PSYC 335-001 Psychology of Creativity and Innovation  Fall 2013
Section 1:    TR 10:30-11:45 AM  
Location : Planetary Hall 126 (formerly Science & Tech I)  
Instructor: Vias C. Nicolaides, M.A.  
Instructor E-mail:  vnicolai@gmu.edu  
Instructor Office hours: TR 14:00-15:00 PM, King Hall 3077  
Instructor Phone:  703-993-3706

Course Overview and Goals:

Creativity involves the generation of an idea that is both novel and valued, and it is critical to aspects of our lives ranging from mundane (e.g., solving personal and interpersonal problems) to profound (creating works of art, making scientific discoveries). We will discuss how to increase creative behavior in individuals, groups, and organizations, and highlight aspects that are common to all three. We will also have class discussions centered on journal articles. In short, this course is an introduction to the psychological study of creativity, including: theories of creativity; the processes of creativity; characteristics of creative people; blocks to creativity; the motivation to create; creative thinking tools for solving problems. A unique aspect of this course is that the exact topics and order will be determined in part by the interests of the enrolled students.

Required reading*:

2. The Cambridge Handbook of Creativity (Kaufman & Sternberg, 2010; Sternberg, 2013; Older (2000-2013) versions will suffice)

*Additional course readings will be made available online by the course instructor.

Recommended reading:  The Social Science of Creativity (Amabile, 1996)

Please note, that the required readings are sources for information, and will also serve as sources for exam questions. Usually, I relate class material to the textbook, but I do not focus on it solely. Class time is an opportunity to clarify, expand upon, apply, and challenge what you have read in the textbook. Therefore, reading the textbook before you come to class will allow class to go more smoothly, allow me to spend less time on lecture, and more time on discussion and other activities (which will be based on the readings). While only the assigned readings are required for the course, it is strongly recommended that you read the rest of it (textbook, some journal articles) on your own to support your learning.

Grading:  The final grade will consist of the following weighted components:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Essays</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>Team Research Proposal</td>
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<td>Team Research Proposal Presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Improve the World” Individual Student Class Presentation</td>
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<td>“Improve the World” Individual Report</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
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Class Participation (10%): Class attendance is required in all classes! In a genuine emergency, I will allow an absence if you discuss the reason with me in advance of the class. Frequent late arrivals without explanation may also affect your grade. In the first class, I will describe the kind of discussion I want to have in class, and the type of participation I expect from each of you. “Participation” includes both thoughtful speaking (responding to the ongoing thread of discussion) and attentive listening (listening closely and critically as other students are speaking). Constructive criticism is encouraged and students are implored to not take others’ (or the instructor’s) feedback negatively (i.e., the wrong way). The purpose is to discuss, learn from one another, and develop as human beings. At the end of each class I will be assigning points to students who were active and who made a significant contribution to discussion (quality of remarks rather than quantity). If after a class, you think you contributed to the discussion, write your name on a piece of paper and hand it to me on your way out. It is okay for you to use your computers during class for class-related purposes—for example, you may choose to have my slides on and taking notes. Or, a topic may come up in class and you may want to do a quick Internet search on it. But please refrain from using your computer to check email or do work for another class (or watch videos, or play games, or Facebook, Twitter...). Also please text only if absolutely necessary. The key is to stay focused on what is happening in the class, so that you participate and learn, and also to avoid distracting other students.

Short Essays (15%): For many classes you will bring a one or two page essay. These essay assignments are designed to foster engagement with the readings, and also to prepare you for that day’s class discussion.

Team Research Proposal and Presentation (15% & 15%): You will be randomly divided up into groups of 3-5 members and come up with a creativity-related research proposal to write up and present to the class. The research paper will propose a study for investigating an issue related to the study of creativity and a presentation of your research idea to the class. The write up should be at least 10 double spaced pages (not including tables, figures, references, author information) and the format is open to your creative imaginations. The presentation should take at least 20 minutes and must involve the active participation of all members. More details on grading will be discussed in class and posted online. The research proposal must be directly related to topics and journal articles that we have covered in the course. It should be original and must be your own work entirely. That is, it must not be (a) a study that has already been conducted by you or other researchers, (b) a study that you have proposed for another course or for a thesis or major project. The proposal should include:
(1) A title page (containing title, author/class information);
(2) Project Description which should include: a) A brief review of the relevant literature, b) aims and hypotheses, c) research design and methods, and d) predicted results and interpretation of possible results. Selected references should be cited as necessary. At the end of the semester, teams will be asked to evaluate the contributions of their members on the team paper and presentation. This feedback will be considered when assigning course grades, primarily to adjust for any “free-riders”.

“Improve the World” Individual Creativity Report (15%): The goal is for you to seek out and solve a problem, showing what you have learned in this course in the process and turn in a short report. We will schedule the presentations in class and further details will be provided in class. The report should: 1) name the project, 2) describe the project, 3) trace the steps (process) you went through from before you got an idea through your progress to the final completion of the project, 4) try to remember the hurdles or blocks and the creative thinking tools you encountered along the way, describe relevant current work, advantages, disadvantages, 6) The report need not be longer than five double-spaced pages.

