

**Syllabus Fall 2007**

**JINS 355, Creating in the Arts and Sciences**

3:30 – 4:50 Tuesdays and Thursdays VH 1320

Note: Changes may be made in assignments and in this syllabus as needed.

*Don't loaf and invite inspiration. Light out after it with a club.*

--Jack London

*You're only given a little spark of madness. You mustn't lose it.<sup>1</sup>*

–Robin Williams

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**JINS (Junior Interdisciplinary Studies) Courses**

The JINS courses were created to enhance the liberal arts culture at Truman. All JINS courses are required to include the following:

- Examination of a topic or problem from the perspectives of at least two disciplines.
- Considerable writing with an opportunity for deep revision.

**JINS 355 Course Description.**

Examines creativity and the creative process. Students will (1) examine creative contributions to society, (2) investigate the conditions and the habits of thought, attitude, and behavior that enhance or inhibit creativity, (3) consider the ethical responsibilities of creators for their work, (4) apply what has been learned by doing a creative project, and (5) observe, reflect, and write on the process of applying theory to one's own practice. The disciplines used to consider creativity are:

- **Epistemology and ethics:** consideration of how of what we know we invent, and what is our responsibility for what we invent.
- **Psychology:** consideration of human behavior and the creative process.
- **Design in the arts and sciences:** Especially as they apply to designing & making human environments (homes, offices, public spaces) and designing human learning experiences such as films, exhibitions, and games.
- **Praxis:** Applying what we've learned to making a film/video.

**Goals:** To encourage you to: Change how you look at the world. Take responsibility for choosing what you wish to do and learn. Feel more comfortable with uncertainty, ambiguity, and risk. Improve your writing. Experience creativity by doing a quality project.

**Perspective and Rationale**

We humans live largely in a world of our own invention. Language, customs, artifacts, technology, science—all the elements of culture are inventions. Inventions and inventing change our consciousness. Yet the process of inventing (creating) is often regarded as something reserved for others, for the talented, for the "creative."

**Attendance**

Required. Please note, if you don't come, it affects your grade. Rationale: The course is a discussion and activity-based experience, so if you don't come, you don't get the experience.

**Library Reserves**

Work ahead! The library has a limited number of copies on reserve. Do the reading and note taking early, otherwise you may not be able to read the material before class and won't be able to do the assignments or pass the quiz on the reading.

**Tentative Syllabus Calendar:** This is the most important handout in the course—it details what we're doing and what is due. The syllabus calendar may change several times during the semester, so make sure you have the current version!

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<sup>1</sup> Quotes are from Martin, W. (2004) The best liberal quotes ever. Naperville, Illinois: Sourcebooks, Inc.  
Syllabus for JINS 355: Creative Work

## Scoring Guides

A scoring guide (rubric) will be provided for each assignment. The scoring guide shows you what you are being evaluated on; it also allows instructor and students to evaluate unique products on defined criteria and in a systematic way. The scoring guide allows you to evaluate your own work and to determine how to improve your work before you submit it for a grade. You will always know why you received the grade you did.

## List of Assignments and Evaluation

Overall grade will be based on:

- (15%) Writing Assignment: *Ethics & our responsibility for our inventions.*
- (15%) Writing Assignment: *Discussion of the key themes of the book you read on the creative process (Bateson or Csikszentmihalyi or Sherkerjian) with emphasis on how the book applies to you now and in the future. 4-5 pages. May be revised and resubmitted.*
- (15%) Writing Assignment: *Discussion of key themes of Gelb's How to think like Leonardo DaVinci or Maisel's Fearless creating, with emphasis on how the book applies to you now and in the future. 4-5 pages. May be revised and resubmitted.*
- (05%) Garage Band Assignment:
- (05%) 30 – 120 second still photo iMovie project: a key idea in your area.
- (20%) Assignment: Video Project (individual or group project). Emphasis on quality and creativity.
- (05%) Final Presentation: PowerPoint presentation (2.5-3 minutes) of what you learned in the course, how it has changed you, and how you might apply what you have learned in the future, including ethical implications of our responsibility for what we create as individuals, communities, and societies.
- (20%) Written in-class essays (quizzes) over readings. The in-class require you to give evidence that you have read the material, done at least some of the exercises (if present), reflected on and applied the content to your own experience. Expect these anytime, esp. if there is a reading due.

