

Proposal to the University Curriculum Committee/Freshman Inquiry Course
Meaning and Madness at the Margins

I. Cover Sheet

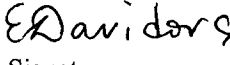




Course title: **Meaning and Madness at the Margins**

Date first offered Fall 2002

Sections per year: 5-6

Statement of theme: We will explore different ways of knowing, the nature of the creative process, and how our society perceives individuals who challenge the boundaries of accepted thought, with an emphasis on contrasting the arts and sciences.

Signatures of participating faculty:

Evguenia Davidova Name	 Signature	9/27/02 Date
Tim Hagge Name	 Signature	Date 9.27.02
Eric Lewis Name	 Signature	Date
Alan MacCormack Name	 Signature	9/27/02 Date
Anmarie Trimble Name	 Signature	9/27/02 Date

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II. Course Narrative

A. Statement of theme/topical area:

What does the artist, who seeks beauty and meaning in the human condition, share with the scientist's empirical approach to making sense of the physical world? What roles do science and art play in understanding the universe and our place within it? How do creative individuals come to question existing paradigms, gain new perspectives, and create revolutionary ideas? Beginning with the lives and works of world-traveling scientist Charles Darwin and reclusive poet Emily Dickinson, this course will explore different ways of knowing, the nature of the creative process, and how our society perceives individuals who challenge the boundaries of accepted thought. By examining the lives of diverse individuals who have inspired change, we can trace society's ongoing struggle to reconcile genius, non-conformity, and madness. Is madness an existentialist conundrum, a physical condition, or a state defined by the dominant social order?

B. Learning objectives specific to this theme:

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Explain and discuss the neurological processes of human perception and interpretation
- Identify scientific, artistic, and philosophical concepts and tools of meaning making
- Articulate how science and the arts inform their understanding of the universe and their role within it
- Understand how diversity issues shape an individual's and social group's experience and perception of the world
- Explore how learning styles and multiple intelligence shape the creativity and uniqueness of each person
- Understand various theories of creativity
- Explore and express their own creative process within different disciplinary approaches as a way of creating personal and broader meaning
- Understand the historical and ideological context of the lives and ideas of key creative thinkers
- Explain and discuss the processes and conditions that have given rise to revolutionary ideas and paradigm shifts
- Explain and discuss historical and contemporary attitudes towards individuals who challenge boundaries of accepted thought
- Differentiate and discriminate between true biological/psychological issues and socially driven concepts of deviancy
- Identify different cultural perspectives and explanations for creativity and for mental illness
- Evaluate the social underpinnings of seemingly culturally specific mental disorders
- Present the results of independent and group research to peers
- Imagine creative-yet-feasible solutions for social and political issues that personally concern them

C. Assessment of student learning (specific to theme):

Assessment of student learning in this theme will be based on regular informal writing assignments such as observation journals and online dialog papers; graded research projects and essays; observed development of skills in articulating and mediating different viewpoints; measured evaluation of theme-specific knowledge; assignments requiring analysis, interpretation of quantitative, linguistic, graphic and other subject matter. Students' grades will be apportioned as follows: group projects 25%; essays 25%; portfolios 25%; informal assignments and class participation 25%.

D. Description of methods to ensure coherence of theme across participating faculty:

The "Meaning & Madness at the Margins" team will meet weekly during the year to continue course development, exchange ideas and experiences, share new projects, materials and teaching strategies to enrich the ongoing class experience, and collaborate on assignment development. The team will utilize a common core of readings and assignments and each team member will visit the others' classes regularly. In addition to the weekly meetings, a longer meeting will be scheduled at the end of each term to review goals, share experiences, and assess student needs and progress.

E. Interdisciplinarity of team:

The "Meaning & Madness at the Margins" theme consists of one biologist (MacCormack), one poet (Trimble), one social psychologist (Lewis), one clinical social worker (Hagge), and one historian (Davidova).

F. Relation of course to other University Studies offerings (cohesion, ties to future learning):

The Meaning and Madness at the Margins curriculum is designed to support the intellectual, ethical and personal growth of entering students. We will explicitly address questions of how individuals develop goals and perspectives that can lead to significant contributions to society. We will consider the need for social norms and constraints and their dampening influence on creativity. Our studies will include examples from the natural sciences, the arts, and the social sciences.

Specific linkages between the theme and Sophomore Inquiries and their Clusters include but are not limited to the following :

1. Our study of the childhood circumstances of exceptional individuals and theories of the ontogeny of creativity will directly link to the Family Studies Cluster.
2. The Meaning and Madness at the Margins theme will consider resistance of societies to change and the social response to nonconformity and deviance. The social construction of madness, the obstacles to leadership and the dynamics of paradigm shift in various fields will all be integral components of the course. These issues and ideas link to the content of the Leadership for Change; Gender Studies; Freedom, Privacy and Technology; Framing Two Cultures; and Knowledge, Rationality and Understanding clusters.
3. The progression of the course will move from the 19th century (Darwin and Dickinson), to the early 20th century (Freud, Einstein, Picasso, Gandhi...), and ending with the consideration of contemporary figures and conditions. In each case we will explore historical and cultural context. These activities will prepare students for further work in the American Studies, European Studies and 19th Century clusters.

