

# **Creative Process UARTS 250/550-4 credits**

## **Winter 2015**

### **Coordinator:**

**Dr. Stephen Rush**, School of Music, Theatre and Dance

### **Professors:**

**Amy Chavasse**—School of Music, Theatre and Dance

**Nick Tobier**—Penny W. Stamps School of Art and Design

**Herbert Winful and Andrew DeOrio**—College of Engineering

**Gregory Saldaña**—Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning

### **Course Description**

Creative Process is a course in which students are encouraged, in an interdisciplinary way, to explore processes of creativity. Activities are organized around a series of two-week hands-on workshops, weekly colloquia, and a final project, all of which are designed as opportunities to learn and practice--and even get good at--being creative in all sorts of ways in all kinds of situations. Aptitudes like empathy, storytelling, and experiencing awe will be fostered, along with the ability to identify opportunities where none are apparent and the courage to make and share things that are beautiful and joyful. A team of five faculty from four different UM schools will work closely with students to illustrate how thinking and working creatively bring greater productivity, accomplishment, meaning, and richness to life, academic, professional and personal.

### **In particular, the course aims to:**

- Demystify creativity and demonstrate that it is an inherent potential in all humans
- Challenge common misconceptions of creativity—that it is available only to a select few who are special and talented; that it is relevant only to certain fields, that “being creative” simply means you are borderline crazy and have an overly active imagination that makes you think of impossible things and shout “Eureka!” in moments of visionary brilliance
- Develop a conceptual and experiential foundation for understanding what creative work is and how it is generated, considering approaches to creativity as exemplified by the faculty as well as great “Creative Types” (including Meister Eckhart, Malcolm X and Lao Tzu)
- Foster the ability to recognize creative potential in unexpected contexts and understand that creative expression in any field is a process that can take many different forms
- Prepare students to be more confident and creative makers and doers, able and willing throughout their personal and professional lives to utilize creativity for positive, productive ends.

## **Structure**

Our class of 80 students will be divided randomly into four sections of approximately 20 each. Specific randomness will be used. In other words, “music-oriented students” will not be herded into one section, “engineers” will not be herded into another. Each student will encounter students and faculty with varying types and amounts of experience and will be expected and encouraged to work across disciplinary boundaries.

The course is comprised of four focused areas of activity:

1. **Mini-Project Workshops (Mon/Wed, 3-5).** During the first half of the semester, students will rotate through four two-week workshops exploring creative process as practiced in Movement, Art and Design, Engineering and Architecture. Each workshop will include a combination of lecture, demonstration, and “hands-on” participation and will be led by a professor with expertise in that area. These sessions will attempt to be as wide-open as possible, and students will be provided with ample materials (physical, psychological and imaginative) to work and play creatively.
2. **Weekly Colloquia (Wed 5-6).** Led by course coordinator, Stephen Rush, the colloquium will bring all the students together to consider the wider issues surrounding creativity such as inspiration, fear, dysfunction, ego and “open-mindedness”. Lecture topics and readings will be extraordinarily varied, including essays by Howard Gardner, Stephen Nachmanovitch, Daniel Pink, Sir Ken Robinson, Thomas L. Friedman, Keith Sawyer, and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi along with the Tao Te Ching, Rilke’s Letters to a Young Poet, the Bhagavad Gita , and the Four Vias of Meister Eckhart.
3. **Final Project.** During the latter part of the semester, students will shift their attention to final projects. Topics for final projects are based on “prompts”, short, open-ended conceptual provocations that will be distributed at the second Colloquium. Students are encouraged to trade or combine ideas and to organize themselves into collaborative interdisciplinary teams. Final projects begin during the 10<sup>th</sup> week and will be developed through a series of four iterations. Final project presentations are given during the last week of the semester with a public Gallery Showing in the Duderstadt Gallery April 28 and 29 and 30th.
4. **Online Journal.** Throughout the semester, students will keep an online journal as a blog of their work for the course, an archive of their 4 mini-projects, and a journal detailing their work on their final project. All the mini-projects should be visible/audible in the Online Journal. The Journal can also be a kind of “Cyber Magic Box” that could include sound files, pictures of sculpture, book references, poems, random number generators, quotes, materials of any sort, even pets or plants on video – all discovered during the course of the semester! These are not simply a few paragraphs where one archives his/her “creative experiences”, or a place to work on your project. They are opportunities to try-out, flesh-out, sound out, visualize, and enact concepts and ideas encountered in class and in the “real” world. Each student is expected to add material to their journal once a week, at least. Date each entry; it will affect your grade! Using your journal as a portfolio-building exercise, as well as

a place to archive thoughts and sounds/images, can be an important archive for future reference, as well as a clear way for the class as well as the instructors to see your complete body of work for the course.

