**SYLLABUS**

**Creativity and Innovation**

Grad Studio Center 503

Mondays and Wednesdays, 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.

January 22 – March 17, 2014

**Instructor: Paul D. Miller**

* The best way to connect with Paul is: [pmiller02@mica.edu](mailto:pmiller02@mica.edu).
* Paul is also available for Skype sessions by appointment

**Co-instructor: Aaron Henkin**

* The best way to connect with Aaron is by phone / text at 410.935.4693, or via email at [aaronhenkin@wypr.org](mailto:aaronhenkin@wypr.org)
* Visits with Aaron can be arranged by appointment, Monday through Friday, 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.

**Course description:**

Risk taking, tolerance for ambiguity, abductive thinking, heuristic method, praxis, General Design Theory (GDT), and epistemology are explored in Creativity and Innovation. Focus is on conceiving design solutions through a variety of processes involving analyzing fundamental assumptions, skeptically questioning the nature and justifications of these assumptions, intuition, research, experimentation, and envisioning through iterative sequences that generate unexpected outcomes. Innovative ideation is the goal of this class; charettes, critiques, brainstorming sessions, etc. emphasize non-judgmental, neutral dialogue that encourages novelty and ensures imaginative and inventive design concepts.

**Course objectives:**

* Enhanced understanding of creativity as a renewable resource in the 21st century
* Increased awareness of creativity as currency in a an era of permanent freelance
* Demystification of the concept of ‘creative genius’

**Course schedule:**

Week 1 (Jan 22): *cancelled due to inclement weather*

Week 2 (Jan 27): IDEAS AS CURRENCY

How much is an idea worth? And how creative do you have to be to steal it? Can piracy fuel of innovation? How far are we willing to go to protect ideas? How far are we willing to go to get past those protections? What will be pirated in the future?

* Please come to class prepared to discuss: *Piracy - The Intellectual Property Wars from Guttenberg to Gates*, by Adrian Johns <http://www.amazon.com/Piracy-Intellectual-Property-Gutenberg-Gates/dp/0226401197>

Week 2 (Jan 29): THE INFANCY OF OUR EVOLUTION

In terms of our evolutionary timeline, how far have humans progressed as innovators? How quickly is our capacity for creative thought accelerating? Or decelerating? What might we stand to learn from the distant past about how to more creatively solve problems today?

* Please come to class prepared to discuss: *The World until Yesterday: What Can We Learn from Traditional Societies*, by Jared Diamond <http://www.amazon.com/The-World-Until-Yesterday-Traditional/dp/0670024813>

Week 3 (Feb 3): THE WORLD IS A STAGE, THE CITY IS A CANVAS

How do we sensitize ourselves to the overlooked underpinnings of our day-to-day lives? What can we do once we notice them? How can we transform them into something aesthetically engaging? How can we use those aesthetics to provoke change?

* Please come to class prepared to discuss: *The Revolution in Everyday Life*, by Raoul Vaneigem <http://www.amazon.com/The-Revolution-Of-Everyday-Life/dp/0946061017>

Week 3 (Feb 5): THE ART OF THE INTERVIEW

Who do you choose to talk to in a given day? What do you choose to ask? What do you choose not to ask? What might you be neglecting to ask? Can an interview be an act of subversion? What can you gain if you give yourself over to pursuing a result that’s impossible to predict?

* Please come to class prepared to discuss: *Out of the Blocks*, by Aaron Henkin & Wendel Patrick. This audio documentary and accompanying materials can be found at: <http://transom.org/?p=38865>

Week 4 (Feb 10): THE FUTURE IS A STORY WE TELL OURSELVES

How can fiction (especially science fiction) work as a tool to spur real-world innovation? What’s so fundamentally compelling about made-up stories?

* Please come to class prepared to discuss: *Ecotopia*, by Ernest Callenbach <http://www.amazon.com/Ecotopia-Ernest-Callenbach/dp/0553348477>

Week 4 (Feb 12): WRAPPING OUR MINDS AROUND THE UNIMAGINABLE

Evolution, relativity, global warming… How do we react to ideas that are so monumental that they strain the limits of human understanding? How do we reinvent the way we think in order to incorporate them?

* Please come to class prepared to discuss: *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*, by Timothy Morton <http://www.amazon.com/Hyperobjects-Philosophy-Ecology-after-Posthumanities/dp/0816689237>

Week 5 (Feb 17): WHAT’S BEHIND WHAT WE DELETE

What can we learn about a society by studying its garbage? What does the internet’s mildew teach us? Who (or what) generates it? What effect does it have? How does the web innovate to protect itself from the nuisance?

