

HANDS-ON CREATIVE PROJECT

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COURSE:

**SPECIAL TOPICS IN THEATRE HISTORY:
HISTORY OF COSTUME FROM 1800 TO 1970**

(ENGL 486)

SUMMARY

Students have the option to do either a creative project or write an academic paper that expands upon and further explores an aspect of course content. The creative project illustrates a concept or thesis through various physical media that may be technology-based, craft-based, or graphic, and includes a 3–5 page written report.

“Give students the space to care ... they flourish when given the chance to be creative.”

- Catherine Bradley

GOALS

- Offer students an opportunity to creatively demonstrate their learning
- Provide students with a safe space for innovation and free expression
- Use multiple modalities to help students explore a topic of their choice in-depth

STEPS

- 1 Students receive assignment [guidelines](#) and see examples of assignments done by previous students.
- 2 Students submit a written proposal for a project they want to do. The proposal must be submitted by a specific date via the Assignments tool in myCourses.
- 3 The instructor provides written feedback on the proposals in myCourses and guides students toward a project that balances intellectual curiosity with manageable scope.
- 4 Students research their topics and create their projects. Creative projects must include a 3–5 page contextualizing statement and, at students' discretion, a log of the number of hours it took to complete the project.
- 5 Students regularly share their progress during class time so that no one leaves the project to the last minute.
- 6 Students submit their assignments at the end of term. Both academic papers and creative projects are displayed at a class vernissage over one class period.

ASSESSMENT

The assignment is worth 20% of the final grade.

Creative projects are assessed according to a four-criterion [rubric](#): (1) assignment specifications, (2) concept, (3) execution, and (4) content.

The instructor refers closely to students' proposals to ensure that students did what they set out to do.

Assessing creative work can be challenging and it is important to share assessment criteria with students. See Catherine's [Assessment Guidelines for Instructors](#).

READY TO TRY IT OUT?

HERE'S SOME ADVICE ...

- Offer one-on-one brainstorming sessions for students who are struggling to identify a topic to work on or medium to work with.
- Insist on students submitting proposals because students often need help with scaling back a creative idea or adding substance to it. The proposal also helps students formulate a trajectory for their project.
- For planning purposes, suggest students break down the project into two aspects: topic and medium.
- As students begin the research/creation phase, be open to late modifications to the projects either in scope or intention.
- Value creative projects and academic papers equally by displaying all assignments at the end-of-course vernissage.

BENEFITS

- Students can experiment with media that may be new to them or advance their existing artistic skills.
- Students work on topics and with media they care about, which motivates them to apply themselves.
- Students can choose to take a break from standard academic work while still remaining productive.
- The assignment can create a safe space for students to express who they are and what matters to them.
- Students report a great sense of accomplishment and pride in their assignments, and enjoy the vernissage at the end.

CHALLENGES

- Some students underestimate the time it takes to do a rigorous creative project. Therefore, instructors should create systems, such as completing a proposal and having regular check-ins, to encourage students to do these projects in a "slow and steady" manner.
- Assessing creativity can be challenging. In some instances, projects are beyond the instructor's own sphere of expertise. In such cases, a colleague who is knowledgeable in the area is consulted.

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