

CREATIVITY

Humanities I Seminar: New College 212
Mondays and Wednesdays, 9-11 AM
New College Seminar Room 109 [Carmichael Hall]

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and New College
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Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:30-4:30 PM and by appointment

Course Description

This first-level humanities seminar uses creativity as its organizing principle. Human culture, self-awareness, the creative process, and creative expression are explored through written texts (autobiographies, novels, poetry), film, research papers, oral and written reports, journals, individual and group projects, conversations with artists, and out-of-classroom experiences. This four credit seminar carries both the Humanities and the Fine Arts designations. The "H" designation indicates that the course considers questions of values, ethics, and aesthetics as they are represented in works of art, literature, philosophy, and theology. The "FA" designation indicates that the course is designed to increase the student's awareness of the visual arts, music, theatre, and dance.

Course Requirements

New College 212 will be conducted as a participation-intensive seminar. Each member will contribute actively to the on-going, in-class conversation and will assume group and individual leadership responsibilities on at least three occasions during the semester.

Written work will include 1] a journal (to be maintained throughout the semester); 2] one 4-6 page report concerning a visual artist, a composer, or a musician about whom you would like others to know; 3] three 1-2 page critical reviews of various cultural events that you will attend during the course of the semester; 4] one 1 page proposal for the final project; and 5] one 6 page narrative concerning the final project—with details of (among many possibilities) the project's genesis and development, and an assessment of its significance to you and, perhaps, to others.

There will also be three in-class presentations. 1] The group presentation will focus on one of the three assigned books. In collaboration with the instructor, the group will be responsible for creatively structuring the seminar for two or three meetings around issues of significance that appear in the texts. 2] The artist, composer, or musician presentation will be a reinterpretation/representation of the 4-6 page written report. During the course of fifteen minutes, the student should introduce the class to the biography of the chosen artist, offer some examples of her or his work, and discuss the "value" of this artist's work for you personally and for society as a whole. 3] The final project should be a creative work that you have been developing all semester. It may be a dramatic monologue, a song, a painting, pottery or poetry, or a gourmet meal, for example. The creative work, which constitutes the final exam, will be presented to the entire class during the last two weeks of class.

This course engages a community of scholars in active, in-class learning. Because the unfolding classroom drama is essentially unrepeatable, and because your classmates are depending upon you for support, criticism and feedback, individual absences from class will diminish the learning experience of all; therefore, **no unexcused absences will be accepted.** For the purposes of this class, an excused absence is a University-sanctioned excuse written on official stationery and signed by a University Health Services professional. The excuse is due on the day the student rejoins the class. After two unexcused absences, the student's final grade will be reduced by one increment for each additional unexcused absence. In other words, if your grade average was A- at the end of the semester but you had four unexcused absences, your final grade for the course would be B. If attendance is a problem for you for whatever reason, you should not take this course.

Class discussions are central to how this course shall proceed. Maintain a journal with your observations about the films, readings, presentations, concerts, cultural events, in-class discussions, etc., and bring your journal to each class meeting. Come to class with written comments and questions that you would like us to pursue together. Good class discussion is a sustained, wide-ranging-yet-focused, fun and exhilarating inquiry. It increases in quality and intensity as the semester progresses. Participation involves attentive listening as well as talking. We have a great deal to learn from each other. Listen respectfully to your colleagues; respond to their questions; build upon their comments. This is what a "liberal education" in the classic (i.e., not the "political") sense is meant to be.

Academic honesty is expected of all students. All acts of dishonesty (plagiarism, cheating) in any work constitute academic misconduct. The Academic Misconduct Disciplinary Policy will be followed in the event of academic misconduct.

To request disability accommodations, please contact Disability Services (348-4285). After initial arrangements are made with that office, please see me.

Required Texts

1. Milan Kundera [Michael Henry Heim (Translator)], The Unbearable Lightness of Being (New York: Harper Perennial, 1999).
2. Michael Moore, Dude, Where's My Country? (New York: Warner, 2003).
3. Art Spiegelman, Maus: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History/Here My Troubles Began (New York: Pantheon, 1993).

NOTE: BE SURE TO PURCHASE BOTH VOLUMES I & 2

These books are available at the usual campus stores. Please obtain them during the first week or two of classes, as the local booksellers tend to return unpurchased texts very early in the semester.

Evaluation

Sixty percent of the final grade will be based upon written work. With the exception of the journal, all written work is expected to conform to the standards of excellence established in the University of Alabama's first year composition courses. The specific breakdown will be as follows:

10 % Journal

[points will be deducted if you do not maintain a journal and do the in-class or at-home exercises— which will often be the basis for our in-class discussions]

15 % Artist/Composer/Musician Written Report

15 % Performance Reviews (3 at 5% each)

20 % Proposal and Final Project

Forty percent of the final grade will be based upon work done in class.

