

Creativity, Play, and the Imagination across Disciplines

Teachers College, Columbia University May 26-28, 2011



Call for Proposals

Creativity, Play, and the Imagination across Disciplines

Conference at Teachers College, Columbia University (May 26 – May 28, 2011)

525 W. 120th St. New York, NY 10027

Website: <http://blogs.tc.columbia.edu/creativityconference2011/>

Contact: Nick Sousanis: nsousanis@gmail.com or Suzanne Choo: ssc2146@columbia.edu

Creare – v. Latin. The act of creating; to make, to produce, to give birth to new meaning.
 “A path is made by walking on it.” Chuang Tsu

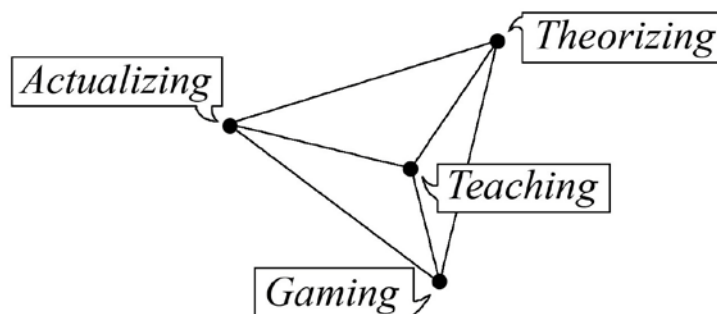
In the spirit of Creativity, Play, and the Imagination, this interdisciplinary conference seeks to bring together educators, artists, scholars, and game-makers from all disciplines to reflect on and experience creativity as a central site for learning and everyday living.

By providing a space for participants to come together and share creative practices, processes, and products, the conference aims to facilitate creative discovery and promote interdisciplinary collaborations so vital to expanding our perspectives. To this end, this conference seeks to blend theory and practice, as Wallace Stevens wrote of poems, “not ideas about the thing but the thing itself,” part of the world and not about it.” In exploring content and concept, the conference will be a forum for constructing. Rather than flat, one-directional presentations of information, this conference places an emphasis on a dialogue among people and an interaction of ideas across disciplines in order to bring forth new possibilities. This then embodies the notion of *creativity* which requires *imagination*, an openness for possibilities or as Maxine Greene (2007) says, “a passion for possibilities – what might be, what could be” (2). It also involves *play*, a space to explore possibilities.

The conference is organized in conjunction with **Game Show NYC**, an art exhibition of games that expands the concept of an art show by making the enjoyment of art an active and educative experience (see www.gameshownyc.com for more details). By orchestrating this conversation between conference and exhibition, we envision an intersection and interaction of people and events that will continue to grow and bring forth new possibilities long after the events themselves are concluded.

Call for proposals

In this conference, we imagine topics of discussion around, between, and within the following four broad strands, which we might visualize as being represented by four points of a tetrahedron:



- 1) **Theorizing:** philosophical conceptualizations regarding creativity; the relationship among knowledge, reason, imagination, and creativity; the relationship between creativity and ethics; deconstructing disciplinary boundaries and theorizing inter-disciplinary thinking.
- 2) **Actualizing:** processes of and approaches toward creating; the connection between creating and propensities such as meta-reflection, tolerating ambiguity, and curiosity; and how creative orientations – new ways of seeing – can be fostered in everyday living and formal education.
- 3) **Teaching:** considerations of curriculum, assessment, and pedagogical strategies for educating for creativity; examples and proposals for promoting creativity in the classroom that go beyond “teaching to the test”; and discussions on forms of creative assessments in schools.
- 4) **Gaming:** explorations of ways in which an activity can be rendered playful, joyful, mysterious, and full of surprises including role-playing; exploring a series of “what ifs ...”; the role of chance and choice; and strategies for transforming classrooms into “game spaces.”

Ultimately, these are guide posts for proposing YOUR OWN interdisciplinary and playful excursions that relate to the conference themes of creativity, play, and the imagination.

