

Course Syllabus: GISW CAP 3121 Creativity and the Evolution of Culture

Instructor Contact Information

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“While we cannot foresee the eventual results of creativity—of the attempt to impose our desires on reality, to become the main power that decides the destiny of every form of life on the planet—at least we can try to understand better what this force is and how it works. Because for better or for worse, our future is now closely tied to human creativity. The result will be determined in large part by our dreams and by the struggle to make them real.”

— **Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention***



Waiting to speak with Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi at Sapientia Hungarian University Of Transylvania, Csikzereda, Romania, July 2018.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's ancestral village in Transylvania.

Course Description

Explores creativity from a Systems Perspective—as achievement resulting from a confluence of the Individual, the Domain, and the Field. Investigates creativity's role in the advance of culture; provides students opportunities to enhance personal creativity. Prerequisite(s): junior standing.

Learning Objectives

University Level Objectives

- **Critical Thinking**

Graduates will demonstrate critical thinking through the ability to evaluate, analyze, and integrate information from a variety of sources in order to develop reasoned positions and solutions to problems.

- **Communication**

Graduates will display competence in oral, written, and visual communication, as appropriate for their discipline.

Course Level Objectives

The course explores two types of creativity:

1. **“Big C” creativity**, achievements that advance a specific field or contribute to the evolution of culture in general. Big C creativity results from the interrelationships among a creative Individual, a Domain, and a Field (the gatekeepers who pass judgment on the work of people within a specific domain).
2. **“Small c” creativity**, or personal creativity, its relationship with Flow (optimal experience), and its overlap with Big C creativity. The course provides students many opportunities to reflect on and enhance personal creativity.

Upon completing the course, students will be able to

- Define Big C and small c creativity and contextualize the core components of creativity within an interlocking system: individuals, domains, and gatekeepers.
- Analyze the connection between creativity and the evolution of families, schools, work environments, and cultures.
- Apply creativity research to your individual associations, character strengths, and strategies for effectively managing the various types of work essential to creativity.
- Define and assess the dimensions of Optimal Experience—Flow—as a prerequisite for creativity. Create personal improvement plans for taking on personal and cultural obstacles to embracing challenge and achieving Optimal Experience.

Course Requirements

Required Texts

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1996). *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*. New York: Harper Collins.
[Click here to view on Amazon](#)

Cousineau, P. (2008). *Stoking the Creative Fires: Nine Ways to Rekindle Passion and Imagination*. San Francisco: Conari.
[Click here to view on Amazon](#)

You will be asked to access additional readings and videos at Web links included within Course Content assignment descriptions.

About the Texts

Csikszentmihalyi's book is denser, and most people find it a more challenging read. However, *Creativity* offers the empirical, research-supported dimension of the discussion, which is crucial — just as creativity is equal parts inspiration and perspiration! It may help to remember that a hallmark of creativity is finding what is personally relatable and important in challenging material.

It is also important to remember that Csikszentmihalyi's purpose in this study was to identify common traits among "Big-C" achievers, not to imply that creativity does not exist outside of inventors and Nobel-prize winners. His research is tremendously important in describing conditions where little c creativity, what he calls *personal creativity*, can also thrive and be nurtured. Small c creativity, the everyday passion, inspiration, and hard work we can practice anywhere, creates the conditions for Big C creativity, and makes life worth living.

Instructional Methods

Readings, Videos, Personal Interest Surveys, and Concept-Practice Activities

Course materials reflect the course's dual purpose: to develop your understanding of the historical and cultural evolution of creativity while also helping you discover where your own creativity lies and how to maximize it.

Written Reflection/Blogging

We often do not know what we know or feel about something until we start writing about it. Then we start to learn, make connections, generate ideas, discover what we really think, and experience creativity.

You will be asked to write three types of submissions. Most will be submitted to the instructor, but several will be blog posts visible to other GIS students enrolled in the course now and in the future.