The close examination of the interdependency of the intellectual community and the greater civic society will inform student understanding of Portland State University’s mission “Let Knowledge Serve the City.” Our community based learning work with groups in the Portland area will start our students on a path towards their Senior Capstone.

G. How this theme will address the University Studies goals:

University Studies Goal	Representative Assignments	Assessment Plan/Type
Communication: Writing	All terms: weekly informal writing assignments (journals, creative and critical exercises); one 7-8 page research paper ; additional individual and group-based written essays and formal reflections.	UNST writing assessment; theme-specific pre- and post-course evaluations graded according to writing rubric. Also experience peer evaluation.
Oral Communication	All terms, presentations to class of project results; role playing; class discussions; individual creative presentations; group presentations.	Organization, ability to connect to others, eye contact, articulation of main points, ability to connect course concepts to subject matter.
Numeracy	Fall: Excel assignment on Malthusian growth potential, graphing. Winter: Introduction to measures of central tendency, deviancy, normal distributions. Spring: Analysis and presentation of data from surveys.	In each term, graphical and numerical analysis will be incorporated in the context of the coursework. Students will be encouraged to use quantitative information in their writing and class presentations.
Visual Communication & Graphics	Fall: students create visual/symbolic representations of abstract written concepts; essay analyzing print advertisement as symbolic communication. Each term: selection of images from sciences and arts as basis for analysis of underlying values, contextual meaning, ideological significance; critical analysis of art, film, graphics, multimedia.	Ability to interpret and articulate graphs, apply and interpret symbolism, and connect visual images to values, context and ideological significance.

Computer Literacy	All terms: Assignments will sequence towards progression from basic skills training such as Web searches, email, and Excel to building and incorporating PowerPoint and Web pages into their presentations.	Effective use and relevance of technology in class presentations; functionality, design and content.
Group Process	Fall & Winter: Century timeline assignments require collective decision making on selection and presentation of key historical benchmarks relevant to the course material. Spring: Community-based learning assignment requires students to collaboratively choose subject and create “listening points” for collecting information towards understanding a marginalized group and their creative approach to a social or political issue. All terms: Ongoing in-class group-focused exercises and assignments to foster understanding of group process concepts, and acquisition and use of group skills that promote efficacy, division of labor, and consciousness of self and citizenship.	Individual and group written reflection on the following points: collaborative process, common purpose, controversy with civility, consciousness of self, commitment, and citizenship.
Inquiry & Critical Thinking	All terms: Use of text as critical thinking tool to guide acquisition of skills throughout course; discerning key events for historical timeline as context for specific course subjects. Fall: advertisement analysis; poetry explication and interpretation. Winter: research essay analyzing significant creative thinker within a specific theory of creativity. Spring: debate on contemporary mental illnesses to consider basis for legitimate diagnosis vs. constructs for social control.	Responding critically to peer writing on rough drafts; demonstration of ability to differentiate between perception, opinion and reasoned inquiry in writing and discussion (UNST critical thinking rubric).
Diversity of Human Experience	Fall: Group exercises exploring how diversity issues shape individual and social experience; learning styles and multiple intelligences as diversity issue in education. Winter: cultural approaches to creativity. Spring: cultural perspectives on madness and marginalization; community-based learning assignment that	Oral presentations and written assignments to assess their understanding of different perspectives and values, what constructs their own perspective, and how the construction of normal/abnormal can be used as a tool for social manipulation by the dominant culture. Written reflection demonstrating an

	emphasizes listening to a marginal group that advocates a creative approach to a social issue, to consider the construct of the group's marginalization.	understanding of the interaction between creativity, conformity, and deviance.
Ethics and Social Responsibility	Fall: Timeline assignment exploring how the construct of social responsibility evolves within historical and social contexts. Winter: research paper exploring how the integration of an individual and his/her vision is balanced against the needs of family, community, and society. Spring: debate presentation on contemporary mental illnesses as possible constructs for social control; discussion topics include: the role that subjective labels of 'madness' have played in marginalizing or exalting creative thinkers; centrism/bell curve models as defining extremes of nonconformity and the adaptive function of conformity.	Written reflection, debate presentations, and in-class discussions demonstrating understanding of personal responsibility to and impact of actions on family, community, and larger society.

