Course Description

Successful business people approach their problems creatively and happy people live their lives as works of art. In this course we explore the many dimensions of creativity that are important in business and in our own lives. Creativity isn’t a mystical quality with which only a special few are endowed. Practical methods to become more flexible, imaginative, and productive thinkers can be learned by anyone, nurtured in others, and harnessed to create new products, uses, designs, theories, methods, strategies, structures, and other solutions of all kinds. We will define creativity, review the science, and develop our own creative skill set by learning about, experiencing, and experimenting with a variety of approaches.

IMPORTANT: This only works if everyone in the class

1. Is invested in their own and each other’s creative development,
2. Is committed to doing all the work, inside and outside of class,
3. Is willing to take personal risks, and
4. Is an enthusiastic participant in all activities (even when they are hard, seem silly, or make you uncomfortable).

Please think carefully about this, review the syllabus thoughtfully, and take the course ONLY if you are excited to invest the time, energy, and courage required.

Course Objectives

- Define creativity and understand its applications.
- Develop an appreciation for the ability of every individual to become more creative and build confidence in the face of challenges better solved creatively.
- Learn about your own creative style and how to work with those whose styles differ from yours.
- Understand the human characteristics that hinder creativity – habits, routines, assumptions, perceptual blocks, cognitive biases, fear of failure, social influences, etc.
- Learn to overcome the barriers and leverage our innate creative talents through practice and the use of specific techniques.
- Experience and critically evaluate formal structures for creative problem solving.
Materials

Readings. I have indicated readings for every class. It may look like a lot, but I promise they are a) almost all quite short and b) carefully curated to enrich what we are doing in class. They are optional, but I have never had a complaint that they are not worth the time!

Videos. These are all easy to find using the links in NYU Classes.

FourSight Thinking Profile. Directly from the FourSight website:

1) Go to ___________________
2) Read the instructions and answer all the questions online (~10 minutes). I will give you your results during our class on teams.
3) Be sure to complete the assessment before our first class!

Criteria for Evaluation

Class Participation (~20%) & Attendance. Because this is a fun and fascinating subject and you have all chosen to be here, I can’t imagine this will be an issue, but just to make expectations clear… I expect you to be fully prepared in each class to discuss assignments, be active in our in-class exercises, and be thoughtful in your contributions and questions. I also encourage you to continue our discussions online.

This course is unusually interactive and very short. What you learn and what your classmates learn will depend to a great degree on your presence and enthusiastic participation. If you have one unexcused absence, your grade for the course will be no higher than a B. A second unexcused absence will lower your grade to no higher than a C. The only excused absences are for religious or civic obligation, serious family emergency or serious illness. If this is your situation, just send me a brief note explaining the matter as soon as you reasonably can. Please do not request exceptions for other reasons.

If you must miss a class, please notify me as soon as you can, preferably at least 48 hours in advance. This is important because I may create teams for exercises in advance and need to know who will be in class. It is your responsibility to review the content you missed. (Lecture slides will be posted in NYU Classes after each session and I will provide a link to a video recording of the class on request.)

Assignments (~80%). There are several small assignments and two somewhat larger ones, due as indicated in the course outline. Most involve completing forms and submitting them in NYU Classes or posting on our Course Blog. Please submit as Word files (i.e., don’t convert to pdf). There are two kinds of assignments:

- Exercises for introspection and practice
- Freshness experiences to shake things up, broaden your perspective, and create connections (a couple are optional)

Due to the subjective nature of creativity and my desire to encourage experimentation, I place most emphasis in grading on how thoughtful and energetic you are in completing assignments (i.e., what you show me you got out of them) and whether you follow instructions. So, please pay close attention to exactly what I am asking you to do and where and when assignments should be submitted.
**Course Blog.** Our course blog is in Blogger. You will use it to submit some of your assignments (including the first). A couple of weeks before our first class I will send an invitation to your Stern email address. When you have it:

1. Click on the “Accept invitation” link in the message.

2. You will be required to sign in to accept the invitation. Please make sure your profile includes your full name, so we’ll know it’s you when you post.

3. Once you accept the invitation, the invitation link will no longer work. The next time you want to visit, you can find our blog in either of these ways:
   - Go directly to the blog link –_____________________________– or
   - Go to [http://www.blogger.com/](http://www.blogger.com/) and click the link that lists your blogs. You will see ours listed as Creativity 2016 EMBA.

4. To contribute, click “New Post,” top right. (If it won’t let you post, make sure you are logged in with the same Gmail account you used when you accepted the invitation.)

5. **IMPORTANT:** Check to make sure your name appears at the end of your post. If it doesn’t, please edit your Blogger profile, so we’ll know who you are.

**Deadlines.** If you miss a deadline for a written assignment, I will deduct a half grade for each day (rounded up) it is late. The only exception is for religious or civic obligation, serious family emergency, or serious illness. Just send me a note as soon as you reasonably can. Please do not ask for exceptions for other reasons.

**Communication**

**From Me to You.** When I need to contact you, I will send email to your Stern address. If your Stern email account is not the one you check regularly, please set it up to forward to one you use, since everything for the course will be sent there (including your blog invitation).

