

THE CREATIVE PRACTICE: Cultivating Habits of Mindfulness

FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR (FRS-004), 2 UNITS P/NP, CRN 25487

WINTER QUARTER 2017 - Wednesdays 4:10-6:00PM Hunt Hall 166

Instructor: David de la Peña, dsdelapena@ucdavis.edu, 530-752-4082
office 111 Hunt Hall, hours: Thursdays 1-3:30 pm, or by appt.

Description: Why do we have such a hard time focusing on our work? Why do we feel blocked when we need to write? Why do we let self-doubt keep us from making art and beauty? This seminar addresses these questions by diving into a mindful practice of writing and creating in a supportive group environment. The course establishes a structure for students to begin a habit that fosters self-awareness and banishes anxiety by creating in spite of resistance. The heart of this course will be individual work in the form of journaling exercises and in exercising the student's chosen creative practice. Students do not have to have any self-identified talents in writing, drawing, knitting, etcetera; a desire to pursue some creative outlet is sufficient. Classes will offer supportive and safe space for sharing our successes and roadblocks. The end of the class will culminate in brief presentations showcasing the work done over the course of the quarter.

Learning Objectives: This semester will provide students with tools to find satisfaction in their work and in their personal creative endeavors. Students will learn to overcome anxiety, writer's block, and creative resistance by maintaining a mindful practice of writing and creating. The course will help them develop effective communication skills and prepare for lifelong learning in their academic careers and beyond.

Format: The seminar will meet for 2 hours each week. In class we will discuss student experiences with their daily practices, we will do mindfulness exercises, and the instructor will introduce topics relevant to the themes of the class. Additionally, students will be required to keep a morning journal and to practice their creative art (writing, drawing, painting, etc.). During the quarter, students will also report back on their reading of one of three books: Natalie Goldberg, *Writing Down the Bones* (2016); Twyla Tharp, *The Creative Habit* (2006); or Steven Pressfield, *The War of Art* (2012).

Grading: Students will keep journals and document their creative practice. They will also present and discuss a selected book, and will be expected to participate in all class discussions. At the end of the quarter, they will make a brief presentation to the class on a creative work. Grading will be based on their book presentation (15%), class participation (15%), submission of daily journals and creative work (50%) and final presentation (20%). A grade of "pass" is awarded to undergraduate students for work that would receive a grade of C- or better (at least 70%).

About the Instructor: David is an architect, urban designer and Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Design. He studies how citizens create and adapt cities and how designers engage with them to build places collaboratively. He is currently working on two books that highlight innovative approaches to participatory design in the U.S. and in Spain. His current creative projects include self-built community centers, urban farms, community gardens, the UC Davis Solar Decathlon, and the UC Davis Sustainable Living and Learning Community. He also teaches a summer abroad course on urbanism in Barcelona. He earned his M. Arch from UT Austin and his MUD and PhD from UC Berkeley.

Course Schedule:

| | |
|--------|--|
| Jan 11 | Introduction to class and participants; make journals |
| Jan 18 | The Body – Awareness & Meditation 4:10-4:30 Exercise 1 – Breathing, thinking, monkey mind 4:30-5:00 Sharing about the experience, about hesitations 5:00-5:40 Main exercise – Guided body scan 5:40-6:00 Wrap up – application for your practice |
| Jan 25 | Art – Seeing 4:10-4:30 Ex. 1 – Blind Contour 4:30-5:00 Sharing back about week, progress 5:00-5:40 Ex. 2 – Still Life Drawing 5:40-6:00 Wrap up – seeing as being present |
| Feb 1 | Verbal – Hearing 4:10-4:30 Listening 4:30-5:00 Sharing back about week, progress 5:00-5:40 Memory exercise 5:40-6:00 Wrap up – active listening vs writing |
| Feb 8 | Show and Tell Session with Food & Feedback |
| Feb 15 | Student Guided Session – The Body (Twyla Tharp group) |
| Feb 22 | Student Guided Session – Art Practice (Cameron & Pressfield group) |
| Mar 1 | Student Guided Session – Writing Practice (Goldberg group) |
| Mar 8 | Closing thoughts, reflections, evaluations |
| Mar 15 | Final Show and Tell Show with Food – location tba |
| Mar 22 | Finals week – no class |