CHAPTER THREE

"PREPARING STUDENTS TO BECOME PRO-ACTIVE CREATIVE MANAGERS" BUSINESS EDUCATION AS A FOUNDATION FOR THE NEEDS OF 21ST CENTURY BUSINESS

BRUCE B. ROSENTHAL

"Creativity is simultaneously the most important and least understood aspect of contemporary business. It can be the lifeblood of some companies – what they become known for; for others it remains a mystery that has to be out-sourced. Understanding harnessing and investing in creativity are likely to become central to any and all businesses as we move through the 21st century. As consumers become more sophisticated, competition more aggressive and regulation more intrusive, the need to find creative solutions and creative means to serving and interacting with customers is likely to become acute. Creativity therefore must no longer be the sole preserve of the professional creative. It must pervade every division, department and employee" (Snook as quoted in Harris, 2009).

We are no longer living in the manufacturing age—the age where all a company needed to succeed was the method to bring a product to market faster, cheaper and hopefully of good quality. Efficiency in production and delivery is still important, of course, but even the Japanese are beginning to understand that the ability to bring creativity—"right brain thinking" - to a solution or strategy will be increasingly important in the digital age, the 21st century.

In spite of the importance of creativity in achieving and maintaining competitive edge in the modern world, very few MBA programs—as the prime grooming vehicles for upper management—have any kind of concentration

(or even a course) that would enable students to become better at this highly prized skill. A quick look at the faculty in most MBA programs allows us to understand why this is.

Most faculty are recruited for the obvious disciplines: accounting, finance, economics, marketing, only one of which prizes creativity as a bedrock of the discipline - marketing. Very few faculty have creativity training in their backgrounds, never mind BFAs. In fact there are universities—sometimes referred to colloquially as "quant jock schools" —where the overwhelming majority of classes are geared towards quantifying problems through spreadsheets and graphs. Creativity can be taught though, and considering the demands of twenty first century business, it is a necessary discipline to teach. My course "Creativity and Innovative Thinking" I believe is a good first step.

In approaching course development, it is important to define what exactly we should be teaching. This is obviously not a topic that we normally discuss when creating courses in accounting or finance, but creativity is more amorphous and so starting with a definition makes sense.

What is Creativity?

The best single statement I have found that defines what creativity means to business is the following:

> "Corporate Creativity is characterized by the ability to perceive the world in new ways, to find hidden patterns, to make connections between seemingly unrelated phenomena, and to generate solutions. Generating fresh solutions to problems, and the ability to create new products, processes or services for a changing market, are part of the intellectual capital that give a company its competitive edge" (Naiman, 2011).

And then there is this definition, from no less than Steve Jobs:

> "Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask creative people how they did something, they feel a little guilty because they didn't really do it, they just saw something. It seemed obvious to them after a while. That's because they were able to connect experiences they've had and synthesize new things." (Jobs, 1995)

Most other definitions, such as May's in *The Courage to Create* (as cited in Naiman, 2014) focus on "the process of bringing something new into being"

and "passion and commitment". Sir Ken Robinson defines creativity as "the process of having original ideas that have value", and – importantly -stresses "the interaction of different disciplinary ways of seeing things" (Robinson, 2006).

Mednick (as cited in Titus, 2007) believes that the ability to make "new combinations of associative elements" is a crucial aspect of creativity but that "an individual's ability to formulate these creative associations was dependent on (a) the individual's associative hierarchy or prior knowledge, (b) his/her ability to make associations or form new relationships and (c) serendipity or chance—chance occurrences or accidental happenings".

These three elements are commonly found in definitions of creativity, but it is important to focus on the supposed outcome: making new combinations of things, which were possibly not commonly linked before.

Titus (2007) has developed a model to explain the creative process, called the "Creative Marketing Breakthrough Model". The model consists of four factors:

-Motivation
-Serendipity
-Cognitive flexibility
-Disciplinary knowledge

Motivation is defined by Titus as the desire to work hard on the solution, what Thomas Edison referred to as "stick-to-it-iveness". Thomke (as cited in Titus, 2007) notes that Edison famously stated genius was "99% perspiration 1% inspiration", and that after having failed numerous times to develop a light bulb, he hadn't failed, he had merely found 10,000 solutions that wouldn't work. (Rosanoff, 1932) One quote that resonates with students is also from Thomas A. Edison, and echoes the theme of a strong work ethic concerning innovation: "Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up." (Thomas, n.d.)

As Titus examines the role of motivation though he stresses that Intrinsic task motivation - an internal desire to create, rather than fulfilling a work demand—is more effective. In other words the more driven a person is to find that creative solution the more likely s/he is to find it.

Mednick (as cited in Titus, 2007) also pointed out, serendipity—accident or chance- has a role in the creative process. Fleming and penicillin; Spencer and microwaves both come to mind, as well as the creation of Viagra – originally developed for blood pressure (Titus, 2007). This is an aspect of creativity and creative solution finding that is most difficult to teach, or in fact

even approach. When teaching the 'harder' disciplines (the number-oriented courses for example), leaving wiggle room for chance is usually avoided – for good reason, yet creativity requires that the practitioner allow for serendipity. Cognitive flexibility refers to the ability to utilize a variety of methods to solve cognitive problems, including counter-intuitive approaches. For example, most restaurants pride themselves on greeting and interacting with their patrons in a gracious manner, but there are some successful eating establishments which insult or harass their patrons – and the patrons love it. Rather than cute, sweet "all-American" Barbie dolls, there are doll companies that have produced decidedly exotic and slightly erotic, heavily made-up dolls. Creative breakthroughs can come by reversing assumptions made in previous iterations of the product or service, which I cover in more detail in the section of this chapter devoted to the actual class.

Disciplinary knowledge refers to intimate knowledge of the field in which you are working which should yield "creative synthesis". Creative synthesis is vital to creativity, and refers to "combining or rearranging concepts and ideas in a way that results in the formation of new novel configurations". Presumably, a lack of knowledge of the field in question would limit the creative person's ability to develop a novel approach to a problem, or to even know what would constitute 'novel'. However it is also important to note that combining ideas takes center stage in Mednick's (as cited in Titus, 2007) analysis of creative solutions.

Finally, Amabile (as cited in Titus, 2007) refers to a "sociological model" - the combination of domain-related skills, creative relevant skills, and task motivation as major factors in personal creative performance. Note the resemblance to Titus' list.

