (and I think some of my classmates) were never 100% sure of the strategy for our action research.

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.

A.) As the person who actually asked each professor if I could modify assignments here and there, and every single term paper, I was always quite comfortable asking to negotiate projects to work into my unified plan for my complete Master's program. I was never worried about getting a good grade. I figured that would happen naturally if I put 110% effort into anything that I received special permission to do.

B.) Again, negotiating around "formal standards" is in my everyday wheelhouse with all the various projects I work on.

10. I have approached the CCT synthesis course and the CCT program as works-in-progress, which means that, instead of harboring criticisms to submit after the fact, I have found opportunities to affirm what is working well and to suggest directions for further development.

A. Yes, on the whole. I always felt very comfortable contacting Jeremy Szteiter with any question or problem, and he was extraordinarily patient with me -- from learning how to use Blackboard and Google Hangout, to my reasoning for putting off the final writing of my synthesis paper.

B. As I said in part B of question 8, I struggled for a clear, clean path through the 693 Action Research class. I thought I had it figured out, but it turns out, that I was off in my final project – although personally, I learned a tremendous amount from my endeavor. This was the only time I brought up my frustrations "after the fact," which I did in person to Jeremy while in Boston delivering my synthesis presentation.