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ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT
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TITLE 5 – 2003

PILOT COURSE NAME/NUMBER: HUM 2250 (CRN #12471, #15216)
Twentieth Century Humanities

IDENTIFICATION OF PROBLEM AND CLEAR GOALS

I have traditionally approached the teaching and learning of humanities as a way of understanding humanity. The arts are manifestations of what people have thought and believed across history. Philip Bishop, in his text, *Adventures in the Human Spirit*, categorizes these manifestations into 7 areas: dance, painting, sculpture, music, poetry and literature, and theatre. I add an 8th area: film. Man's history has been recorded by artists in these area, who tell us what people were doing and thinking at the time. Understanding and appreciating/valuing the arts (not the same as liking everything you see) is an important element of any humanities class. It is also important that students/people see themselves as an active participant in the "history recording" process, because they are not only the "humanity" being recorded, but are also the "recorders". This ultimately leads to the inclusion of explaining/discussion/analyzing/etc the creative process and appreciating/valuing what artists have done.

An important element of the student's dealing with the creative process as a recording device is to recognize his own ability to create and record. Most people do not see themselves as creative individuals. The creative instincts nurtured in them as children are often replaced by the demand to concretize as they get older. Creativity (in the arts AND sciences) is a risky, chance-taking, unpredictable enterprise. In her book, *The Artist's Way*, Julia Cameron identifies some reasons for not pursuing one's creative bent into the arts. They add up to a lack of confidence in one's ability to trust one's own judgement. Many of the workshops we have participated in for the Title V grant have dealt with the inclusion of strategies to build confidence: critical thinking, planning one's life, and such. In addition, the core competencies are designed to help prepare the student to become a creative person WHO HAS CONFIDENCE IN HIS/HER ABILITY TO CREATE. What I plan to do in the 20th century humanities class is to give students the opportunity, not only to analyze and explain the creative work of artists, but to participate in the creative process through "hands-on" activities.

The goals of this project are to have students

1. Investigate and identify elements of their own creativity, and
2. Interpret class material through a creative project.

PREPARATION

Background

1. **Students** – In an informal survey of students in and out of my 20th century humanities classes, I asked these three questions:
 - a. Do you consider yourself a creative person?

- b. If “Yes”, what factor(s) do you feel contributed to your creativity?
- c. If “No”, what factor(s) do you feel stunted your creativity?

The #1 factor in the answer from students who described themselves as creative, was that they had been encouraged to encounter a wide variety of experiences.

The #1 factor in the answer from students who described themselves as lacking creativity, was that they were afraid of failure and “being different”.

(The challenge here to create a situation where students could learn from a new experience without fear of failure or loss of self-esteem.)

My plan is to create a more formalized version of my survey to use as a pre-test of self-awareness. **The survey will be in the form of a flashlight survey.** The results will be given to the students in order to introduce class discussion on personal creativity. The goal is to increase student awareness of their own creative experiences.

- 2. **Peers** – My research in this area has been two-fold. Informally, I have discussed in several venues how to encourage students to feel comfortable with, and to explore, their creativity. On a somewhat more formal basis, I led a seminar/workshop at Florida State Thespian Conference in Tampa, Florida, in April, 2003, which investigated ways to encourage creativity in students of the arts. Participants in the discussion included teachers and parents of high school theatre students in Florida. These participants felt that creativity is not dealt with adequately because it is difficult to “teach” and assess, and therefore often omitted from class work and assignments, or handled as an “extra- credit” assignment.

3. Literature and Seminars:

- a. Cameron, Julia, *The Artist's Way*. New York, NY: Jeremy P. Tarcher / Putnam, a member of Penguin Putnam Inc., 2002.
- b. May, Rollo, *The Courage to Create*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1994.
- c. Huba, Mary E., and Freed, Jann E., *Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses*. Allyn and Bacon, 2000
- d. Brookfield, Steven D., *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.
- e. Walvoord, Barbara E., and Anderson, Virginia Johnson, *Effective Grading: A Tool for Learning and Assessment*. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.
- f. Edwards, Betty, *Drawing on the Right side of the Brain*. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York.
- g. Angelo, Thomas A., and Cross, K. Patricia, *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers*. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

- h. Bonwell, Charles C., and Eison, James A., *Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom*.

