

Interdisciplinary Expressive Arts 4100

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Location: Kwantlen University College, Surrey Campus

Schedule: Thursdays, 11:00-12:50

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Basic Philosophy of the Course

This course continues the foundational work begun in Interdisciplinary Expressive Arts 3100 or Mythological Narratives 3130, in which students have explored the many dimensions of interdisciplinary inquiry. The course is, for the most part, led by the initiatives and interests of students working individually and in groups. The course content will evolve as the course develops, but will include a diverse number of current interdisciplinary approaches within the expressive arts. These include creative writing, music, movement, fine arts, theatre, expressive arts therapies, storytelling, mythopoetics, photography, film making, etc.. Additionally, students will explore potential academic and career directions within the cultural and social services sectors.

As a reminder, and for new students (those who have not enrolled in IDEA 3100), Interdisciplinary Expressive Arts refers to a specific set of educational activities, goals and strategies. Based on innovative pedagogy and integrative approaches to learning, interdisciplinary studies involve the synthesis and synergy of various disciplines toward a cohesive, unified educational experience. Interdisciplinarity is much more than enrollment in courses from more than a single discipline. Authentic interdisciplinarity emphasizes the linkages between disciplines by focusing on contrasting and complementary aspects of diverse educational domains.

Interdisciplinary studies encourage students to develop broader intellectual skills, greater facility for critical thinking, and greater awareness of the social relevance of their education. Interdisciplinary students have the opportunity to develop exemplary skills in problem solving, insight, team-building, lateral thinking, and multi-modal learning styles. Interdisciplinary strategies involve approaching an issue or problem from various perspectives. This typically entails intellectual inquiries that range beyond the borders of any single discipline or domain. While still respecting the function of the boundaries between domains, interdisciplinary approaches recognize that those boundaries are essentially arbitrary and do not always serve the goals of learning. Global

warming and the AIDS pandemic are two examples of contemporary issues that require interdisciplinary approaches.

This course is about creativity, about making a claim for the fundamental right of intentional creative action. Within that context, we will explore the ancient and modern practices of creative endeavor (particularly as regards family and culture), the hurdles of creativity (as they involve craft and precision and clarity) and the great gifts we might receive from others of our creative kin (that is to say, the long tradition of writers, poets, sculptors, dancers, craftspeople of all stripes, musicians, myth-makers, and so on). Throughout this process, our guiding archetype will be that of the trickster.

In this course we stake out the territory of the creative, inspecting the geology of its forms and ideals, finding our own individual places to homestead. Creativity involves the search for truth, yet also an awareness that truth and fact are often provisional, and mythological; they are shapeshifters on the wide-open plain of creativity. We will explore what this means, and what to do about it.

And, finally, the goal of the course (from my point of view, at least), is to have fun: to preserve and nurture the creative and imaginative spirit that is the foundation of all the arts and sciences.

Learning Goals

- Read selected interdisciplinary texts and discuss their origin, development, and contemporary relevance
- Interpret interdisciplinary literary traditions within the context of contemporary academic and professional inquiry
- Articulate (verbally, in writing, and through creative endeavour) knowledge of interdisciplinarity as both an ancient and a current mode of inquiry
- Describe the ways in which interdisciplinary expressive arts are more than a simple aggregation of various disciplines
- Evaluate diverse interdisciplinary perspectives and approaches using heuristic modalities
- Complete a series of linked interdisciplinary projects and presentations
- Complete a final project using interdisciplinary principles

Learning Experiences

The course will include a variety of learning experiences contingent upon regular attendance and dedicated participation. Because creativity is an interactive process, much of the class time will be devoted to group experiential exercises, individual reflective tasks, collaborative endeavors, and practical assignments.

We will create a collaborative environment in this class. We are not going to cobble together the type of group one often hears about in the arts: competitive, cut-throat, critical. Repeat: we are not creating such a group. Instead, we will direct our efforts toward building upon the individual strengths of each participant, finding ways for each of us to be self-reflective in terms of assessing our creative work, discovering a means of protecting the quality and integrity of our writing. The creative spirit is remarkably persistent, yet it is also fragile, especially at its inception, and we must be conscious of this fragility. Think about it: did you not experience, as a child, the strangulation of your creativity in school, by way of a culture of insensitive peers or teachers? Why do you think hardly anyone feels comfortable singing in public, or dancing, or drawing, or reading their written work to others? We have, most of us, been the victims of inappropriate feedback and judgment. We have to be careful about this, in our course, so that we do not harm one another.

Readings

Required Course Texts

Barron, F., Montouri, A., and Barron, A., eds. *Creators on Creating: Awakening and Cultivating the Imaginative Mind*.
New York: Putnam, 1997.

Wilson, Frank. *The Hand: How Its Use Shapes the Brain, Language and Human Culture*.
New York: Vintage, 1998.

