University of Michigan
Provost's Teaching Innovation Prize

2017 WINNER

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Dr. Rush would like to acknowledge the 15 professors who assisted with the course over the last decade, especially:

Michael Gould, Professor of Music (Percussion)
Amy Chavasse, Associate Professor of Dance
Andy Thompson, Lecturer in Art and Design
Mark Kirschenmann, Lecturer in Music
Nick Tobier, Professor of Art and Design
Elona Van Gent, Professor of Art
Herb Winful, Arthur F. Thurnau Professor and Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science
Yojairo Lomeli, Lecturer in Architecture and Urban Planning
Andrew DeOrio, Lecturer III in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, College of Engineering

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Opening Students' Minds Through Interdisciplinary "Making"

Innovation Description

"Creative Process" (UARTS 250) is a course that promotes interdisciplinary learning approaches through the lens of four North Campus "making" academic units: Art & Design; Engineering; Architecture & Urban Planning; and Music, Theatre & Dance. A team of five faculty from four different U-M schools works closely with students to illustrate how thinking and working creatively brings greater productivity, accomplishment, meaning, and richness to multiple aspects of life: academic, professional, and personal.

Rotating through two-week sessions with different faculty members "place[s] students comfortably in zones of discomfort," where low-stakes, introductory assignments encourage risk, failure, and iteration—all backbone principles for the course. For the final project students are given balloons with a word tucked inside. These words are simple, randomly generated, and as diverse as "butter," "diagonal," or "salmon." The students are encouraged to explore their words etymologically, physically (through dance), spiritually and socially, building on the themes and skills explored during the rotations. Their projects are displayed and discussed at a gallery showing at the end of the semester to illustrate the diversity of work generated.

Student Comments

"The best part about 'Creative Process' is that students were at all skill levels, and despite this, everyone could contribute constructively. My background in math and science helped me contribute to class discussions. The skills we learned, especially through powerful teamwork and camaraderie, could be applied to any field."

"I took UARTS 250 two years ago and am still working with what it taught me….."

"UARTS 250 did not magically turn me into a creative genius, but it certainly primed me to work towards creative solutions."

"This course somehow prepared me for a future I couldn't predict, and I am certain it will continue to prepare me for the rest of my life."

"I didn't expect to be so 'touched/moved' in taking this course … I am surprised by the many related connections that I am making between the projects and lessons for living."

"In the first week, I could not understand the relationship between engineering and art. However, I now can relate those concepts and how one is needed to create the other."

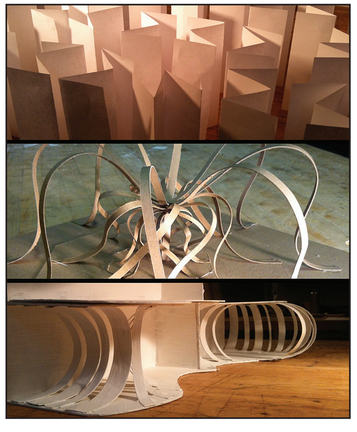
Examples of Teaching Innovation

"Creative making" brings greater productivity, accomplishment, meaning, and richness to all aspects of life, academic and personal. Learning outcomes include:

- Demystify creativity and demonstrate it to be an inherent potential of all humans.
- Challenge common misconceptions of creativity – that it is only available to a select few "geniuses" and/or to those considered borderline "crazy."
- Assist students in developing a conceptual foundation for identifying creative approaches to arrive at their own creative process.
- Foster the ability to recognize creative potential in unexpected contexts, and understand that creative expression is a process taking many different forms.

UARTS 250 aims to take an ineffable, abstract concept like "creativity" and make it accessible, visible, and productive, giving students from diverse disciplinary and identity backgrounds direct connections to their own personal and academic practices.

By consciously and purposefully building in performance, display, and discussion opportunities for work created in the course, students can experience the breadth of creative making in concrete ways.



Inspired by the word "rhythm", engineering students created sculptural works out of a variety of materials ranging from wood to paper.