Seminars:

- a. Technology Seminar, January 10, 2003
- b. Assessment Seminar, Wendi Troxel, January 31, 2003
- c. Collaborative Learning Seminar, Susan Ledlow, March 27, 2003.
- d. Critical Thinking Seminar, Skip Downing, April 11, 2003.
- e. Critical Thinking Strategies, Steven Brookfield, December 7, 2002.
- f. Dealing with Creative Students, April 2003.

4. Self

Getting in touch with one's creative side is a subject that is part of everything I do, as a person, a teacher, and a parent. It encourages people to understand themselves and how they relate to others and their world. Its by-product is the enrichment of our artistic culture, certainly, but also people who can think "outside the box" and become critical thinkers and problem-solvers. Skip Downing described a "deepening" discussion technique. Well, that is what the creative approach to learning can do. It encourages learners to ask hard questions, of themselves and others, and to see possibilities and take chances in implementing them, rather than just becoming drones in the workforce.

Thinking – critical and creative thinking – does not take place in a vacuum. It is essential that learners be provided opportunities to see the creative process in operation, and be provided with opportunities to experiment with their own creative nature. This is a life fulfillment skill that will last far beyond the college experience.

CORE COMPETENCIES

- Think* - To identify characteristics of surrealism.
To analysis personal experiences in light of knowledge of surrealism
- Value*- To recognize contributions expressed in attitudes, choices and commitment.
To evaluate one's own values from individual and cultural perspectives.
- Communicate* - To employ methods of communication appropriate to purpose.
To evaluate the effectiveness of one's own communication.
- Act*- To apply knowledge, skills, and values to personal goals.
To implement effective problem-solving, decision-making, and goal-setting strategies.

OUTCOMES

I have planned a project that actually has four phases which take place over a period of three weeks. The students will:

1. keep a dream journal for at least 7 days,
2. summarize their dreams in a writing assignment (part of the 600 word requirement),

3. interpret their dreams in a creative project (dance, music, poetry, short story, painting, short play, sculpture, film) which they present to the class, and
4. complete a self assessment in which they focus on what they have achieved by working on the project.

There are obviously many possible objectives for the entire project, but for this presentation, I will focus on phase three of the project, the interpretation of their dreams through a project which they will present to the class.

Specifically, students will be able to :

1. Identify elements and characteristics of surrealism in the arts.
2. Employ their knowledge of surrealism to create from their own experiences, an artistic surrealistic experience.
3. Present to the class the completed creative expression.

ASSESSMENT METHODS

Assessment will be in the form of a checklist, which will focus on elements of the investigative and creative process.

LEARNING OUTCOMES	PERFORMANCE CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES	INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES
To identify ways in which the student's own life experiences have contributed to their sense of being a creative person	Students will identify and analyze various events and people who have helped shape their creativity	Completion of a survey which identifies areas of influence and provides material for discussion and analysis	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Instructor will lead class discussion on aspects and definition of creativity 2. Students will fill out flashlight survey
To become aware of relationship of elements of surrealism and the students dreams	Students will keep a dream journal for 7 days, and create a ½ - 1 page summary of material gleaned from personal dream journal which relates characteristics of surrealism to elements of their dreams.	Students are required to produce the following documents which will be assessed through a checklist: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dream journal 2. Summary paper 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teacher presentation on surrealism 2. Class discussion of characteristics of surrealism, and their application to 20th century art. 3. Students discuss in small group and class discussion how their dreams

			relate to surrealism
To interpret one's own experiences in an artistic format (painting, poetry, dance, etc)	1.Students will produce a creative manifestation of the material uncovered in their Dream Journals 2. Students will present their creative work for the class.	Self-evaluation of their creative process.	Presentation of the creative product to the class.