Plus one text chosen by the student.

Suggested Books

Allen, Pat. *Art is a Way of Knowing*.
Shambhala, 1995.

Hyde, Lewis. *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*.
New York: Vintage, 1983.

- Butala, Sharon.** *Wild Stone Heart*.
HarperFestival, 2000. ISBN 000255397X.
- Calvo, César.** *The Three Halves of Ino Moxo*.
Translated by Kenneth Symington.
Inner Traditions, 1995. ISBN 0892815191.
- Campbell, Joseph.** *The Mythic Image*.
Princeton UP, 1974.
- Ellis, Normandi.** *Dreams of Isis: A Woman's Spiritual Sojourn*.
Quest, 1995.
- Hancock, Graham.** *Heaven's Mirror: Quest for the Lost Civilization..*
Crown, 1998.
- Hedges, Chris.** *War Is a Force that Gives Us Meaning*.
Anchor, 2003. ISBN 1400034639.
- Kingston, Maxine Hong.** *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*.
Vintage, 1989. ISBN 0072435194.
- Kwan, Michael David.** *Things that Must Not be Forgotten: A Childhood in Wartime China*.
Soho Press ISBN 1569472823
- Laird, Ross A.** *Grain of Truth: The Ancient Lessons of Craft*.
MWR, 2000.
- Langewiesche, William.** *American Ground: Unbuilding
the World Trade Center*.
North Point Press, 2002. ISBN 0865475822. (Also see *Inside the Sky*.)
- London, Peter.** *No More Secondhand Art*.
Boston: Shambhala, 1989.
- Lopate, Phillip.** *The Art of the Personal Essay: An Anthology from the Classical Era to the
Present*.
Anchor, 1997. ISBN 038542339X.
- Macfarlane, David.** *The Danger Tree: Memory, War and the Search for a Family's Past*.
Walker, 2001. ISBN 0802776167.
- McNiff, S.** *Art Heals: How Creativity Cures the Soul*.
Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2004.

- Merwin, W.S.** *The Mays of Ventadorn*.
National Geographic Directions, 2002. ISBN 0792265386.
- Ondaatje, Michael.** *Running in the Family*.
Vintage, 1993. ISBN 0679746692.
- Pirsig, Robert.** *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*.
HarperTorch, 2006 (reprint). ISBN 0060589469.
- Saint-Exupéry, A.** *Wind, Sand and Stars*.
Harvest, 2002. ISBN 0156027496.
- Sanders, Scott Russell.** *Writing from the Center*.
Indiana UP, 1997. ISBN 0253211433.
- Sullivan, William.** *The Secret of the Incas: Myth, Astronomy, and the War Against Time*.
Crown, 1996.

Books on Creativity and Associated Philosophies

- Achebe, Chinua** *Hopes and Impediments*. New York: Doubleday, 1989.
- Barron, F., ed** *Creators on Creating: Awakening and Cultivating the Imaginative Mind*. New York: Putnam, 1997.
- Benjamin, Walter** *Theses on the Philosophy of History*.
- Borges, Jorge Luis.** *Collected Fictions*.
Penguin, 1999. ISBN 0140286802.
- Bohm, David** *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*. London: Ark, 1980.
- Bohm, David** *Unfolding Meaning*. New York: Routledge, 1985.
- Bohm, David** *On Creativity*. New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Bronowski, Jacob** *Science and Human Values*. New York: Harper, 1956.
- *The Face of Violence*. London: Turnstile Press, 1964.
- *A Sense of the Future: Essays in Natural Philosophy*. Cambridge, MIT Press, 1977.
- Degler, Teri** *The Fiery Muse: Creativity and the Spiritual Quest*. Toronto: Random House, 1996.

- Demos, John.** *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America.* Vintage, 1995. ISBN 0679759611.
- Flack, Audrey** *Art and Soul: Notes on Creating.* New York: Penguin, 1986.
- Franklin, Ursula** *The Real World of Technology.* Toronto: Anansi, 1999.
- Fulford, Robert** *The Triumph of Narrative: Storytelling in an Age of Mass Culture.* Toronto: Anansi, 1999.
- Goldberg, Natalie** *Writing Down the Bones.* Boston: Shambhala, 1986.
- Herrigel, Eugen** *Zen in the Art of Archery.* New York: Random House, 1977.
- Hildegard of Bingen** *Secrets of God: Writings of Hildegard of Bingen.* Boston: Shambhala, 1996.
- Hyde, Lewis** *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property.* New York: Vintage, 1983.
- *Trickster Makes This World: Mischief, Myth, and Art.* New York: North Point Press, 1998.
- Jiménez, Juan Ramon** *The Complete Perfectionist: A Poetics of Work.* Edited and translated by Christopher Maurer. New York: Doubleday, 1997.
- Jung, C.G** *The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature.* Translated by R.F.C. Hull. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.
- London, Peter** *No More Secondhand Art.* Boston: Shambhala, 1989.
- Pye, David** *The Nature and Art of Workmanship.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1968.
- Richards, Mary** *Centering in Pottery, Poetry and the Person.* Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP.
- Sarton, May** *Journal of a Solitude.* New York: Norton, 1973.
- Sennett, Richard** *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism.* New York: Norton, 1998.
- Thoreau, Henry David** *Walden.* New York: Norton, 1985.