**Note: The rubric is part of the assignment; the grade is based on the rubric. You are responsible for what is in the rubric, so be sure to review whether you have done everything before you turn in your assignment.!**

## Expectations

Understanding expectations is always a big part of succeeding at anything; here are my expectations for the roles of students and teacher in the class:

- My job: Be a knowledgeable facilitator of learning, not an information giver. Get to know everyone, encourage questions, stimulate controversy, give feedback, challenge.
- Your job: Come to class with an agenda of things you want to learn. Come to class prepared; study the readings; do the assignments. Also: learn the names of people in class, work with them, and encourage them. Do the assignments in a way that benefits you. It's not your job to guess what the instructor or other students mean when they say something. If you don't understand, it's your job to ask. So please ask!

## Writing Enhanced

Like all JINS courses, JINS355 is writing enhanced. Expect to write, critique, peer review, revise, and present.

- Outline Format. All work is to be done in full-sentence outline format. (For an example, see Wittgenstein's *Tactatus Logico Philosophicus*.)
- Peer Review. Expect to do peer reviews of all assignments. Part of your grade will be based on the assistance you provide others.
- Deep Revision. Expect to do deep revision on some of your writing (a requirement for writing-enhanced courses). This does not mean revising poorly written papers. I expect the drafts that you present for peer revision and for instructor evaluation will be the best you can do. My experience in both giving and receiving editorial comments is that only well written drafts can be effectively critiqued, discussed, and then edited. The first draft you hand in must have been proofread and edited. Drafts that do not meet this criterion will be returned ungraded (you may resubmit). All assignments may be revised.
- To make evaluations anonymous, always put your name on the **back** of each page.

- **No names on front of papers!** For all written assignments, put your name on the rubric stapled to the last page of your paper. Put your name ONLY on the back of the paper; that way I can do a more fair and systematic job of grading your paper by grading it anonymously.
- *Staple* all pages together. *No* paper clips (they cause papers to get lost).

## Readings

In a course of two hundred students, everyone was reading the same book.  
Two hundred people can read two hundred books. –  
--John Cage, *Diary: How to Improve the World (You will only make it worse)*

### **Purchase List:** NOTE: COME TO CLASS BEFORE BUYING THE BOOKS

**Note:** You are responsible for the choice you make. Skim the books before you buy to make sure that they fit your needs. This is important because you are expected to learn and apply the content to yourself and your own experiences. If you cannot find suitable choices, see me and I can offer additional alternatives. Reviews of some of the following items may be found at amazon.com. I recommend you visit the Amazon site (amazon.com) to help you make your selection.

#### **Purchase one of the following two:**

Fearless Creating: A step-by-step guide to starting and completing your work of art

Eric Maisel. 1995. New York : Putnam, ; ISBN: 0874778050 (acid-free paper) 9780874778052 (acid-free paper)

[Comment: Maisel is a novelist, psychologist, and psychotherapist with a practice specializing in work with artists, performers, writers, and film makers. Don't choose this unless you've read some of it first...some people like it...others hate it.

*How to think like Leonardo Da Vinci: seven steps to genius every day.* Michael Gelb

2000, 1998. New York, N.Y. : Dell Pub., ; ISBN: 0440508274 (pbk.) : 9780440508274 (pbk.)

[Comment: Gelb attempts to identify ideas and skills that made DaVinci creative and then devises activities to assist readers in experiencing these ideas and skills.]

