

***Seminar on the Psychology of Creativity: The Creative Process***  
***Professor Patricia Stokes***

This seminar investigates the creative process in two stages. First, we review classic Psychometric, Psychodynamic and Personality models of creativity. Then, we apply contemporary Process or problem-solving models to several domains. Our research will be organized around the question “Are people (painters, architects, musicians) more creative working with or without constraints?” One current model suggests that the (counter-intuitive) answer is the second, that *constraints make creativity possible*. To see if this is so, outside experts will visit to discuss their work and working methods with us. Readings will acquaint us with the habits and output of other experts. Each seminar member will pursue an area for individual investigation (and class presentation). Our ongoing investigations will be recorded in a “handbook” that will be reorganized throughout the semester. The completed handbook will constitute the required research paper. Finally, since psychology shows that we learn best by doing, we will “try on” a series of compositional constraints to see which make our writings more precise, convincing, creative.

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***Readings:***

1. ***Psychology:*** reprints (marked with \*) will be provided in class or on reserve in the library  
One book (Stokes) is available at Labyrinth; the other is only available used – there are multiple (cheap) copies at Amazon.com.
    - a. Definitions of Creativity – A. Cropley \*
    - b. The Artistic Personality: A Systems Perspective – S. Abuhamdeh & M. Csikszentmihalyi \*
    - c. The Domain of Creativity – M. Csikszentmihalyi \*
    - d. The Acquisition of Expert Performance – K. Ericsson \*
    - e. The Influence of Personality on Artistic and Scientific Creativity – G. Feist \*
    - f. The Dynamics of Composing: Making Plans and Juggling Constraints – L. Flower and J. Hayes \*
    - g. The Evolving Systems Approach to Creative Work – H. Gruber \*
    - h. Creativity – J. Guilford \*
    - i. The Associative Basis of the Creative Process – S. Mednick \*
    - j. Creativity from Constraints: The Psychology of Breakthrough – P. Stokes
    - k. Learned Variability Levels: Implications for Creativity – P. Stokes \*
    - l. Creative Problem Solving: Notes from the Autobiography of a Fugue – W. Reitman \*
    - m. On the Structure of Ill-Structured Problems – J. Voss & T. Post \*
    - n. Creativity: Genius and Other Myths – R. Weisberg (1988, paperback)
  
  2. ***Literature***
    - a. Three by Annie Dillard - A. Dillard
    - b. Passions of the Mind, Sugar and Other Stories – A.S. Byatt
    - c. The Art of the Novel, Ignorance – M. Kundera
    - d. Fantasy \*, Invisible Cities – I. Calvino
  
  3. ***Readings for your project***
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## ***Format***

The first three sessions will provide a foundation in the creativity literature.

Five sessions will focus on constraints in literature. Members of the seminar will lead these discussions. To facilitate this, all will do the required readings in advance, and post discussion questions/topics on course-works.

Two sessions will focus on the visual arts: guests will visit us; we will visit a museum or gallery. During the remaining sessions, each member will present her (pre-approved) independent project to the group.

**Writing in this seminar is continuous and cumulative.** The instructor will collect and comment on all weekly assignments. The final research paper will incorporate everything covered in class plus your independent project.

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## ***Grading Policy***

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| Weekly preparation and participation | 20% |
| Weekly writing assignments           | 20% |
| Independent project and presentation | 20% |
| Final paper                          | 40% |

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## ***The Semester***

### ***Weeks 1 & 2:***

#### ***Overview – Traditional Models***

**Read:** Cropley, Guilford, Mednick, Weisberg,

**Write:** Start “handbook” with your summary of the models presented in the readings.

The handbook will, by the end of the semester, include all the material that we cover in class as well as your project. It will be reorganized (several times) and rewritten (at least once) to tie the separate sections together.

### ***Week 3: Overview – Contemporary Models***

**Read:** Csikszentmihalyi, Abdulah & C., Gruber, Stokes (Chapters 1 & 2)

**Write:** Add models to handbook.

### ***Week 4: Overview- Constraints in Art***

**Guests:** Sculptor and Printmaker

**Read:** Ericcson, Stokes (Chapter 4)

**Write:** Start section on art, including our guest as an example.

### ***Week 5: Constraints in Composition/ Literature (Byatt)***

**Read:** Flower and Hayes, Reitman, Voss & Post, Still Life (Byatt)

**Write:** Start section on composition

- subsection on literature: outline Byatt’s constraints
- Short memoir (2 paragraphs perhaps).

### ***Week 6: Constraints in Literature (Byatt)***

**Read:** Rose Colored Teacups, Sugar – Byatt

**Write:** Add to Byatt

Rewrite memoir using Byatt’s constraints.

**\*\* MAKE APPTS TO SEE ME ABOUT YOUR INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATION TOPICS \*\***

***Outside Regular Class Time: Constraints in Art (we will have to agree on a date for this)***

***Visit:*** Gallery or museum show

***Write:*** Reorganize section on art around shared and distinctive constraints in the visiting printer or sculptor, the work we see this week, and one artist from Chapter 4 in Stokes

***Week 7: Constraints in Literature (Kundera)***

***Read:*** Dialogue on Composition (from Art of the Novel) - Kundera  
Ignorance – Kundera

***Write:*** Add Kundera to section on literature  
Rewrite memoir using Kundera's constraints.

***Week 8: Constraints in Literature (Calvino)***

***Read:*** Fantasy, Invisible Cities – Calvino

***Write:*** Add section on Calvino  
Rewrite memoir in Calvino's style.

***Week 9: Constraints in Literature (Dillard)***

***Read:*** The Writing Life, (assigned parts of) American Childhood - Dillard

***Write:*** Reorganize section on writing around shared and distinctive constraints in  
Byatt, Kundera, Calvino and Dillard  
Rewrite memoir using Dillard's constraints.

***Week 10-End: Individual Presentations***

***Write: Week 11*** - Outline for final paper.

***Last day of class*** – Final paper in APA format (see *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, (4<sup>th</sup> Edition))