Further Suggestions

- Arendt, Hannah** *Illuminations*. London: Cape.
- Chodorow, J.** *Dance Therapy and Depth Psychology: The Moving Imagination*. Routledge, 1991.
- Dewey, John** *Art As Experience*. New York, Perigee, 1931.
- Diamondstein, Barbara** *Handmade in America: Conversations with Fourteen Craftmasters*. New York: Abrams, 1983.
- Gadamer, H.G.** *Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Trans. D.E. Linge. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.
- Gardner, Harold** *The Unschooled Mind: How Children are Taught and How Teachers Should Teach*. New York, Basic, 1993.
- Greene, Brian** *The Elegant Universe: Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions, and the Quest for the Ultimate Theory*. New York: Norton, 1999.
- Hammarskjöld, Dag** *Markings*.
- Knill, P., Levine, E. and Levine, S.** *Principles and Practice of Expressive Arts Therapy*. New York: Jessica Kingsley, 2004.
- Levine, S. K. and Levine, E. G.** *Foundations of Expressive Arts Therapy*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1999.
- Levine, E.** *Tending the Fire*. Ontario: EGS Press, 2003.
- Levine, Peter** *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma*. North Atlantic Books.
- Lorca, Federico** *In Search of Duende*. Translated by Christopher Maurer. New York: New Directions, 1998.
- Lyndon, Susan** *The Knitting Sutra: Craft as a Spiritual Practice*. San Francisco: Harper, 1997.
- McNiff, Shaun** *Art Heals: How Creativity Cures the Soul*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2004.
- . *Creating with Others: The Practice of Imagination in Art, Life, and the Workplace*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2003.

———. *Art As Medicine*. Boston: Shambala, 1992.

———. *Fundamentals of Art Therapy*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1988.

———. *Art-Based Research*. London: Jessica Kingsley, 1988.

Mazza, Nick *Poetry Therapy: Interface of the Arts and Psychology*. CRC Press, 1999.

Minnich, E. K. *Transforming Knowledge*. Temple University Press., 1990.

Moustakas, C. *Heuristic Research: Design, Methodology, and Applications*. Newbury Park: Sage, 1990.

Needleman, Carla *The Work of Craft: An Inquiry Into the Nature of Crafts and Craftsmanship*. New York: Kodansha, 1979.

Demonstration of Learning

Assignments

Three linked assignments and several presentations (see below) are required for this course. These assignments may be comprised of any type of art expression (writing, music, imagery, dance, movement, photography, etc.). The central idea is for you to choose a specific theme or thread and explore it in some depth. We will discuss these projects at length in class. They are opportunities for you to discover and explore creativity in your own life.

For philosophical reasons, I do not prescribe a particular length or structure for the projects. There is no upper limit on the length or complexity of the projects.

The individual projects are worth 25 percent each.

Group Presentations

Each student will be a member of several different peer groups; each peer group will present at least one mini-presentation (roughly thirty minutes each) on various topics. Each class session after the second will involve presentations, with one presentation from each group. Class time will be given for preparing the presentations. The structure and content of the presentations will be discussed in class.

The group presentations are worth a total of 25 per cent of your grade.

Presentation Methods and Goals

The central idea of the presentations for this course is to give you opportunities to practice interdisciplinary thinking and expression. As such, the presentation should be interdisciplinary. Essentially, this means that you should try to use multiple presentation strategies and modalities. These might include (but are certainly not limited to) any of the following:

- Storytelling
- Poetry
- Music (playing)
- Drumming
- Singing
- Dance
- Movement
- Sport
- Ritual
- Film (showing)
- Film making
- Photography
- Web content
- Craft work

- Art making
- Individual reflection
- Meditation
- Health practices
- Creative process (any type)
- Group communication
- Cultural practices
- Nature experiences

Whenever possible (and workable), try to mix together multiple modalities into a single presentation. For example, you might ask the group to do some individual reflection using the modality of poetry, then create a series of movements based on the poetry, then work in small groups to talk about and share the process. Many configurations are possible. The trick is to choose an activity that you enjoy, then find a way to apply it to the content (suggested presentation topics are listed below). Please do not create your presentations using only written and/or spoken materials. In other words, don't just stand up at the front of the class and talk about the presentation topic. Utilize the energy of the group. Remember that in interdisciplinary work divergences are valued as unique opportunities. So, feel free to experiment with activities and modalities that may not seem, on the surface, to be related to the topic at hand but which might, upon experiment, yield surprising connections and results. Be playful. Allow yourself to laugh at yourself, to be embarrassed, to engage with the process in novel and interesting ways.