II. Course Schedule and Topics

TERM	TOPICAL OUTLINE	FACULTY
Fall	<p><u>Background:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freire and making meaning of your education • Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" as metaphor for meaning making • Neurological basis of perception and how the mind interprets its subject • 19th century culture, politics, and society as context for understanding the contributions of Charles Darwin and Emily Dickinson • Charles Darwin's experience and the genesis of evolutionary theory • Emily Dickinson's experience and the creation of a modern poetry <p><u>Topics</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contrasting lenses for making meaning: Science and Art as ways of knowing • How to read a poem • Analysis as a tool in science and poetry: reading, 	All

	<p>seeing, and writing within the disciplines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is science? • Understanding and applying scientific method • What is art?: The role of the artist from Plato to the Transcendentalists • The language of image, symbol, and metaphor: from poetry to contemporary popular culture 	
Winter	<p><u>Background:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theories of creativity: Cultural perspectives on creativity; contemporary American stereotypes and theories • 20th century creative movements in art, science, society, culture: surrealism, Marxism, feminism, and other -isms. • Overview of clinical models for measuring intelligence, creativity, and deviancy: their assumptions, validity and fallacies. <p><u>Topics</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How individuals spark change, and the recursive process of social contexts that both shape and are affected by change. • What changes are socially meaningful, and who creates them? • Creative figures who have shaped the modern era: Freud, Gandhi, Picasso, others of student choice 	All
Spring	<p><u>Background:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myths and stereotypes of creativity and madness, and the research on their proposed connection • Society's response to revolutionary thinkers and change, and the role subjective labels of 'madness' has played in marginalizing or exalting creative thinkers • The adaptive value of creativity and conformity <p><u>Topics</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is madness, insanity and normalcy? (From Foucault and the rise of the Asylum to <i>One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest</i>). What is center and periphery? What is marginality? Who defines the marginal groups? • What are the social constraints and conformity within our society? Risk-taking vs obedience • Marginality in our community: identify and understand people not commonly perceived as marginal and discuss what is meaningful to them • Creative problem solving: students imaging solutions to social issues within social constraints 	All

IV. Preliminary reading list: (selections from the following may be assigned)

- Albert, Robert S. ed. *Genius and Eminence: The Social Psychology of Creativity and Exceptional Achievement*. Oxford, New York, Seoul, Tokyo: Pergamon Press, 1983.
- Barron, Frank, Alfonso Montuori, and Anthea Barron, eds. *Creators on Creating: Awakening and Cultivating the Imaginative Mind*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1997.
- Brown, Kurt ed. *Verse and Universe: Poems about Science and Mathematics*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 1998.
- Chu, Franklin D. *The madness establishment; Ralph Nader's study group report on the National Institute of Mental Health*. New York, Grossman Publishers, 1974.
- Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*. New York: HarperCollins, 1996.
- Darwin, Charles R. *Recollections of the Development of My Mind and Character and The Darwin -Wallace Essays of 1858 in The Darwin Reader*, Bates, Marston and Philip Humphrey eds. Charles Scribner's Sons 1956.
- Darwin, Charles R. *The Voyage of the Beagle*. Modern Library Edition 2001.
- Darwin, Charles R. and Alfred R. Wallace. "On the Tendency of Species to form Varieties; and on the Perpetuation of Varieties and Species by a Natural Means of Selection."
- Feynman, Richard P. Selections from *What Do You Care What Other People Think?: Further Adventures of a Curious Character*. New York: Bantam Books, 1988.
- Foucault, Michel. *Madness and Civilization: a History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. London ; New York : Routledge, 2001.
- Franklin, R.W. ed. *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981.
- Friere, Paolo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1970.
- Gamwell, Lynn. *Madness in America: cultural and medical perceptions of mental illness before 1914*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press ; Binghamton, N.Y. : Binghamton University Art Museum, 1995.
- Gardner, Howard. *Creating Minds: An Anatomy of Creativity Seen Through the Lives of Freud, Einstein, Picasso, Stravinsky, Eliot, Graham, and Gandhi*. New York: Basic Books, 1992.
- Gould, Stephen Jay. "Three Facets of Evolution."
- Habegger, Alfred. *My Wars Are Laid Away in Books: The Life of Emily Dickinson*. New York: Random House, 2002.
- Hirsch, Edward. *How to Read a Poem: And Fall in Love with Poetry*. : Doubletake Books, 2000.

Hopper, Stanley Romaine and David L. Miller, eds. *Interpretation: The Poetry of Meaning*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1967.

Horgan, John. *The End of Science: Facing the Limits of Knowledge in the Twilight of the Scientific Age*. New York: Broadway Books,

Hughes, Robert. *The Shock of the New*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982. (There's a newer edition?)

Johnson, Thomas H. *Letters of Emily Dickinson*. Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1958.

Malthus, Thomas R. "Population: The First Essay."

Nogales, Patti D. *Metaphorically Speaking*. Stanford: CSLI Publications, 1999.

Pinker, Steven, *How the Mind Works*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1999.

Plato "Allegory of the Cave."

Simonton, Dean K. *Origins of Genius: Darwinian perspectives on creativity*. New York : Oxford University Press, 1999.

Slater, Lauren. "Dr. Daedalus: A Radical Plastic Surgeon Wants to Give You Wings," *Harpers*. July 2001 57-67.

Stearns, Stephen C. *The Evolution of Life Histories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Sontag, Susan. *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1966.

Treffert, Darold A. and Gregory L. Wallace. "Islands of Genius," *Scientific American*. June 2002 76-85.

Watts, Alan W. "Society and Sanity," *Psychotherapy East & West*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1961.