**Optional meditation session- “Catching your Breath” (Wed 6-6:30).** At these optional gatherings, breathing and resting will be discussed as a possible means for encouraging creativity. This will not be a “meditation technique class”, per se. This will simply be students (and faculty) learning to take a break from momentum. No emphasis on God, TM, Centering Prayer, etc. will be given, but if a student or faculty member wants to approach it that way, it really makes no difference. You must attend 3 of these sessions. It is an opportunity to learn to rest productively.

### Class Schedule

The overall structure and calendar for the course could be illustrated thusly:

	Wk 1	Wk 2&3	Wk 4 & 5	Wk 6 & 7	Wk 8 & 9	Wk 10	Wk 11	Wk 12	Wk 13	Wk 14	Wk 15
	Jan 8	Jan 13, 15, 22, & 27	Jan 29, Feb. 3,5 & 10	Feb 12, 17, 19, & 24	Feb 26, Mar 10, 12, & 17	Mar 19 & 24	Mar 26 & 31	Apr 2 & 7	Apr 9	Apr 14&16	Apr 21 GALLERY
<b>SECTION 1</b>											
M/W 3-5	Course Intro-Lecture Hall-Art/ Arch	Movement Mini-Project Living Arts	Architecture Mini-Project 2023 Art & Arch Bldg	Engineering Mini-project 2006 Art & Arch Bldg	Visual Art Mini-project Duderstadt DL1	FP Iterate 1 Living Arts	FP Iterate 2 2023 A&A Bldg	FP Iterate 3 2006 A&A Bldg	FP Iterate 4 Dude DL1	FP Workday Living Arts	FP Present Living Arts
<b>SECTION 2</b>											
M/W 3-5	Course Intro-Lecture Hall-Art/ Arch	Architecture Mini-Project 2023 Art & Arch Bldg	Engineering Mini-project 2006 Art & Arch Bldg	Visual Art Mini-project Duderstadt DL1	Movement Mini-Project Living Arts	FP Iterate 1 2023 A&A Bldg	FP Iterate 2 2006 A&A Bldg	FP Iterate 3 Dude DL1	FP Iterate 4 Living Arts	FP Workday 2023 A&A Bldg	FP Present 2023 A&A Bldg
<b>SECTION 3</b>											
M/W 3-5	Course Intro-Lecture Hall-Art/ Arch	Engineering Mini-project 2006 Art & Arch Bldg	Visual Art Mini-project Duderstadt DL1	Movement Mini-Project Living Arts	Architecture Mini-Project 2023 Art & Arch Bldg	FP Iterate 1 2006 A&A Bldg	FP Iterate 2 Dude DL1	FP Iterate 3 Living Arts	FP Iterate 4 2023 A&A Bldg	FP Workday 2006 A&A Bldg	FP Present 2006 A&A Bldg
<b>SECTION 4</b>											
M/W 3-5	Course Intro-Lecture Hall-Art/ Arch	Visual Art Mini-project Duderstadt DL1	Movement Mini-Project Living Arts	Architecture Mini-Project 2023 Art & Arch Bldg	Engineering Mini-project 2006 Art & Arch Bldg	FP Iterate 1 Dude DL1	FP Iterate 2 Living Arts	FP Iterate 3 2023 A&A Bldg	FP Iterate 4 2006 A&A Bldg	FP Workday Dude DL1	FP Present Dude DL1
Wed. 5-6:00	<b>Every Wednesday:</b> Lecture Hall, School of Art and Architecture										
Wed 6:10 - 6:30	<b>Every Wednesday:</b> “Catching Your Breath”, (Req. 3 times), Room 2216-19, School of Art and Architecture										

### **Outcomes and Grading**

Students will be evaluated based on attendance, class participation as exemplified in creative outcomes, and personal risk-taking. Students who are already “wild and wooly” will be encouraged to explore stillness, slowness and quietude. More internalized folk will be encouraged to push beyond their perceived external shells to explore different means of self-expression and innovative problem solving.