Domain related skills refers to the individual's store of information/ knowledge about the problem at hand and previous solutions. The more the domain related skills, the better the probability of developing a creative approach to the problem at hand.

Creative-relevant skills refers to the individual's "cognitive style and ability to effectively apply creative problem solving heuristics" to the problem. In other words the ability to think in non-linear or non-quantitative ways; clearly to the extent that the individual can do this, the higher the likelihood of developing a creative solution.

Task-motivation refers to the individual's "baseline attitude toward the task and the individual's perceptions of his/her reasons for undertaking the task". The greater the personal motivation, the higher the likelihood of developing a creative solution.

While rarely mentioned in the literature, the willingness to break rules wherever found remains a large factor in the ability to develop creative solutions. As Edison put it:

"Hell, there are no rules here - we're trying to accomplish something." (Rosanoff, 1932). This is an essential aspect of creativity as uncertainty becomes part of the goal; in other words developing a novel solution demands entering territory that is essentially different from previous solutions, and therefore unknown. Rules dictate what has been done before, and so need to be examined and broken when needed, creating uncertainty.

Among the variety of definitions, and descriptions several crucial points emerge, all of which can be part of the teaching of creativity skills, assuming personal motivation, and good serendipity:

1) creativity should consist of seeing things in a different way, in other words training ourselves to observe the same input in a way, or ways, that differ from how we have been observing and analyzing them in the past;
2) creativity should consist of making connections among experiences or observed phenomena:
3) creativity should consist of finding hidden patterns in observed points or experiences, and building on those to develop a new version of products or services;
4) creativity depends to a certain degree on breaking previously accepted rules; as the Audi commercial puts it: "Challenge all givens". (Audi, 2015)

Creativity is important for future business leaders to understand

The following quotes will serve to put into perspective how important creativity is for future business leaders.

According to the European University Association (Creativity, 2007): "The complex questions of the future will not be solved 'by the book', but by creative, forward-looking individuals and groups who are not afraid to question established ideas and are able to cope with the insecurity and uncertainty that this entails."

According to the management professor and consultant Henry Mintzberg (as cited in Naiman, 2011): "The excessive focus on analysis, targets and number crunching, and

the absence of introspection and imagination has resulted in a crisis in management which is partly to blame for our current financial crisis."

In *A Whole New Mind,* Daniel Pink writes: "Left-brain linear, analytical computer-like thinking are being replaced by right-brain empathy, inventiveness and understanding as skills most needed by business. In other words, creativity gives you a competitive advantage by adding a value to your service or product, and differentiating your business from the competition. Without creativity, you are doomed to compete in commodity hell." (Pink, 2006)

IBM (as cited in Naiman, 2014) conducted a Global CEO Study in 2010 which surveyed 1,500 CEOs from 60 countries and 33 industries worldwide: *"More than rigor, management discipline, integrity or even vision—successfully navigating and increasingly complex world will require creativity." "The effects of rising complexity calls for CEOs and their teams to lead with bold creativity, connect with customers in imaginative ways and design their operations for speed and flexibility to position their organizations for 21st century success."*

Also note the following quotes concerning the role of creativity in business:

> "Recent discourse on the knowledge economy has shifted to 'stress the need for what might be called 'higher order' notions such as creativity or even wisdom" (Oakley as cited in Gibbs, 2008).
>
> "In a creative knowledge economy, therefore, creative ideas 'are the key asset in economic success—intellectual work creating intellectual value'" (Thompson, Jones & Warhurst as cited in Gibbs, 2008).

Creativity "is now the decisive source of competitive advantage" (Florida as cited in Gibbs, 2008).

> "…we now have an economy powered by human creativity…In virtually every industry, from automobile to fashion, food products, and information technology itself, the winners in the long run are those who can create and keep creating" (Florida as cited in Gibbs, 2008).
>
> "As the competitive landscape has changed, so too has management's response to those changes. Increased competitive pressures resulting from the rapid advances in technology, the con-

> tinued growth of the service sector, and the escalation of global competition have led to a shift in managerial strategy. Businesses have begun to shift away from the strategic, bottom line cost cutting focus of the 1990s to a renewed top-line focus on revenue growth via organizational innovation and creativity" (Coy as cited in Titus, 2007).
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> "The creative workforce now includes those employed in a wide variety of industries beyond the 'creative industries', including computing, engineering, architecture, science, education, arts and multimedia…..less focused on routine problem solving and more focused on new social relationships , novel challenges and the synthesizing of 'big picture' scenarios" (McWilliam & Dawson, 2008).
>
> "Creativity is not, and should not be limited to any particular organization or job as everyone can utilize creativity in different situations" (Mumford as cited in Al-Beraidi & Rickards, 2006).

From the above examples it should be abundantly clear that creativity is an essential element of 21st century business—and should be treated as such in business education.

Creativity can be learned:

A major issue with teaching creativity is the concern that it can be taught at all. A troubling concept exists which would have the world divided into two groups of people: those naturally gifted with creativity and those not. However this concept ignores the following studies and observations, where the central focus is not how we teach creativity but how we undo the "teaching out of creativity" that is part of our educational system.

According to a study by George Land (as cited in Naiman, 2014), we are naturally creative as children, but we actually learn to be uncreative through our educational system. "Creativity is a skill that can be developed and a process that can be managed. You learn to be creative by experimenting, exploring, questioning assumptions, using imagination and synthesizing information. Learning to be creative is akin to learning a sport. It requires practice

to develop the right muscles, and a supportive environment in which to flourish" (Naiman, 2014).

Sir Ken Robinson has spent a major portion of his life studying and discussing the role of creativity in our lives and in the classroom, and he has come to a similar conclusion concerning our ability to become creative forces: "all kids have tremendous talents and we squander them, pretty ruthlessly" (Robinson, 2006).

"My contention is that creativity now is as important in education as literacy, and we should treat it with the same status.
What we do know is, if you're not prepared to be wrong, you'll never come up with anything original. And by the time they get to be adults, most kids have lost that capacity. They have become frightened of being wrong. And we run our companies like this, by the way, we stigmatize mistakes. And we're now running national education systems where mistakes are the worst thing you can make. And the result is, we are educating people out of their creative capacities. John Lennon once said, all children are born artists, until they are told they are not an artist. (Fawcett, 1980) The problem is to remain an artist as we grow up. I believe this passionately, that we don't grow into creativity, we grow out of it. Or rather we get educated out of it." (Robinson, 2006).