#### **Purchase any one of the following four:**

1. Composing a life. Mary Catherine Bateson

1989. New York : Atlantic Monthly Press, ; ISBN: 0871133342 : 9780871133342

[Comment: Anthropologist Mary Catherine Bateson takes a very different approach to examining everyday life as a creative experience by focusing on the processes of making meanings and making decisions in very particular situations. The merits of her book have to do with her anthropological examination of her life in her culture as a subject for examination and reflective insight. Some people liked this; others disliked it.]

2. Creativity: flow and the psychology of discovery and invention. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

1996 1st ed. New York : HarperCollinsPublishers, ; ISBN: 0060171332 9780060171339

[Comment: Psychologist Csikszentmihalyi describes the results of his lifelong project to research the creative experienced. Outstanding book about creativity by the leader of the field in the United States.]

3. *Uncommon genius: how great ideas are born.* Denise G Shekerjian. 1990

New York, N.Y., U.S.A. : Viking, ; ISBN: 0670831530 : 9780670831531

[Comment: Enthusiastic encounters between the author and over sixty recipients of the Mac Arthur Award for creative work.]

4. *Authentic happiness: using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfillment.* Martin E P Seligman. 2002. New York : Free Press, ; ISBN: 0743222970 9780743222976

[Comment: Seligmann, a research psychologist, overlaps Csikszentmihalyi's approach to creativity, especially in relation to the concept of flow. Though written in a popular style, it is based on psychological research, which, I am happy to say, Seligmann discusses in detail without ever losing the reader's interest.]

## Description of the Course

### **Part I: Ethics and Epistemology of Invention: What is our responsibility for the world we have invented, the world in which we live?**

The readings invite us to examine possible answers to this question. What are we doing when we verify a statement? How much of our world have we invented (the answer is more complex than might

appear to be case)? What is responsibility? If our world is largely one of our invention, are we not responsible for the world in which we live? We will consider these and other questions as we examine the work of Heinz von Foerster, Humberto Maturana, and Ernst von Glasersfeld—three writers who invite us to question what we know about our own knowing. We will conclude with von Foerster’s questions “What are the consequences of all this [how we choose to understand reality] in ethics and aesthetics?” Von Foerster leaves us to ponder two imperatives for action, an ethical imperative and an aesthetical imperative:

If I am the only one who decides how I act, then I am responsible for my action...  
*The ethical imperative:* Act always so as to increase the number of choices.  
*The aesthetical imperative:* If you desire to see, learn how to act.  
--Heinz von Foerster, On Constructing a Reality, in *The Invented Reality*

## Part II: Application.

Individually or in groups of two or three, we will design and produce short videos.

“Q. To whom does design address itself...? A. To the need.”  
--Charles Eames, Design Q & A, film interview

“It’s from the giving oneself over to the doing that the creator accumulates an *intimate* fund of knowledge that will inform his efforts. It is through the doing that he exposes the knotty tangle of relevant questions that will make up the capital of his life work. It is in the act of doing that he opens himself up to the unanticipated directions that may lead him to something new, something useful, something beautiful, something creative.”  
--Denise Shekerjian, *Uncommon Genius*, 73-74

## Part III: Psychology: The Study of the Process of Invention

“...unless enough people are motivated by the enjoyment that comes from confronting challenges, by discovering new way of being and doing, there is no evolution of culture, no progress in thought or feeling.”  
--Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*, 110

We continue our study of creativity by reading from the work of authors in the area of psychology who have researched the phenomenon of creativity. In particular, we will examine the work of Csikszentmihalyi, Department Chair of Psychology at the University of Chicago, a man who has published extensively in research journals as well as writing for the public. His books focus on his concept of the heightened experience of aliveness that often takes place in the creative process of solving problems and in living itself. *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention* is a study of 90 influential, creative people. The list of people interviewed is a who’s who of outstanding contributors to the arts and sciences. An anonymous review of the book at amazon.com paraphrases Csikszentmihalyi’s position in the following words: “Creativity is not a private enterprise but occurs only when an individual, who has mastered his subject matter, is acknowledged by the gatekeepers of his field of endeavor or if, like Freud or the Wright brothers, creates his own field.”