10 % Group Book Presentation

10 % Artist/Composer/Musician Presentation

10 % General Class Participation

10 % Final Creative Project

Put another way: half of your grade is based on class participation (adding 10 % for the Journal) and half is based on traditional writing assignments.

Put yet another way:

25 % is based on the Artist/Composer/Musician Report and Presentation

30 % is based on the Final Creative Project

30 % is based on other group and individual forms of class participation

15 % is based on written critical reviews

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Course Calendar

Jan 7 [W]	Introduction to the Course; Questions and Concerns; Determine Book Presentation Groups
Jan 12 [M]	Collegiality; Reconsidering the Syllabus
Jan 14 [W]	Creativity and Place: <u>Coat of Many Colors</u>
Jan 19 [M]	NO CLASS MEETING: Martin Luther King, Jr., Day
Jan 21 [W]	Discussion: <u>Coat of Many Colors</u> Studio: Writing the Self
Jan 26 [M]	Film: <u>The Joy Luck Club</u>
Jan 28 [W]	Discussion: <u>The Joy Luck Club</u>
Feb 2 [M]	Discussion: "What culture do I bring to this class?" DUE: Cultural Event Evaluation # 1 ("Classical Music")
Feb 4 [W]	Studio: Beethoven String Quartet
Feb 9 [M]	Group One Discussion: <u>The Unbearable Lightness of Being</u>
Feb 11 [W]	Group One Discussion: <u>The Unbearable Lightness of Being</u>
Feb 16 [M]	Group One Discussion: <u>The Unbearable Lightness of Being</u>
Feb 18 [W]	Looking Backward/Looking Forward: Midterm Evaluation; Discussion: "What creates a good individual presentation?" and "What are the components of a final presentation?" DUE: Cultural Event Evaluations # 2 ("Kinetic")
Feb 23 [M]	Discussion: Issues Before Viewing <u>Daughters of the Dust</u> Film: <u>Daughters of the Dust</u> (part 1)
Feb 25 [W]	Film: <u>Daughters of the Dust</u>
Mar 1 [M]	Discussion: <u>Daughters of the Dust</u>
Mar 3 [W]	Artist/Composer/Musician Presentations and Reports (x 5)

NOTE: Artist/Composer/Musician Written Report is due on the day the oral report is presented in class

- Mar 8 [M] Artist/Composer/Musician Presentations and Reports (x 5)
DUE: Proposal for the Final Creative Project
- Mar 10 [W] Artist/Composer/Musician Presentations and Reports (x 5)
- Mar 15 [M] Group Two Discussion: Dude
- Mar 17 [W] Group Two Discussion: Dude
- Mar 22 [M] Film: Smoke Signals
- Mar 24 [W] Film: Smoke Signals and Discussion
DUE: Cultural Event Evaluations # 3 ("Painting/Sculpture")
- Mar 29 [M] SPRING BREAK
Mar 31 [W] SPRING BREAK
- Apr 5 [M] Group Three Discussion: Maus
- Apr 7 [W] Group Three Discussion: Maus
- April 12 [M] Group Three Discussion: Maus
- April 14 [W] Course Reflections
- April 19 [M] **FINAL CREATIVE PROJECTS (x 5)**
- April 21 [W] **FINAL CREATIVE PROJECTS (x 5)**
Course Evaluation
- April 26 [M] **FINAL CREATIVE PROJECTS (x 4)**
- April 38 [W] **FINAL CREATIVE PROJECTS (x 4)**
DUE: All written work related to the Final Project from all students

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ASSIGNMENT GUIDELINES

A. Written Assignments

There are five types of writing assignments for this class.

1] Journal

You should maintain a writing journal and bring it to class every day. I recommend buying a bound composition book for this purpose. The journal can be the first pass at all other writing you will do for this class. You may use it to record experiences, explore ideas, play with words, hold onto impressions, react to in-class (and out of class) discussions, etc. On random occasions you will be given a specific problem to consider in your journal. Your participation grade will suffer if you do not have your journal with you. Two or three entries per week would be a reasonable average for which to strive.

2] Cultural Event Evaluations

Three 1-2 page TYPED evaluations of a variety of cultural events are due on specific dates during the semester as indicated on the course syllabus. These evaluations do not need to go into great detail, but they should include the classic "Five W's" of journalism: who, what, when, where, and why. Of these, the "why" question is probably the most important. Why did you choose to spend a portion of your life attending this particular event? Was it worth it? Why or why not?

3] Visual Artist, Composer, or Musician Report ("Artist" Report)

One 4-6 page TYPED report concerning a visual artist, composer or musician—is required. The written report is due at the time you give your presentation in class. The form of the report is up to you to determine, but your report should include at least the following elements: 1] a brief biographical description of the person in question; 2] a general overview of the artist's work; 3] a more extended discussion of particular works that you think are important; and 4] an assessment of this artist's significance to you personally.