The concept of learning creativity (or unlearning uncreativity) is actually widely accepted, although assessment concerns remain, as explained below. In fact 92% of participants in UK National Teaching Fellows survey believe that developing and teaching creative skills is very possible (The Creativity Centre 2006 as cited in McWilliam & Dawson, 2008).

However, developing a serious body of knowledge and skills to impart to students can be tricky, especially as creativity is sometimes seen as the domain of only those who are 'gifted'. To address this issue, Kaufman and Sternberg (as cited in McWilliam & Dawson, 2008) divide the concept of creativity into "small c creativity" versus large C creativity: the difference between being able to apply creative methods to solving problems (small c) and being Mozart (a huge C). This directly addresses the myth that "creativity is only about individual genius and/or idiosyncrasy as it applies to the arts"; in fact creativity is an "economically valuable, team-based, observable and learnable" skill (Kaufman & Sternberg as cited in McWilliam & Dawson, 2008).

Creativity in the classroom

Although creativity instruction has been slow to diffuse into marketing classrooms and instructional texts, there are signs that it is being taken more seriously as a course of study in MBA programs (Titus, 2007). However there have been several problems linked to teaching creativity in the classroom, which are only slowly being resolved.

A major stumbling block has been assessment: Creative capability is the "most elusive" of "the attributes that university academics might want to claim for their graduates" (McWilliam & Dawson, 2008). "While it is one thing to be able to prove, through performance testing, that a student is more knowledgeable about accounting or physics or statistics, it is quite another to assert that a student has more creative capacity as a direct result of their program of study. It is even more of a stretch if the program or discipline seems generally unrelated to the creative arts" (McWilliam & Dawson, 2008).

A second issue has been—as Robinson pointed out in an earlier quote—failure is very much a part of the creative process, yet is stressed as something to be avoided at all costs in a business setting (Robinson, 2006). According to Titus (2007), "failure is an inescapable part of the creative experience".

McWilliam and Dawson speak directly to this inherent need to embrace failure for what it is - a stepping stone towards ultimate success. An important aspect of educating for creativity is "*Explaining less and welcoming error* - an environment in which 'command and control' instruction is sparingly used and it is anticipated that all members will make mistakes – the aim is to learn from the instructive complications of error rather than to avoid error or attempt to disguise it" (McWilliam & Dawson, 2008). The necessity of embracing error or failure is not something easily imparted to students who have had a lifetime of education stressing avoidance of error. The only assessment that students have ever known has forced them into a semi-defensive mode where the ultimate goal is to produce error-free reports, presentations and tests.

Titus stresses the importance of learning exercises in class designed to force the students to think more flexibly, and the importance of going to a wide variety of disciplines for ideas and relevant inputs.

In spite of the fact that creativity is deemed important in the business world, and that creativity skills can be taught in classrooms, the sad fact is that they rarely are. In *BusinessWeek's* list of top thirty full time MBA programs (Top, 2015), and according to each University's webpage, online

course catalog, and online curriculum listing, 16 out of thirty programs do not offer creativity/innovation electives. The remaining 14 programs offer at least one creativity/innovation elective. Only 5 of the 14 programs offer more than one elective course. None of the programs offer a course on creativity as a core – in other words a class that would be required to graduate. Many universities' marketing mentions the words "innovation" and "creativity", but a review of the syllabi reveal that the courses in question cover management of new products, or entrepreneurial courses—not courses on how to think "outside the box". According to their respective websites, Stanford, Harvard and USC are notable exceptions, offering courses that focus on understanding and developing the creative process.

As I move into a more detailed discussion of how my class is constituted and taught, the following quote from Perkins *The Mind's Best Work* (1981) becomes very relevant: learning to approach problems in a creative mode will depend on "skills like pattern recognition, creation of analogies and mental models, the ability to cross domains, exploration of alternatives, knowledge of schema for problem solving, fluency of thought and so on are all indicators of creativity as a set of learning dispositions or cognitive habits."

MBA 600 Creativity and Innovative Thinking

I have taught the graduate-level class as both a 7 week intensive course and a full 14 week course – 3 credits in both forms. In each case the class was composed of lectures, interaction between students and instructor, and student teamwork. I stress throughout the course that the students will have far less structure than they are used to – especially in the case of more 'numbers-oriented' classes like economics, finance or accounting. The class is far more interactive and far more student-driven than many students have ever encountered before, and as I explain later, this is a source of concern for many.

Taking in account the definitions and descriptions of creativity covered above, I concentrate on the following aspects and skills of creative problem solving:

The role of rule breaking;
The power of assumptions to derail a creative solution;
Various techniques for arriving at non-linear solutions:
-listing attributes then changing them one at a time;
-using animal associations;
-using non-rational combinations;

-using opposite, or non-traditional approaches to a service, product;
-SCAMPER analysis
-Start from the solution and work backwards; rephrase the problem ("Formulation of the problem is often more essential than its solution" Einstein)
-Play with verbs/nouns: "How can I increase expenditures?"
-Improv!
-Theater productions: productions of The Magic Flute
-As many uses as possible

Blue Ocean Strategy: opera, ballet
Right brain/left brain approaches to advertising;
Innovation: disruptive versus sustaining
Finishing the course up with a discussion of Twyla Tharpe's book *The Creative Habit.*

Going over each of these in slightly more detail:

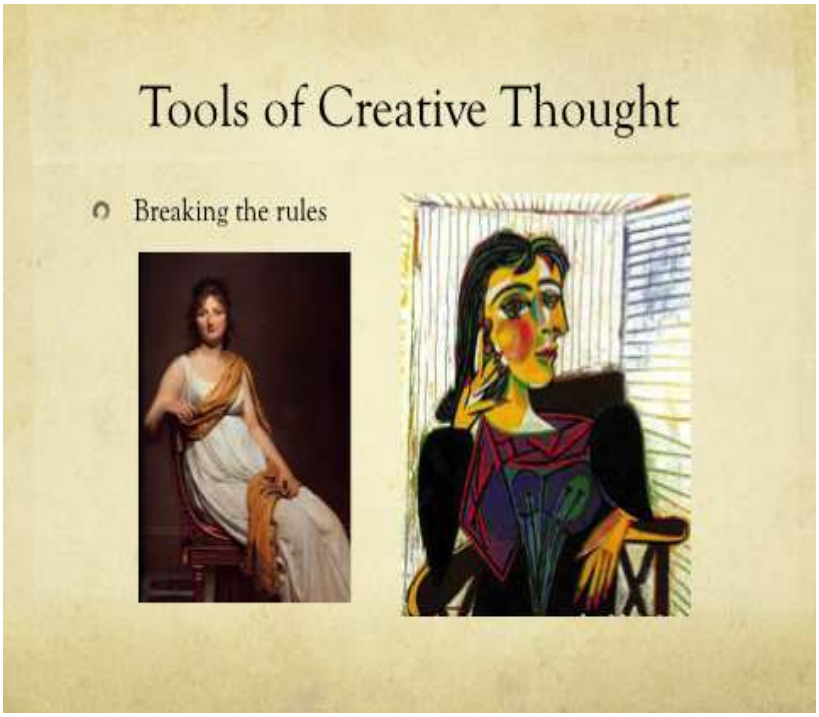
When discussing the concept of breaking rules I have found a very good series of examples in French art of the 19th century. As can be seen from the pictures below—works of Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825) and Picasso (1881-1973)—what was understood to be great art in the first decades of the 19th century was vastly different from that of the first decades of the 20th. What makes this a great series of examples is that students can quite clearly see which rules were broken and by whom. For example - as the David picture shows – early 19th century French art used Roman and Greek themes, or religious themes almost exclusively, and used classical perspective; however Courbet broke those rules and painted peasants. Having said that he painted in a very realistic and conservative manner—he would break the rule of content but not style. Manet went a bit further in breaking the "classical content" rule—he painted women who were clearly prostitutes—and used a slightly flat perspective, not the pure classicism of David.

Then came the Impressionists, and again, it is easy for the students to see which rule they decided to break: they were not concerned with recreating the visual world, they wanted to create a vision of how the world felt – their impression of it. They were also very concerned with modernity, breaking from the past of Greek and Roman themes.

The next example I use is van Gogh, and again, the students can clearly see that he decided to not only break the rule of content, but form as well, creating in many cases a world of his own, from within his head—a step that not

even the Impressionists took. His final painting—Field of Wheat with Crows—is a lens into the mind of a man at the end of his rope and about to commit suicide.

I then move on to Matisse, and the huge rule that he broke, above and beyond the rules that his contemporaries and predecessors broke. Not only did he throw away any pretence of realism, he painted pure color for the sake of color—blazingly red rooms for example. He also began sliding gently closer to abstract painting, although use of a figurative focus (in other words an identifiable form somewhere in the painting) was a rule that neither he nor Picasso would ever break. Finally of course, is Picasso. He broke the rule of realism, by deliberately painting horribly distorted figures; he broke the rule that painting needed to be done on canvas—he used a variety of materials to create his works; he broke the rule that only one perspective could be used on the figures—cubism, and many of his other styles- used multiple perspectives.



David, 1798-99; Picasso, 1937

That brings the class to the early part of the 20th century, however I go on and talk about the styles of painting that broke 'rules' that not even Picasso was willing to break—abstract expressionism, pop, conceptual, etc. The point to reaffirm with the students is that as businesspeople they will be called on to solve problems and develop strategies for their companies—which rules are they willing to break? What would Picasso tell you to do?

I have found it interesting and important to the students to understand how assumptions can undermine strategic plans, and impede creative solutions. The example that I use, in the form of an assignment, is to have them form into teams and develop a ten step series of actions which would result in my marrying Princess Stephanie of Monaco. The students have fun putting together the list of steps, but fail to understand that they are all working from a central assumption, that may or may not be flawed: they all assume Princess Stephanie and I don't know each other. Along with a firm understanding of the rules and which ones they are willing or able to break to get to their solution, students also need to understand what assumptions they are making and whether or not they are justified. The best answer I heard for the Princess Stephanie Problem was: "Get your wife to change her name to Princess Stephanie and you're done."

There are various techniques for arriving at some creative solutions for business problems: students can list all the attributes of a certain product (such as, a toaster is made of metal; bread is inserted vertically; heating coils are on either side of the bread; you lower the bread into the slot via a handle, etc) and then one-by-one change those attributes and see what happens (bread is put in horizontally, the heating coil rotates, etc) (Michalko, 2006).

Students can practice combining different elements (Mednick's 'associations') in several ways: I have them write the names of animals on scraps of paper, and then the name of a common product. The students then randomly pick one of each and do an analysis of how the attributes of the animal could be incorporated into the product or how the product could be marketed differently—based on the animal attributes. They can also use the animal to create a new version of the product.

Non–rational associations which is sometimes referred to as "fusing" would be combining concepts that should have no relations to each other, yet making that combination work. Autumn and yogurt for example (as Autumn leaves change color maybe yogurt labels could change color showing closeness to the "sell-by" date). (Sawyer, 2013)

Opposite combinations would be those similar to the restaurant example above—instead of treating customers with respect, treating them with con-

tempt. Instead of the chef cooking and the wait staff serving, maybe customer cooks and the staff eats?

SCAMPER analysis (Eberle, 1971) is a variation of the 'attribute' analysis listed above, except that for each attribute of a given product or service the student: **s**ubstitutes something else; **c**ombines with something else; **a**dapts the usage in some way; **m**odifies it in some way; **p**uts it to another use; **e**liminates it; **r**earranges/reverses that attribute. This should yield a long list of possible variations of the product or service that will be more creative versions of what already exists.

I go over an exercise with the students where I stress that sometimes just rephrasing the problem might yield better results. Instead of phrasing the problem in terms of "increasing productivity" for example, phrasing it in terms of "making employees' jobs easier" might work. Instead of trying to figure out how to increase sales, you might ask how to increase expenditures, or how to increase customers.

Improv experiences are a big part of the class as well, where I have one of our theater faculty work with the students to open up their abilities to communicate, lower social inhibitions and form teams. The *improv* allows the students to create freely, and get to know each other as teams shift and students work together without preconceived notions.

As part of the theater/business creativity connection I often show the students productions of the same opera (Mozart's "The Magic Flute" for example) by different theaters with the sound turned down and then up. Some productions place the action in a modern setting, some in a fantastical setting, some in an ancient period setting…The point is to impress on the students how different teams can take the same source material and observe it/recreate it in a variety of ways.

Observation by itself can be a powerful tool in creating something new. I have also showed them 'art' by Marcel Duchamp—a urinal for example—that has become art simply because Duchamp said it was. In other words, interpreting something in a completely different way. We use business examples to emphasize the point: rather than Widget A being used for *this*, could it not be also used for *that*…?