1. **Detailed Submissions worth 5 points:** a minimum of 4 to 5 well-developed paragraphs (at least approximately 350 words).
2. **Detailed Submissions worth 10 points:** multipart assignments requiring more discussion than regular 5-point assignments (at least approximately 450 words)
3. **Brief Submissions:** a minimum of one complete, well-developed paragraph (at least approximately 200 words)

How to Earn Maximum Points for your Submissions

Your submissions are not expected to be formal papers. However, they should be thoughtful and detailed. Commit yourself to thinking seriously about each topic and focus on accomplishing two things:

1. Demonstrating your familiarity with the assigned readings and attention to the assignment details.
2. Going beyond *just* summarizing the readings. You'll be expected to make your own connections and applications. When an activity asks you to write a detailed post, please make sure that it includes discussion, reflection, analysis, and examples, as well as whatever summary of the readings is necessary to make your point.
3. Re-reading for clarity before submitting. Although your posts are mainly evaluated for your thinking and the way you support your ideas, your submissions may lose points if they are riddled with confusing sentences and wording that obscure your meaning. Most people do better by writing their posts in a word processing program first, revising them, and THEN submitting.
4. **Be sure to address all parts of each assignment, and if attaching a document, put your name, the name of the course, the activity title, and the submission date in the upper left corner of the first page.**

Determination of Grades

I will evaluate your posts based upon their thoughtfulness, the degree to which they apply specific concepts from the readings, and their overall clarity. You will receive a score of 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 for each submission based on these criteria:

0 = Did not post the assignment

1 = Did not complete all parts of the assignment or completed them with minimal discussion

2 = Completed all parts of the assignment, but missed opportunities to

support ideas with reference to the sources or personal examples
3 = Post reflects significant effort to address all parts of the assignment in a substantive way, but leaves room for additional development
4 = Post is developed thoughtfully and thoroughly, but may lack clarity in one or more sections due to proofreading/wording problems
5 = Outstanding effort that balances reflection on source specifics with unique examples and thoughtful discussion

Grading Scale

You can earn a maximum of 103 points for the course.

2 Activities x 4 points each = 8

13 Activities x 5 points each = 55

3 Activities x 10 points each = 30

Total = 103

97-103 A

93-96 A-

90-92 B+

85-89 B

82-84 B-

79-81 C+

75-78 C

72-74 C-

69-71 D+

62-68 D

61 and below F

UNI Academic Ethics Policy

Students at the University of Northern Iowa are required to observe the commonly accepted standards of academic honesty and integrity.
<http://www.uni.edu/policies/301>

Submissions or portions of submissions plagiarized from any source, including a fellow student in the course, will be given no credit with no opportunity for revision. Unless otherwise instructed and approved by the instructor, written work has to be created without collaboration with other parties.

Course Communication and Technology

This course is conducted completely online utilizing eLearning for instruction, materials, and communication. This online component can be accessed through the [UNI Blackboard Learn website](http://elearning.uni.edu/): <http://elearning.uni.edu/>

All of the handouts and information for this course will be available in eLearning and via a Web browser. Please check the website and your e-mail regularly for communication about the course. Any changes to the course syllabus or schedule and any other announcements relevant to the course will be posted as an Announcement within the course and emailed to you. You are responsible for learning how to use Blackboard for submission of assignments. Blackboard tutorials are also available on the [Blackboard Learn Help website](#).

Communication with Instructor

I will primarily communicate with you via email, but I will be available by appointment on campus in LIB 261 or Zoom online. You can send questions and concerns to me via my personal email address, or if you prefer to discuss them live rather than in an email, send an email to request an appointment or Zoom conference and indicate days and times that work for you. If you do not have Zoom, I will send you an email invitation with a link to an easy, free download. Generally, it will take me no more than 24 hours to respond to emails.

I will provide written feedback on some, but not all, of your assignment submissions, and I will grade your work within one week of submission. I will email if there are any delays beyond a week.

Online Netiquette

Because this is a fully online class and a guided independent study, you will mostly be communicating with me. Be sure that in all communication with instructors, you use an appropriate subject line, identify yourself, and craft clearly-worded content.

[Albion's Core Netiquette Rules](#) offers helpful tips for addressing your professor and other students respectfully and effectively.

Technology Requirements

In addition to Blackboard Learn, you are required to have access to and ability to use the following:

- UNI Gmail account
- Microsoft Office
- High speed internet connection
- Firefox or Chrome (Internet Explorer and Safari do not support eLearning and users can experience difficulty opening files)
- YouTube
- Google Drive and Google Apps (these are free with your UNI email account)

Technical Support

If you experience any technical problems, do not contact the instructor. Please contact the Office of Continuing and Distance Education at 319-273-7740 or cesp-consult@uni.edu. Support hours are available Monday - Thursday 8am - 9pm and Friday 8am - 5pm.