On a more concrete level, students will create 4 “mini-projects” at the beginning of the semester along with a final project and a journal. These will each constitute a portion of the final grade:

- 4 mini-projects @ 10% each
- Journal @20%
- Final Project @ 40%
- Meditation (“for credit only”)

Faculty will track each student’s progress on their Mini-Projects and Final Project with an eye for:

- Critical Thinking (did a student “study up” on the idea? was research involved? is this a clone of a previous idea?)
- Iteration (is this an idea that has grown and developed over time or is this the first thing a student came up with and they “stuck to it”? Did they do many sketches? Edit? Delete? Combine?)
- Completion (is the idea fully realized? Does the piece do what the student [and to a lesser extent, faculty] hoped it would?)

### **Attendance**

Each student must attend each class (Mon/Wed 3-5) and each colloquium (Wed 5-6). TWO absences are allowed (one complete week) per semester. Attendance will be taken at every session and the attendance policy will be strictly observed. The “Catch your Breath” time is required three times (Wednesday 6:10-6:30).

### **UARTS 550—Graduate Section**

During the first half of the semester, graduate students will participate in the four two-week workshops, weekly colloquia, and one or two separate meetings (please make note of the time commitment involved). During the second half of the semester, graduate students will gather every other week (Fridays, 10-12) for a symposium to discuss required readings and creative approaches in their area of study, again, within and across disciplinary boundaries. Attendance at every symposium is required. The semester will culminate in a Final Project—either a written paper or a combination of “made” and written paper. The project is due at the end of the semester and should be based on class discussions and readings. Written papers should be 5-7 pages long and both written and “made” projects need to include a credible bibliography of referenced sources.

## Project Descriptions

Some students have found it helpful to have a preview of the two-week mini-project workshops. With that in mind, below you will find a short description of those projects.

All students, in a series of four meetings, will get a brief introduction to and assignment in the following areas: Movement, Architecture, Visual Art and Engineering. Students are not graded on their virtuosity in these areas. Instead, they are provided with tools (cognitive or physical) with which to create, under the caring, challenging guidance of the professor. These projects, along with the colloquia, provide valuable experience and preparation for completing the final project.

**Movement** – How are ideas expressed through movement? How do we translate movement into textural and spatial narratives? Engaging with improvisational exercises, cultivating keen observational skills, experimenting with sonic elements (sound, voice, music) and developing an imaginative language of gesture and play, we will create movement studies that have shape, intention and intrigue. Viewing and discussion of dance/theater videos will support our investigation. A final movement event will be created individually or in groups and presented to the class.

**Engineering** – Students will visit the world of Engineering by discussing innovations in machinery, tools and technology. Exploring discovery of structure through Origami, they will be compelled to imagine possibilities using ordinary materials (car tires, pieces of paper, etc.) then asked to create small projects, using toys known as MakeyMakey's – an interface that use touch sensors and interfaces to create all kinds of fun/meaning– all using something originally designed as a toy for 5-year-olds.

**Architecture** – Students will get acquainted with the complex and oft-misunderstood world of Architecture by seeing and talking about great works of Architecture (as well as the people who created them), from Greek Architecture to Gaudi and beyond. Students will learn to discuss, critically, physical objects (designed by humans or not) using terms such as Space, Light, Shape and Form. Then students will create small projects using flexible and shapeable cardboard and prompt words to guide their work.

**Art & Design** – What do you experience at night that you don't see during the day? In the Visual Arts segment we will explore the processes of working from visual sources as inspiration to conjure up and construct sculptural objects that reveal different attributes from structure through skin. By day and by night. These objects will join together for an illuminated public spectacle.

We will use wire, paper, lights, and other “regular objects” to create this art!