One of the other exercises we work on is having the students develop different uses for the same product: the best example is trying to figure out 60 uses for a chair. The first five or six will not be very creative at all, the last five will—chances are— be very creative.

Blue Ocean Strategy (Kim & Mauborgne, 2005) is a well known method, used by many companies to attempt to think creatively about developing a

new and unique product or service. The example of Cirque du Soleil is an effective one, as CdS created something that is not quite theater, not quite circus, but a unique form of entertainment that has created its own niche, or Blue Ocean. To practice this kind of planning I have students look at the world of ballet and the world of opera; tellingly none of the students in any of my classes have any knowledge of either of the two art forms/businesses. The object is for the students to use BOS to develop a new and unique form of entertainment that is not quite what is currently offered—a "Cirque du Soleil" type of solution.

In terms of having the students think creatively about the nature of the product or service that they might be working on I have them look at advertising—where the point of the product/service is most forcefully presented. The students look at advertising that is meant to appeal only to the left brain: this product is cheaper, more efficient, bigger, smaller, lasts longer etc. Something that can be easily quantified. We then look at commercials that are strictly right-brain: Axe and Chanel commercials are perfect examples. By suggesting that all a man need to do is put on Axe deodorant or body spray and gorgeous women will literally not be able to resist him (Axe, 2012), or that all a woman need do is put on Chanel #5 and she will have a glamorous life where she will be unforgettable to gorgeous men (Chanel, 2006), these commercials are clearly appealing to the 'dreamer' or unrealistic side of the consumer's brain. Rather than presenting a quantifiable series of factors which should lead the consumer to a purchase decision, 'right-brain' commercials are setting up an emotional appeal. The revamped Jaguar commercials - "It's good to be bad"—appeal to American audiences by plugging into strong positive images concerning British (through famous male film stars), while using terminology that can easily be applied to the cars themselves, mixed of course with London scenery (Jaguar, 2014).

The course also covers innovation, both sustaining (small changes meant to strengthen the appeal of the product—as Apple does regularly) and disruptive (the telephone). I cover the history of disruptive technology based on the book *Seeing What's Next* (Christensen, Anthony, & Roth, 2004). I have found that the description of Western Union's response to the telephone— involving retreat and clinging to what WU assumed was its loyal customer base – to be a very well thought out and easily understandable presentation of disruptive technology in the business world. I also cover how innovation in the healthcare industry, where patients (customers) are concerned with convenience and maintaining distance from hospitals and doctors' offices. The perfect example being home pregnancy tests, which allow women to determine pregnancy

quickly, easily and at home—obviating the necessity for a physician visit. In fact the home health care kits market is now worth hundreds of millions of the dollars in the US alone (DeBenedette, 2013).

My final lecture for the course is an overview of Twyla Tharpe's book on creativity: *The Creative Habit*. She gives excellent advice on how to be a more creative person – and who better to present that? I keep stressing to my students – as Twyla does – that being creative is a habit, and it must be practiced on a daily basis (Tharpe, & Reiter, 2003). It is difficult to develop creative answers to problems if you have not practiced being creative. Throughout the class I have students practice creative skills and emphasize that creativity is like a muscle – in order to be able to use it effectively you must work it.

Final presentations

Looking at the Syllabus below, it can be seen that the Final Presentation is completely unstructured - forcing students to develop their ideas from scratch, and use as many of the creative skills learned in the class as possible. This is also very good practice for the "real world" of business—generally speaking young managers will not be given extremely structured assignments, they will be given an objective: "Figure out how we can increase sales?" with few, if any guidelines. The manager who can develop an inexpensive, creative solution to that problem is the one who will be promoted. The manager who can only regurgitate already-used clichés will get few such assignments in the future.

I have seen students show me how the Heinz company revolutionized the condiment market, while dressed up as ketchup bottles; I have seen students show me how "pop-up galleries" work and how they are changing the modern art scene; I have had students do a presentation based on how difficult it is to come up with a creative presentation (a "Seinfeld-like" approach); I have had students show us the horrors of pollution while spraying what would appear to be a noxious mixture on the table in front of us (it was in fact chocolate pudding with vegetables mixed in); I have had students develop new ideas for shopping carts; develop new ways of presenting movies or TV shows, etc. Students explore creative ideas and present them in creative ways. After the "Heinz presentation" one student asked me: "But you would never actually do a presentation like that in a company would you?". My answer was: "Why not? It certainly made an impression on us, didn't it?".

Student Reaction and Assessment

Some students mistake 'wacky' for 'creative': there are some students who develop silly approaches to a solution and assume that they are being creative, when in fact their 'product' just looks weird. This is a fine line to draw, and the difference between 'silly' and 'impressive creativity' is wholly subjective, as mentioned below. Students who have never been pressed to be creative can find this a difficult concept to accept.

Some students want a traditional class—notes, tests. Most students have rarely—if ever—been taught creativity past elementary school, and prefer very quantifiable and traditional forms of learning. Students have told me that if they have not taken notes during class, and filled up their notebooks they feel as if they have not learned anything. Being aware of that I make sure that at least some of the classes are conducted in an "chalk-and-talk" manner. Having said that, improv classes and game-playing in class need to be part of teaching students to exercise their 'creative muscles'.

Some students are not used to purely subjective assessment. Art students are quite used to the professor judging their work completely subjectively—"*this part of the painting works, that part doesn't"*, but business students really aren't. Many students want tests with finite answers ('$43.15', for example) as opposed to "That doesn't really work for me". Again – this is good practice for the real world where many times your work is judged subjectively.

Although all examples are based on business, some students find it difficult to make the connection to business. Students sometimes fail to understand that examples about breaking rules, assumptions, and creative skills are necessary parts of developing innovative solutions. One student remarked: "I already took an art appreciation class in [undergrad]—I don't need another one" completely ignoring what the real point of the lecture was.

Some students are embarrassed to attempt creativity. The overwhelming majority of students in the MBA class have never been asked to be creative as adults, nor been judged on their ability to do it. Some are embarrassed to attempt it for a grade, and are embarrassed to 'put themselves out there' in front of the their fellow students. Clearly something that has to be overcome—and the improv sessions help with this.