In interdisciplinary work, riddles and puzzles are highly prized. Accordingly, the presentations should (ideally) not be complete explanations or presentations of material. Feel free to play with challenging exercises, with impossible scenarios, and other conundra. One way to think about this is to consider insoluble riddles, such as the one in *Alice in Wonderland*: Why is a raven like a writing desk?

"Have you guessed the riddle yet?" the Hatter said, turning to Alice again.

"No, I give it up," Alice replied. "What's the answer?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," said the Hatter.

"Nor I," said the March Hare.

Alice sighed wearily. "I think you might do something better with the time," she said, "than wasting it in asking riddles that have no answers."

The best interdisciplinary topics offer more questions than answers. They, are essentially, gateways into the mysterious—which, as Einstein will tell you, is an important place to be:

The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science.

Suggested Topics for Interdisciplinary Presentations

- Akhenaten and the invention of monotheism
- Albrecht Durer and alchemy
- Aristotle's book of comedy
- Bill Evans and the Peace Piece
- Buckminster Fuller and the geodesic
- Chenrizi and the politics of China
- Chuang Tzu and the butterfly
- Coleridge and the person from Porlock
- Csikszentmihalyi and the flow experience
- David Bohm's Implicate Order
- Darwin, the bassoon, and the sundew
- Eugen Herrigel and the practice of archery
- Francis Yates and the *Art of Memory*
- Freud, Jung, and the "bosh" incident
- Fulcanelli and *Mysteries of the Cathedrals*
- Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic tradition
- Godel's uncertainty principle
- Hanna Arendt at Nuremberg

- Henri Rousseau in the jungle
- Howard Carter and “wonderful things”
- Jacob Bronowski at Auschwitz
- Jacob Bronowski, Nagasaki, and *Science and Human Values*
- Jan Tschichold and the Nazis
- John Cage on the subway with the *I Ching*
- Kepler’s *Somnium*
- Mary Shelley and the genesis of *Frankenstein*
- Newton’s *Principia*
- Nikola Tesla and universal energy
- Philip K. Dick, VALIS, and 2-3-74
- Picasso, Guernica, and Expo 1937
- R.D. Laing and madness as reality
- Ramanujan’s notebooks
- Richard Feynman and the invention of quantum mechanics
- Schwaller de Lubicz at Karnak
- Simone Weil and leading from desire
- St. Exupery flying into the desert
- The Reimann Hypothesis
- The Voynich Manuscript
- The visions of Hildegard of Bingen
- Thoth’s legacy
- Walter Benajmin and the Angel of History
- Wendell Berry going *Into the Woods*
- Wilhelm Reich’s Cloudbuster
- William Blake’s *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

Evaluation of Assignments and Presentations

My primary focus, as an instructor, is to assist you in developing your creativity. Grades are quite far down on the list of priorities for me. I am focused on your engagement with the process, your commitment to your own work, the extent to which you show up, metaphorically, to be as present as you can be. These are evaluation criteria for me.

Attendance and Participation

The expectation is that you will attend all sessions and involve yourself in the class process. Your willingness to engage creatively with the learning process, to take appropriate personal risks, and to participate in group activities are all central to your involvement in this class. Your emotional involvement in the class is as important as your academic knowledge of the material.

Grade Inflation

Every semester there are students who do well on the assignments, complete all the associated learning goals of the course, participate well, and wonder why they do not receive a grade of one hundred percent (or 98, anyway). Here is the reason: almost every semester there are students who demonstrates a level of commitment that goes beyond the course requirement. Such students complete extra work, or hand in exemplary assignments, or undertake a significant amount of personal development in addition to the course expectations. Such students typically receive the highest grades.

If you do reasonably well in the course you will receive a reasonable grade. Very high grades are intended for extra or exemplary work. Unfortunately, over the past thirty years the post-secondary educational system in North America has participated in a process of grade inflation. Since the 1980's, the average grade for typical course work has been increasing by about 25 per cent each decade. Elevated assessments do not accurately reflect the work of most students. Even worse, grade inflation has caused many students to expect high grades for average work. I am not a particularly stringent assessor; but I will not inflate grades artificially.

The grades for the course will be distributed along a curve, with a small number of students (likely) receiving high grades, most students receiving grades in the middle range, and a few students struggling with lower grades. If you are uncertain about your assessment for a given assignment, or if you wish to know where, roughly, you are along the distribution curve of the class, or if you would like suggestions for how to improve your grade, please ask me for clarification.