

A Short History of Creativity

Start date	13/12/19	End date	15/12/19
Venue	Madingley Hall Madingley Cambridge		
Tutor	Dr Alex Carter Abi Docherty	Course code	1920NRX018

Director of ISP and LL Sarah Ormrod

For further information on this course, please contact Head of Academic Centre Administration, Zara Kuckelhaus
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To book See: www.ice.cam.ac.uk or telephone 01223 746262

Tutor biography

Alex Carter is a Bye-Fellow at Fitzwilliam College, and is Academic Director for Philosophy and Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of Cambridge, Institute of Continuing Education where he has designed and delivered courses in philosophy, ethics and creativity theory. He also oversees the Institute's undergraduate research courses.

Alex's research interests include Wittgenstein's later philosophy, the theology of Simone Weil and the philosophy of humour. Alex's PhD thesis explored some of the surprising aspects of Wittgenstein's views concerning freedom and fatalism. Alex is currently researching the relationship between humour and creative practice via the concept of 'serious play'.

Abigail Docherty is an award-winning playwright for theatre and radio. She teaches Writing for Performance at ICE.

Her first play **Listen To My Inside Mind** was a winner in the BBC Young Playwrights' Festival and is published by Methuen. **One Thousand Paper Cranes** won the Best Scottish Contribution to Drama at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2011. **Sea and Land and Sky** won the 2010 National Open Stage Playwriting competition at the Tron Theatre in Glasgow, and is published by Methuen Drama. Abigail was Pearson Playwright in Residence at the Tron Theatre in 2012. She has written widely for BBC Radio Drama, including **Ursula and Boy**, and **Edward, Edward**.

Her teaching uses a mixture of media, including music, poetry, and visual art, in order to encourage students to create dramatic voice and text.

Course programme

Friday

Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

19:00	Dinner
20:30	Session 1: (Re)creation Myths and our Creative Unconscious (Abi Docherty)
22:00	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00	Session 2: Creation <i>Ex Nihilo</i> (Alex Carter)
10:30	Coffee
11:00	Session 3: Lost Renaissances (Abi Docherty)
13:00	Lunch
14:00	Free
16:00	Tea
16:30	Session 4: The Romantics and Creativity (Abi Docherty)
18:00	Free
18:30	Dinner
20:00	Session 5: Darwin and Transformation (Abi Docherty)
21:30	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Sunday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00	Session 6: Not-writing and other 20 th Century inventions (Alex Carter and Abi Docherty)
10:30	Coffee
11:00	Session 7: Artificial Intelligence and the Paradox of Spontaneity (Alex Carter)
12:45	Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Course syllabus

Aims:

- To develop the students' ability to analyse, evaluate and communicate key concepts within creativity theory and the history of creativity, and to exercise significant judgement across a broad range of functions, including: creativity as an emergent process; creativity as an incremental process.
- To develop students' capacity to interact effectively within a team, giving and receiving information and ideas (learning to identify new problems) and learning to modify responses where appropriate within a collaborative framework.
- To develop students' ability to assess own capabilities using justifiable criteria set by self and others taking the wider needs of the context into account.

Content:

On Friday evening we will introduce the topic by looking at creativity as narrative and metaphor in ancient and modern creation myths. Why do we as a species have a fundamental drive towards metaphor as an essential tool in the construction of our social and moral universes? We will examine the identity-making function of our own personal 'creation narratives' in the writing of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung.

In our second session we will discuss Classical and Judeo-Christian conceptions of creation, as creation "out of nothing" (Ex Nihilo). We will consider attempts (and failures) of philosophers to understand this idea and what this might mean for our contemporary ideas surrounding creativity.

What are the social and political factors that allow us to prize the Italian Renaissance in Europe (14th-17th centuries) above the aesthetic advances in, for example, the art of the Benin tribe in Africa, or the ancient art of the Aboriginal people in Australia? We will explore the concept of 'renaissance' and find a wider definition of application.

We will then turn to how creativity was conceptualised by the Romantic poets in the early 19th Century. Samuel Taylor Coleridge's theory of the 'primary Imagination' as the driving force of all human perception will provide the starting point for our consideration of the 'hierarchy of genius' in the literature and philosophy of this period. We will consider extracts from the work of Kant, Blake, Mary Shelley, Wordsworth and Keats.

How do ideas of the Romantic sublime relate to Charles Darwin's 'autonomous principles of self-generation' and adaptation? In this session we will look at the scientific advances of the 19th Century and the cultural impact of Darwin's concept of evolution. We will examine how Henri Bergson's concepts of 'life force' and 'flow' took Darwin's ideas of 'life as adaptation' into the 20th Century.

In our penultimate session we will explore different ways in which creativity has been democratised—from the Oulipo's emphasis on not-writing to Sally Hogshead's 'Throne of Agony'. We will also try out some of these techniques for ourselves.

We will close by considering our own species' attempts to create new forms of life. What do such attempts tell us about the limits of our own creative capacities?

Presentation of the course:

The course will be presented through a series of tutor-led talks and seminars that are fully interactive with the student group. There will be group and individual tasks and exercises, as well as full debates and discussions.

Students will be encouraged to take home exercises started in class for longer consideration.

Talks will be presented on Powerpoint and there will be mixed media components: videos, music, and visual cues to write to.

As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:

- consider creativity as concept in a general history of the past two thousand years;
- understand the creativities of cultures beyond normative European histories;
- continue to develop research and private study into creativity within a wide variety of historical periods;
- question hierarchies of creativity;
- access their own concept of creativity and use new skills to explore their own interests.

Reading and resources list

Listed below are a number of texts that might be of interest for future reference, but do not need to be bought (or consulted) for the course.

Author	Title	Publisher and date
Rob Pope	Creativity: Theory, History, Practice	Clarendon Press, 1996
David Bohm	On Creativity	Routledge, 1998
Robert Graves	The Greek Myths	Penguin, 1960

Note Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

Information correct as of: 21 November 2019