Assessment is done on the basis of two main criteria: is the 'solution' presented by the students creative? This is judged by the following rubric: does their solution use any of the creative skill exercises taught in class? Does the

solution represent a break from past/traditional solutions? Or – does the final presentation highlight creativity or innovation in business (the Heinz presentation for example)? Have the students presented a concept that they have not previously shown in other classes?

The second criterion relates not to the content, but the presentation method: Frankly, the further away from a PowerPoint presentation the better. The grading rubric includes how much the presenters engage the other students—make them part of the overall lesson or point. The presenters also need to make an impression—even a negative one is better than a boring one —the audience needs to *feel* or *experience* the presentation, not just passively sit in front of it. Of course, as mentioned, the professor's assessment of the degree to which the students' success at this is wholly subjective.

Students in general are very receptive to the class and several students have mentioned that of all the classes they have taken in the MBA program, this is the one that they actually use in the business world. In Chatham University, at a get together between current students and alumnae, one alumna stated clearly to the younger students: "make sure you take Dr. Rosenthal's course— that's the one that will be of use to you when you graduate."

Finally, one student emailed me a while ago and told me that he had just gotten out of a strategy meeting in his company, and his comment to me was: "It was a terrible meeting; the solution that we came up with would never have gotten you married to Princess Stephanie."

ALFRED UNIVERSITY

MBA 600 Creativity and Innovative Thinking Syllabus

Spring 2014

Required Texts:

Kelley, T., & Littman, J. (2005). *The ten faces of innovation: IDEO's strategies for defeating the devil's advocate and driving creativity throughout your organization.* New York: Doubleday.

Stewart, D, & Simmons, M. (2010). *The business playground: Where creativity and commerce collide.* California: New Riders.

Disney Imagineers. (2005). *The imagineering workout.* New York: Disney Editions.

All textbook and additional readings must be read by the dates listed in the Course Schedule. I may also substitute some of the lectures with videos and in-class activities and I reserve the right to change the schedule as and when appropriate, with prior notice to the students.

Course Description

"An innovative product, service, or idea is one that is perceived by consumers as new. There are differing magnitudes of innovation. Adding bran to an established brand of breakfast cereal is considered a *continuous innovation* in that it constitutes a small change to an existing product with little market impact, as opposed to *discontinuous innovations* like the personal computer, which caused great societal impact" (Barron's, n.d.).

An innovative strategy uses continuous innovation to stay one step ahead of the competition. Many experts, such as author Daniel Pink (as cited in Naiman, 2014) believe that, to succeed, organizations must place greater emphasis on right-brain functions: artistic, big-picture thinking and the ability to put things in context.

Therefore creativity and innovation is a core competency for leaders and managers. Corporate creativity is characterized by the ability to perceive the world in new ways, to find hidden patterns, to make connections between seemingly unrelated phenomena, and to generate solutions. Generating fresh solutions to problems, and the ability to create new products, processes or services for a changing market, are part of the intellectual capital that give a company its competitive edge. Creativity is a crucial part of the innovation equation (Naiman, 2011).

(Retrieved from Reich, 2013)

(Credit to Cullum, 1998)

In this course, we will examine both the concepts of creativity and innovation: what they are, how they impact businesses, how to bring them to your business enterprise. The main object will be to teach you how to be creative – how to 'unleash' the right side of your brain.

Course Objectives

After completion of MBA 600 Creativity and Innovative Thinking, students will be able to:

1) Define creativity and innovation and their roles in the business world

2) ***Recognize*** the thought processes involved with creativity and innovation, and ***demonstrate*** an ability to use those processes to identify and solve business problems.
3) ***Identify and overcome*** the blockades to creativity in organizations.
4) ***Create*** a compelling narrative/presentation to demonstrate an innovative idea and demonstrate how it could be implemented

Skills that students will be able to demonstrate by the end of this course:

-Creative thinking: Students will be able to use their "creative side" to convince and persuade; this skill will be demonstrated primarily through mid-term and final projects.

-Integrative thinking: Students will have learned how to take a variety of research, discussions, brainstorming & readings on creativity/innovation in general and analyze and apply the information in terms of how it might relate to a specific example in the business world. Students will also practice putting together seemingly unrelated events, and ideas to develop a creative solution to a business problem. These skills will be demonstrated primarily in the presentations done throughout the semester.

-Innovative thinking/action: By the end of the course students will have done (or thought) at least one thing regarding a business situation or an educational experience that they have never done before. Students will also be able to discuss the applicability of that experience to their careers.

The chief enemy of creativity is 'good' sense.
(Picasso as quoted in Frank, 2014)

Learning Methods and Class Environment

A variety of methods will be utilized in the classroom including: lectures, interactive discussion, readings, case studies, experiential exercises, DVD presentations, role-playing, (possibly a field trip) and written assignments.

Our class should function as a learning community, so that we each participate in the learning process and we are collectively engaged in helping one another achieve our learning goals.

Course Requirements

A) Course Policies:

1) **Behavior:** Appropriate behavior is expected. This includes timeliness and class etiquette. The use of cell phones is not permitted. Computer usage should be limited to course specific tasks. Business attire is required for all formal presentations – unless your presentations demand costumes (!). In the proper context, dressing up as Heinz ketchup bottles is absolutely acceptable.
2) **Attendance/Participation:** It is the student's responsibility to let the course instructor know within the drop-add period if he or she will have to miss class for religious reasons, athletics, or other.

One of the critical factors in making this course a successful experience for everyone is the quality of student participation. Often, the most complete understanding of and best solutions for important issues and challenges are arrived at only after substantial class debate and discussion.

Your participation in class discussions and exercises is an important part of the learning process for this course and will count towards your grade. Class participation means being:

Present—You are expected to attend and participate in all classes.

I reserve the right to drop your letter grade by one complete grade after four unexcused absences. If a student misses a class session it is his/her responsibility, and his/hers ALONE, to find out what he/she missed and do the appropriate make-up work. Please get notes from your fellow students. I will be more than happy to go over any point that is not clear to you but will not teach the class twice or three times for students who were absent.

Prepared—Come to class well-prepared, having completed all readings and advance assignments for the week.

Ready to Contribute—You should be ready to contribute to class discussions by raising questions and responding to discussion topics.

For example, as you complete your reading assignments, jot down 2 or 3 points of interest. For example, you might:

- formulate a question you'd like to discuss in class
- identify what you consider to be the key points the author is making
- note topics that were of particular interest to you, or
- think of topics you expected to be covered by the author, but were not

You can also bring up situations in the news that relate to creativity/ innovative thinking and share your views with your classmates.