Format of Interactions

We’re thinking of conference as convergence, a conversation bringing together educators, artists, scholars, and game-makers, to confer, converse, imagine and play together to celebrate and promote the joy of learning. Attendees come together seeking new perspectives, a comingling of ideas for common purpose, with the aim of enabling creative leaps. This conference will provide an opportunity to broaden our own practices and perspectives by learning from one another in playful creativity and creative play.

To this end, we encourage innovative modes of presentation that rely less on lecture-style presentations and more on dialogue, interaction, and creating together. In the interest of promoting uncommon levels of interaction and in the spirit of the concurrent Games exhibition, we ask that participants envision their presentations as involving game-like characteristics such as immersive experiences, collaborative learning, a quest or journey of exploration, playful dialogues etc. We list a few examples here, not as boxes we want you to fit within, but as springboards to inspire and stimulate your own creative engagements with the conference. Consider:

- ❖ A game-like presentation in which you design a game participants will engage with in order to explore your proposed question;
- ❖ A hands-on workshop in which you design an experiential learning journey to allow you and your participants to explore your proposed question;
- ❖ A role-playing experience in which you design a simulated experience for you and your participants to explore your proposed question;
- ❖ A round-table forum in which you reflect on your thoughts and engage your participants in Socratic or dialogic conversations,
- ❖ A performance or demonstration that makes your inquiry come alive and then engages participants in a reflection or dialogue afterwards.

Please suggest your own format that will engage participants in ways that incorporate the conference themes. We look to structure the conference as unfolding like a game – a space to explore possibilities – and see the conference format itself as emerging from the participation of those attending. To that end, we welcome general contributions toward shaping the creative engagement of this gathering.

Proposal Guidelines

Proposals should focus on a notion, an idea, a question that you'd like to share and explore with others, something you hope to gain new perspectives on, and learn from the synergy of interactions you will have in attending. Think about how you might like to interact and engage with others and questions you'd like to raise and explore.

A working sketch must be submitted as part of the proposal – this might be a short narrative abstract (under 1000 words), a brief description of your proposed format and how you will engage with others, along with full name of presenter/s, affiliation, contact details (email, mobile, address), and any visual materials that help convey your proposal. Please also include any A/V or tech requests, and state a proposed length of time required for your session. You are, however, welcome to sketch an idea not constrained by time, space, or session format, with for instance a game of sorts that plays out throughout the conference and beyond. As stated above, with your proposal we also welcome any other ideas about how this conference might take shape.

Proposals must be submitted through the online submission system before the deadline, Feb 1, 2011, at <http://blogs.tc.columbia.edu/creativityconference2011/>. Please direct questions to Nick Sousanis: nsousanis@gmail.com or Suzanne Choo: ssc2146@columbia.edu

Deadlines for Submission of Proposals

Call for proposals	– Dec 10, 2010 (Online submission system opens)
Deadline for the call	– Feb 1, 2011 (Online submission system closes)
Acceptance letters	– Feb 15, 2011
Attendance Commitment	– Mar 1, 2011
Early-bird Registration	– Mar 28, 2011
Registration	– April 11, 2011
Conference reception	– May 26, 2011

Conference Program

Details of the conference program will be put on our website by March 2011.

<http://blogs.tc.columbia.edu/creativityconference2011/>. In addition to interactive presentations in a variety of formats, the conference will feature invited keynote speakers which will be announced and posted on our website as they become available. Note also, along with the multitude of activities comprising the conference, over its three-week run (May 16 – June 3), Game Show NYC will also feature specific events, which will be posted on the website as they become available: <http://www.gameshownyc.com/>

Conference committee

Ruth Vinz is a Professor in the English Education Program and the Enid and Lester Morse Endowed Chair in Teacher Education. She taught middle and high school students for twenty-three years before coming to Teachers College. Presently, she directs the Center for the Professional Education of Teachers. Ruth is the co-author of several books, “Inside Out, Recasting the Text, Learning the Landscapes and Writing Qualitative Research”. Her book, “Composing a Teaching Life”, received the Richard Meade award for outstanding research published in English education in 1997. In the most recent book, “Becoming (Other)Wise”, Ruth Vinz collaborated with other Program faculty and New York City teachers in an examination of multicultural literature education and cultural criticism as literacy events. Her research interests include cultural literacies, particularly focused on adolescent readers’ practices, constructed and constructing identities of teachers, and traditions and representations of research-in-practice.