4] Proposal for the Final Project

This one page TYPED assignment should describe: 1) what you plan to do for the final project; 2) why you decided to do this particular project; 3) why this project matters to you personally; and 4) how this project is "creative."

5] Narrative (or Story) Concerning the Final Project

This 6 page TYPED narrative should tell the story of how your final project came into being. You may wish to revisit your "Proposal for the Final Project" and elaborate upon the concerns you introduced there. Or you may wish to gather together various journal entries about the making of your final project and piece them into a coherent tale. In addition, you might look at some of the issues relating to creativity that our texts raise, such as: the role of memory in the creative process, or the importance of travel, or the love of learning. You might also wish to speculate about whether you will do projects such as this one in the future. How you tell your story is up to you.

B. Presentations

There are three types of presentations for this class.

1] Group Book Presentation

In collaboration with the instructor and several student colleagues, each student will be responsible for organizing the discussion about one of the three assigned books. Your task is to engender lively classroom discussion. This may be accomplished in a number of ways. For example, you might ask your classmates to draw pictures in response to a particular passage in your book, then explain why they created these images. Or you might ask them to name songs that certain characters or themes call to mind. Or you might ask them to act out scenes of key importance to our overall understanding of the book. The possibilities are unlimited. The point of the exercise is to be inventive in community.

While the group presentations are meant to engage the entire class in active discussion, certain elements should be included in each group presentation.

- 1) A brief (*no longer than five minutes*) biographical sketch of the author should be offered. Particular reference should be made to how significant issues in the author's life are explored through art.
- 2) Key words, passages, and themes in the book should be identified and introduced into the in-class conversation.
- 3) The group should arrive at an overall critical assessment about the value of the particular book. Majority and minority reports would be welcome if there were not unanimous agreement on this point.

2] Artist Presentation

During the course of ten—and no more than 15— minutes, each student should

- 1) introduce the class to key elements of the chosen artist's biography;
- 2) offer an engaging example of the artist's work; and
- 3) discuss how and why this artist speaks to you and others.

The artist (visual artist, composer, or musician) may be from any time period and culture. She or he may be enormously popular or totally obscure. NOTE: the presentation should differ dramatically from the written report you will also submit on the day of your presentation. A typical presentation might spend 3 minutes on biography, 8-10 minutes showing and discussing the artist's work, and 3 minutes evaluating the artist's importance.

3] Final Creative Project

Seize this opportunity to try something you have not been able to do yet during the course of your college career. Your presentation may last up to 20 minutes; it should be at least 10 minutes long. Key elements in this presentation might include 1) the creative work (a song, a woodcarving, a piece of pottery, a film, a drawing, a play, a quilt, a gourmet meal that we can all enjoy, etc.); 2) why you wanted to try your hand at this project; 3) what you learned during the creative process—whether or not you deem your work a "success" in comparison to the works of professional artists.

Please feel free to raise questions about these assignments at any time. You may do this in class—so that others might benefit from your inquiry; or come see me during my office hours. Have fun!

C. General Notes on Written Work

- * All writing should be TYPED and double spaced.
- * Recommended fonts include Courier, Palatino, Times, Bookman, and Century Schoolbook.
- * Type size should be 10, 11, or 12.
- * Margins on the paper should be 1 to 1 1/2 inches on the sides and 1 inch at the top and bottom.
- * Papers longer than one page in length should have page numbers.
- * A cover sheet should be stapled with the body of your paper. It should contain:
 - 1) title of paper
 - 2) your name
 - 3) the date
 - 4) the course name and number
 - 5) the professor

For example, in the middle of the page:

"Cancel My Subscription to 'The Resurrection':
Portraits of the Anti-Christ in the Songs of Jim Morrison

and in the lower right corner of the page:

Frank Lee Jackson
April 28, 2004
NEW 212: Creativity
Professor Trost

* Papers with more than six spelling or grammar errors will be returned for revision prior to evaluation. Please use the spellcheck function on the computer and review your work to make certain that properly spelled words are in fact the words you intend to use (for example: be careful about the difference between "there" and "their" or "its" and "it's").

* Papers with major construction problems will be returned for revision prior to evaluation. At the very least, make certain that your sentences are complete sentences (they have a subject and a verb) and that they express one (but not more than one) complete thought. There should be no run-on sentences.

* If you have writing composition problems, you should consult one of the specialists at the Writing Center on the first floor in Morgan Hall. Your tuition pays for this kind of expert assistance.

* Even if you have a facility with words, you may wish to sharpen your writing skills. In addition to the services of the Writing Center, I recommend:

1) John R. Trimble, *Writing With Style: Conversations on the Art of Writing*
(Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1975)

2) Laurie G. Kirszner and Stephen R. Mandell, *Patterns for College Writing: A Rhetorical Reader and Guide, 7th Edition* (New York: St. Martin's, 1998).

These books are available from <amazon.com> among other booksellers.