(Credit to Fish, 2010)

3) Written assignments (ten points each for a total of 50 points)

Pick five of the following topics and write a 750 (at least) word paper:

-Women students: develop an idea for a product that only a man would be interested in (but women could use). Men students: develop a product that only a woman would be interested in (but a man could use). Try hard to avoid something sexual in nature…

-Find something that you think is creative/innovative; why did you think so? What could you learn from this 'thing' that would relate to business? i.e.

how it was created, what purpose it serves; what problems it solves; did it break rules? (which, why, how….)

-You are the head of on student organization in Alfred (reporting to the President of Alfred and the Dean of Students) and you are tasked with coming up with a foolproof plan to battle obesity on the Alfred campus. Develop a plan where you assume the money/time is no object. Develop a plan where money/time is extremely restricted. Finally develop a realistic solution which combines the best of both.

-Apple and Google are generally considered innovative companies. Pick one of them and discuss them in terms of the class material on creativity and innovation. For example: what rules did they break? What problems did they solve? How were/are they different from their competitors?

-"Sustainability leads to innovation"; comment on that statement and describe what companies have done that prove/disprove it. Come to a conclusion.

- Why do organizations have such problems with innovation? How can that be solved? You are the president of your own entrepreneurial organization—how are you going to foster creativity/innovation?

-You yourself come up with a question that will force you (yourself) to think about creativity and/or innovation.

-Create a logo and motto for yourself. Explain how that motto/logo will help you in your career—remember what a logo and motto are supposed to be and do…

The papers are due two weeks apart during the semester—as described in the syllabus.

4) Small Case Presentations (15 points)—function as the "Mid-Term"

The class will divide into teams of four or five and prepare 1 (one) discussion on a topic concerning creativity and/or innovation. The presentation of the 'answer' will be done in class; no PowerPoints are to be used! Each group is to come up with a way of describing the 'answer' which does not involve a kind of presentation technique that they have used before in a classroom!

Possible subjects might be:

-Think of a company/service/organization/person that has done well in creativity or innovation; describe what they did and why you consider it innovative or creative. What problems did their work solve? What were the business implications? What was/is wrong with it? How is that problem going to be fixed?

-You are all now going through a **very** traditional educational system; brainstorm an innovation that would dramatically change how the system works—for the better of course! How could you use the creativity or innovation texts to start you off?

-The author of the creativity book is a musician—look for how other creative/performing arts can inform or help create a more dynamic business model? What could a service company (for example) learn from a painter? A ballerina? a choreographer? For example find someone who 'revolutionized' his/her field…

-How can you use "mind maps" or "force field analysis" to increase creative thinking?(Michalko, 2006)

-Develop an edgy, fascinating, innovative commercial for the School of Business for Alfred University; I will want to see the mock-ups (storyboards) and/or a rough video.

-Look at a particular industry or market segment, and list up all the 'rules' of that industry/segment. Think of an innovation based on breaking one or more rules; see how many rules you can break—what kind of innovation comes out at the other end…?

-Examine an industry that *must* be creative to survive: fashion, TV commercials, dance companies, etc…How do they harness creative energy? In other words how are they continually creative? What do they do? What is their 'secret'?

-At one point Kodak was very innovative; first—explain what George Eastman did that was so innovative? What rules did he break? Why? How did he change the nature of photography forever? Then: what happened to the company? They went from a large number of employees to only a fraction—almost bankrupt. At what point could they have changed and saved the company? What would you do if you could make them innovative again? Or—you could look at Xerox…

Or you can choose some other topic concerning creativity and/or innovation. I will ask each team to 'present' their assignment to the rest of the class in some way. To make clear: The teams will NOT use PowerPoint for the presentation—you must think of some other way; the more you can engage the rest of the class, the better.

5) Semester 'Presentation' – functions as the Final Exam

The class will divide into four or five teams (depending on the number of students—could be the same teams as for the 'small' assignment) and complete the following assignment: ….you tell me.
Your final assignment will be to develop some way for you to demonstrate that you understand and can use the concepts we learned in this class. You will develop the project, the assessment method, and the content of the final assignment. **You cannot use PowerPoint presentations, nor can the final assessment be a written/oral test. Each group is to come up with a way of describing the 'answer' which does not involve a kind of presentation technique that they have used before in a classroom!**
Show me you grasp creativity/innovation and be creative/innovative in how you show me. All students must also assess their fellow teams' efforts as part of the final assessment.

In other words—I am having you think about and comment on creativity and innovation three times: the first time your response is more traditional (a written paper); the second time a little more creative; the third time I am expecting tremendous creativity! You **might** be able to link the small assignment with the final assignment…if you think that would work for you, come to see me as a group.

B) Course Grading Scale

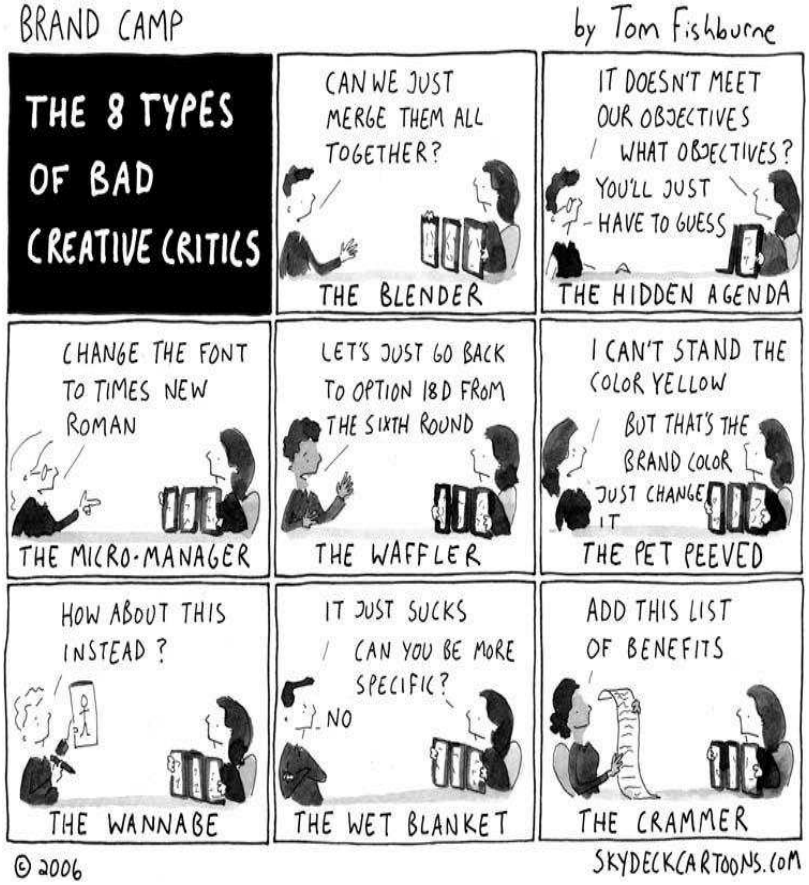
The Imagineering Workout Homework	10 points
Small Case (acts as the 'mid-term')	15 points
Written assignments (10 points each)	50 points
Class Participation	5 points
Final Presentation	20 points
Total	100 points