* Please come to class prepared to discuss: *Spam: A Shadow History of the Internet*, By Finn Brunton <http://www.amazon.com/Spam-Shadow-History-Internet-Infrastructures/dp/026201887X>

Week 5 (Feb 19): REMIX, REWIND, RECYCLE

How has technology changed the game for music composers? What has the technique of sampling done to traditional notions of creative ownership? What’s the line between re-appropriation and plagiarism? Has there ever been a creative product that wasn’t, in some way, a remix?

* Please come to class prepared to discuss: *Sound Unbound*, by Paul D. Miller <http://www.amazon.com/Sound-Unbound-Sampling-Digital-Culture/dp/0262633639>

Week 6 (Feb 24): A SPOONFUL OF SUGAR HELPS THE DATA GO DOWN

How can we share information in a way that matters to people? What can visuals do that numbers can’t? Can audio work as a tool for graphing information?

* Please come to class prepared to discuss: *Cool Infographics: Effective Communication with Data Visualization and Design*, by Randy Krum <http://www.amazon.com/Cool-Infographics-Effective-Communication-Visualization/dp/1118582306>

Week 6 (Feb 26): LOCKED IN OUR CELLS

What are the benefits of unceasing, portable connectivity? What are the side-effects? When does a helpful tool become a crutch?

* Please come to class prepared to discuss: *Constant Touch: A Global History of the Mobile Phone*, by Jon Agar <http://www.amazon.com/Constant-Touch-Global-History-Mobile/dp/1840465417>

Week 7 (Mar 3): WASTE NOT, WANT NOT

Ever notice that ‘nature’ itself never creates waste-products, only reusable by-products? What can modern civilization learn from the landscape it has conquered?

* Please come to class prepared to discuss: *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*, by William McDonough and Michael Braungart <http://www.amazon.com/Cradle-Remaking-Way-Make-Things/dp/1400157617>

Week 7 (Mar 5): THE SCIENCE OF THE MIND AT PLAY

Is ‘creativity’ something that’s inside us? Or is it something in the ether? Is scientific inquiry a useful tool for understanding the neurological roots of human creativity? How useful is it for us to externalize our notion of ‘inspiration’?

* Please come to class prepared to discuss: TED Talk presentation by Dr. Charles Limb: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BomNG5N_E_0> and the Radiolab program, *Me, Myself, and Muse* <http://www.radiolab.org/story/117294-me-myself-and-muse/>

Week 8 (Mar 10): THERE’S AN APP FOR THAT

How has the App redefined the way we interact with digital architecture? How has it changed our notion of ‘useful technology’?

* Please come to class prepared to discuss: *The Imaginary App*, by Paul D. Miller <http://djspooky.com/imaginaryapp/>

Week 8 (Mar 12): THE BLANK CANVAS

What can the planet’s only uninhabited continent teach us about science, beauty, and fragility? What can it show us about our own ambitions and failures? What can it do to stoke our imagination?

* Please come to class prepared to discuss: *The Book of Ice*, by Paul D. Miller <http://www.amazon.com/Book-Ice-Paul-D-Miller/dp/1935613146>

**Course Methods:**

The course consists of lectures, multimedia presentations, readings, student-driven discussion, written assignments, and hands-on assignments.

**Assignments:**

Students will complete one assignment per week. Assignments will be written exercises or multimedia projects demonstrating understanding of class topics. All assignments will be followed up by written feedback from instructors. One-on-one feedback sessions can be arranged, as well. Weekly assignments will be distributed via email on Wednesdays at 5 p.m. All assignments are due the following Wednesday at 9 a.m.

**Final project:**

Each student will record interviews with three different individuals who are engaged in creative enterprises. Those interviews will become the source material for an original exposition on the creative process. The final project may be a written document, an audio production, or a video production. Other formats may be considered upon consultation with instructors. The final project will be due on Monday, March 17th.

**Grading:**

* Class attendance: 20%
* Participation in group discussions: 30%
* Weekly assignments: 30%
* Final project: 20%

**Course Policies:**

* Class attendance counts for a considerable amount of students’ grades, so absence and tardiness should be avoided.
* Assignments are to be completed and turned in on their due-dates, unless prior arrangements are made with instructors
* Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in the Creativity & Innovation course

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact Paul D Miller or Aaron Henkin privately to discuss specific needs. Please contact the Learning Resource Center at 410.225.2416, in Bunting 458, to establish eligibility and coordinate reasonable accommodations. In MICA’s efforts to provide the highest possible quality educational experience for every student, MICA maintains compliance with the requirements of the ADA and Section 504. Any student who has, or suspects he or she may have, a disability and wants to request academic accommodations must contact the Director of the Learning Resource Center immediately.