“Improve the World” Creativity Project Guidelines
The Creativity Project achieves many desirable objectives.
1) It forces students to think more.
2) It forces students to apply creative thinking.
3) It reveals the students' natural, often hidden, creative talents.
4) It builds confidence.
5) It gives the students a sense of power and hope for their future.
6) It shows the students that creativity is fun.
7) It shows the students that they can make a positive contribution to the world.
8) It teaches students the importance of teamwork and provides experience with working in a team towards a common goal.

The project gives you the opportunity to apply the creative thinking tools you learned in this course, to exercise your natural creative abilities, and to make a positive contribution to humanity. **In this project, ideas are worthless. Suggestions or ideas for improvement will receive a grade of zero (0). The project must actually be in place by the deadline.** (i.e., your team’s presentation date) That is, the idea to “improve” the world must have been implemented, realized, or put into action in the real world. You must "make a difference" and prove it before the deadline. By improve, I mean to make better in some way or make a positive and hopefully sustainable contribution to humankind (could be something at GMU). For example, make something go easier, faster, more smoothly; reduce the cost, reduce the time, reduce the labour; improve the function, get more value out of the thing, do more with less, make something more beautiful, etc. Late projects are graded zero. So don't delay, start thinking about a project today, and discuss your ideas with fellow team mates.

**“Improve the World” Individual Student Class Presentation (15%):** Students will individually present in class, for 5-10 minutes, their own creative idea and how they would go around implementing it. You should also tell us how the idea came about, why it is creative & innovative, benefits, and consequences.

**Midterm Exam (15%):** The midterm exam will be multiple-choice. The date will be selected jointly.

**Technology expectations:** All students are expected to maintain and regularly access their Mason e-mail accounts. If you are having your Mason mail forwarded to another account, please ensure that your Mason account doesn’t exceed the assigned limit, causing mail to bounce back to the sender.

**Disability accommodations:** If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me early in the semester. If you have not already done so, contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office. Please keep in mind that it might not be possible to grant last-minute requests for accommodations, so it important to make all arrangements well before the date when the accommodation is needed.

**Honor code:** All students are expected to be familiar with, and abide by, the University Honor Code. As required by the Honor Code, all suspected violations will be reported. The instructor for this course reserves the right to enter a failing grade to any student found guilty of an honor code violation.

**Important dates:**
- Last Day to Add Classes- Sept 3, 2013
- Last Day to Drop- (No tuition penalty)- Sept 3, 2013
- Last Day to Drop (33% tuition penalty)- Sept 18, 2013
- Last Day to Drop (67% tuition penalty)- Sept 27, 2013
- **Midterm Exam:** October 10, 2013
- Columbus Day Change: No class on October, 15
Thanksgiving Recess: No class on November, 28
Final Exam Day (i.e., electronically turn in all final papers to instructor): December, 17

**Enrollment:** Every student is responsible for verifying correct enrollment. Graded work will not be returned to students who are not officially enrolled.

**Official Communications via GMU E-mail:** Mason uses electronic mail to provide official information to students. Examples include communications from course instructors, notices from the library, notices about academic standing, financial aid information, class materials, assignments, questions, and instructor feedback. Students are responsible for the content of university communication sent to their mason e-mail account, and are required to activate that account and check it regularly.

**Disclaimer:** The instructor reserves the right to change the syllabus and its content. Any changes will be announced orally and in writing.

**Tentative Course Schedule:** Each week we will address a different topic and towards the end of the semester we will have student presentations. The exact topics and order will be determined in part by the interests of the enrolled students.

- **Week 1:** Overview; Introduction to Class; Grading; Expectations; Team Formation; Date Selection
- **Week 2:** Theories/methods
- **Week 3:** Personal factors
- **Week 4:** Brain
- **Week 5:** Motivation
- **Week 6:** Creativity and problem solving
- **Week 7:** Cognition
- **Week 8:** Social and cultural factors
- **Week 9:** Enhancing creativity
- **Week 10:** Group creativity
- **Week 11:** Team innovation
- **Week 12:** Organizational innovation
- **Week 13:** Presentations
- **Week 14:** Presentations
- **Week 15:** Presentations/Shared reflections/directions for the future

**Tentative Topic Questions:** Almost each week students will turn in a 1-2 double spaced written answer on various topics on which there will be discussion in class. Sometimes, discussion will be based on scientific journal article readings. The below are some example questions.

What do we mean by creativity?
How do we measure creativity?
What are the characteristics of creative people?
What happens in the mind when people are being creative?
How do people come up with ideas?
How do people choose and execute their ideas?
Is there a biological basis for creativity?
What makes some societies more creative than others?
What makes some groups more creative than others?
What do innovative organizations look like?
What makes some cultures more creative than others?
How can one be more creative?