(Credit to Weber, 1999)

Grading scale for Graduate course:

A 95-100
A- 90-94
B+ 87-89
B 83-86
B- 80-82
C+ 76-79
C 70-75
F 0-69

- Students are expected to take responsibility for earning the grade they want from the class. It is my responsibility to guide the students in the exploration of the concepts, techniques, knowledge and skills associated with creativity/ innovation issues and support them as they work towards the grade they want. You will be increasingly expected to take charge of your education; I will not continuously inquire about whether or not you understand the material and can apply it. If you do not understand a point brought up in class—it is your responsibility to ask. I will be more than happy to go over anything we cover in class as many times as you need in order to 'get it', but ...you have to tell me.



(Credit to Fishburne, 2006)

C) Course Outline—see the appendix on page 57-59

ALFRED UNIVERSITY'S STUDENT CODE OF HONOR

We, the students of Alfred University, will maintain an academic and social environment which is distinguished by Honesty, Integrity, Understanding and Respect. Every student is expected to uphold these ideals and confront any student who does not. Keeping these ideals in mind, we, the students, aspire to live, interact and learn from one another in ways that ensure both personal freedom and community standards. (Alfred University, 2015)

Information about the Honor Code is available in the Student Handbook

- **Students with Disabilities:** If you need academic accommodations because of a disability, please inform me as soon as possible. See me privately after class, or during my office hours for a confidential conversation. To request academic accommodations, students must first consult Special Academic Services (Crandall Hall located on Main Street, x2148; SAS@alfred.edu). SAS is responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students requesting accommodations, determining eligibility for accommodations, and helping students request and use appropriate accommodations.

Grading:

No course with a grade lower than B- will count toward a graduate degree. If a student earns a grade lower than B- in any of the courses required for a graduate degree, the course must be repeated. A second grade lower than B- in a repeated course may be cause for dismissal from the program.

"To ask, and appear ignorant is a moment's shame. To not ask and remain ignorant is a lifelong shame."
(Old Japanese Proverb)

(Credit to Ziegler, 1995)

Correspondence
Bruce B. Rosenthal BFA, MBA, PhD
Director, School of Business
Alfred University
Alfred NY 14802

Author's Brief Bio

Bruce B. Rosenthal has a BFA from Syracuse University, an MBA from Rutgers University and a PhD from the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia (USP). He has worked on Wall Street, as the Chief Representative for a division of Dow Jones in Tokyo Japan, and as a graphic artist/fine artist in an entrepreneurial enterprise which he operated in Europe and Asia. Dr. Rosenthal has been the Director of the MBA program at USP, the Director for the Business Department at Chatham University in Pittsburgh PA and is currently the Director of the School of Business at Alfred University in Alfred NY. In other words, Dr. Rosenthal has extensive experience in both the corporate business world and the 'right brain' world of the creative arts. Having been a businessman on three different continents extending over several decades Dr. Rosenthal has an acute understanding of the needs of employers and businesses around the world – and creativity stands out as a necessary skill for all businesspeople in all disciplines. Dr. Rosenthal has called on his experience in both fine arts and business to construct a course called "Creativity and Innovative Thinking" which he has taught successfully at both Chatham University and Alfred University at the graduate level. The class stresses creativity as a tool for finding and solving problems in non-traditional methods, and has been highly praised by students who have found the lessons learned to be very practical and very effective for their future careers in business.

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Appendix 1—Course Outline

	Date	Text Assignment	Teaching Topic	Assignment/ Due
Week 1	January 23	The Business Playground (TBP):Chapters 1,2	**Breaking the Rules: 19th century art in France**	Do research on a musician, dancer or filmmaker who 'broke the rules'; give an example of what rules s/he broke and how his/her art moved forward from there. Due: Jan 30; I will choose students at random to explain.
Week 2	January 30	TBP: Chapters 3,4	**"It's all happening at the zoo…" The Power of Assump-**	**"How can I marry Princess Stephanie…?"** (Due: 2/6)
Week 3	February 6	TBP: Chapters 5,6	**How companies think: Blue Ocean Strategy Zig-zag**	Paper 1 due
Week 4	February 13	TBP: Chapters 7.8,9	**Guest Lecture: Crosby**	

Week 5	February 20	TBP: 10, 11, 12 + Conclusion	**Images: Chanel; Mercedes-Benz, Axe** Guest lecture: Oates	Paper 2 due
Week 6	February 27	TTFOI: Intro + Chap 1,2	**Guest Lecture: Daedelus Company - Innovation**	Team 'small case' presentations
Week 7	March 6	TTFOI: 3,4	**Guest lecture: Napolitano**	Paper 3 due; Team 'small case' presentations
Week 8	March 20	TTFOI: 5,6	**Seeing What's Next**	Team 'small case' presentations
Week 9	March 27	TTFOI: 7,8	Zig-zag (cont)	Paper 4 due; Watch Sir Ken Robinson video: "Changing Paradigms"; be prepared to comment/discuss April 3
Week 10	April 3	TTFOI: 9,10	Zig- zag	
Week 11	April 10	TTFOI: 11; The Imagineering Workout: pgs 1-37	Zig-zag	Pick two techniques from TIW; document how you used those techniques to complete your final project (Ten Points); Due: 4/24

Week 12	April 17	TIW: pgs 38-78		Paper 5 due
Week 13	April 24	TIW: pgs 79-119		
Week 14	May 1	TIW:120-159		Final Projects due in class; (20 points)
Week 15	May 8			