Nick Sousanis is a doctoral candidate at Teachers College, Columbia University. His dissertation on “unflattening,” centers on the importance of curiosity in learning and will be undertaken entirely in comic book format. Prior to his arrival in New York, he was heavily involved in Detroit’s arts community where among other things he co-founded www.thedetroiter.com, an arts and cultural web-magazine; chaired the **Contemporary Art Institute of Detroit (CAID)**; and served as the founding director of the University of Michigan’s **Work : Detroit Gallery**. Sousanis is also the biographer of legendary Detroit artist Charles McGee. Samples of his educational comics can be seen at www.spinweaveandcut.com.

Suzanne Choo is a PhD candidate in English Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. She taught English Literature in a Singapore high school for eight years and lectured in the teaching of English Literature at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University. Her interests are in multimodality, literature education, global and cosmopolitan citizenship and she has worked as a consultant to various schools and organizations in New York City. In 2008, she was awarded she was the Overseas Graduate Scholarship from Nanyang Technological University, Singapore and was a recipient of the **Education Pioneers Fellowship** in 2009. Her research has been published in various international journals such as English Journal, the International Journal of the Humanities, and the Journal of Curriculum Studies. She co-wrote the book "Reel World Learning: Integrating Media in the English Classroom" which was published by McGraw-Hill in 2007. Her website is <http://poethics.org/>

Professor **Fred Goodman** is a University of Michigan Professor of Education Emeritus now living in Westlake Village, CA. He has specialized in the design of information systems, simulations and academic games for five decades. He was, for example in the 1960's, the chief consultant to the then U.S. Office of Education with responsibility for the design of the decentralized Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC). Starting in 1984, he led a program at the University of Michigan's School of Education called the Interactive Communications & Simulations (ICS) program. For 25 years ICS has been connecting thousands of secondary students in schools throughout the world via computer-aided-communications to participate in term-long exercises like the Arab-Israeli Conflict simulation, the International Poetry Guild, a variety of Earth Odysseys (in which students interact with one another in response to actual trips to various parts of the world that have been taken by ICS-affiliated travelers) and a "character-playing forum" called Place Out Of Time (POOT) wherein students become characters from the past discussing current dilemmas. ICS was honored in 2000 as a Computerworld Smithsonian project. He also has had major responsibility at the University of Michigan for the Master of Arts in Education with Teacher Certification Program (known as the "MAC Program") designed to attract people into teaching from other careers and is the designer of a wide variety of academic games, some computerized, some not, on many subjects. He is the author of several entries in American Educational Research Association (AERA) sponsored Handbooks and Encyclopedias on "Instructional Gaming" as well as numerous articles on the subject.

A writer and educator, **Diane Rosen** is also an artist whose works in paint and pastel explore flux, ambiguity and the uncertainty inherent in all things (see <http://www.rosenart.net>). She has an MA in English Education from Columbia University, NY, and is the recipient of a French Government Fellowship in Painting. Her research interests center on the broadly defined creative process as it complements logically ordered experience, and integrating elements of that process into curricula across disciplines--- following natural curiosity to the random turn and fostering the unexpected journeys that *are* creativity. In 2007, she was awarded the Walter Sindlinger prize for *Excellent Writing in the Field of Education* by Columbia University Teachers College. She is currently an adjunct professor of English at the State University of New York, Rockland Community College in Suffern, NY. Her book *Bringing Inquiry In: A Curriculum Guide* was published in 2010 by SPI (Student Press Initiative), Teachers College, Columbia University.

Teachers College co-partners

- Prof. Margaret Crocco, Chair Department of Arts & Humanities
- Prof. Judith Burton, Art Education
- Prof. Joey Lee, Communication, Computing, and Technology in Education (Games Lab)
- Jessica Hammer, Communication, Computing, and Technology in Education (Games Lab)
- Prof. Frank Moretti, Communication and Education, and CCNMTL
- Prof. Maxine Greene, emeritus
- Prof. Sheridan Blau, program coordinator of English Education
- Prof. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz, English Education
- Andrea Kantrowitz, Art education
- Jondou Chin, Developmental Psychology

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