**From You to Me.** If you have questions about assignments, please post them in NYU Classes so others in the class can see the answers (or even answer you themselves). Otherwise, email works best. Please include “Creativity” in the subject line and provide your name whenever you send email if you aren’t using a Stern email address. If you would like to meet with me, just let me know and we’ll set something up.

**From You to Each Other.** Please feel free to comment on each other’s posts on the course blog and add other interesting things you find there. If you have additional observations to make or questions about what we have been doing in class you can post it on our NYU Classes discussion forum.

I know that it’s hard to remember to check for posts and additions to our online discussions. Fortunately there are features in NYU Classes and our blog that will help:

- **NYU Classes discussion forums:** Go to Forums and click “Watch” at the top of the page. You will see an option to receive an email either whenever a new message is posted or only when a thread to which you have contributed receives a new message. (If it gets to be too much, you can always unsubscribe.)

- **Blog:** Opt to “Follow by email” on the home page, top right. (Fortunately, it sends only a daily digest or it would be annoying on days when assignments are due!)

Creativity
Honor Code

The Stern Code of Conduct says, among other things, that as members of the Stern community we commit to:

2) Exercise integrity in all aspects of our academic work including, but not limited to, the preparation and completion of exams, papers and all other course requirements by not engaging in any method or means that provides an unfair advantage.

3) Clearly acknowledge the work and efforts of others when submitting written work as our own. The incorporation of the work of others; including but not limited to their ideas, data, creative expression, and direct quotations (which should be designated with quotation marks), or paraphrasing thereof, must be fully and appropriately referenced using notations both in the text and the bibliography.

8) Refrain from behaving in ways that knowingly support, assist, or in any way attempt to enable another person to engage in any violation of the Code of Conduct. Our support also includes reporting any observed violations of this Code of Conduct or other School and University policies that are deemed to have an adverse effect on the NYU Stern community.

You can find the complete Code of Conduct here – https://nyustern.campusgroups.com/ose/code-of-conduct/. The Code of Conduct applies to your conduct in all classes, including this one. Suspected infractions will be referred to the Graduate Judiciary Committee.

Faculty Guests & Research

As part of our effort to learn from each other, from time to time I give other members of the faculty read access to our course website or invite them to join us in class.

In addition to providing rich learning material for you, data from our exercises can also support valuable research that contributes to the on-going refinement of creativity theory. If data from your class is used in faculty research, only aggregate statistical information would ever be published and complete confidentiality is guaranteed. Names are removed from the results before any analysis is performed and no identifying information is ever involved.
## Course Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Background Readings, Videos, etc. (not required, but enthusiastically recommended!)</th>
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</table>
| **1**   | What Is It? Why Do We Need It? Where Do We Get It? Internal Barriers 1: Our Amazing Brains & the Problems They Cause Intro to Challenge #1: Make Something | **Exercises**  
1) Go to the link in NYU Classes.  
2) Read the instructions and answer all the questions online (~10 minutes). I will give you your results during our class on teams.  
3) Be sure to complete the assessment before our first class! | Bronson, Po and Ashley Merryman (July 19, 2010), "The Creativity Crisis: For the First Time, Research Shows that American Creativity is Declining. What Went Wrong – and How We Can Fix It," Newsweek, 156 (3), 44-49.  
Ferguson, Kirby (2011), "Everything is a Remix, Part 3: The Elements of Creativity" (video) Keep watching after the closing credits! |
| **2**   | Internal Barriers 2: Fear & the Voice of Judgment External Enablers & Barriers How to See | **Enablers & Barriers**  
1) Think about yourself at your most and least creative. What activities, habits, environments, and mindsets influence how creative you are?  
| **3**   | Osborn-Parnes CPS: Overview, Formulating the Challenge, Ideation Gallery: Make Something Intro to Challenge #2: Improve Something | **Challenge #1, Make Something**  
1) Create something new that is of value using some or all of the materials in your kit. Make it either a finished item or a fully functioning prototype. (If it’s a prototype, you must be able to show that it works!) The only things you may use that are not in your kit are a) tools to manipulate your materials and b) glue to stick your materials together.  
2) NYU Classes (form): Description of your process and your product.  
3) Bring to class: Your creation. Be prepared to tell us:  
   a) its name,  
   b) how it is new,  
<table>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Creativity in Teams &amp; Your Thinking Style (FourSight) More Idea Generation</td>
<td>Challenge #2, Explore Ideas With your partner: 1) Choose a problem to solve from the options provided. 2) Explore ideas -- Use 2 idea generation techniques to generate solution ideas for your challenge. (If we have time to work on your challenge in class, choose different methods for this assignment.) 3) Course blog: For each technique, tell us a) what it’s called, b) how it works (if it’s new to the class), c) how hard/easy it was to use, d) whether it helped you generate many ideas and, at first look, whether those ideas seem to be useful, e) how well-suited it was to the challenge you are addressing, why or why not, and f) how you would describe the kinds of problems for which it would be most useful.</td>
<td>Newsstand Roundup 1) Choose two magazines on different topics that you have never read before. Look through them carefully. Read at least one complete article from each. 2) NYU Classes (form): Ideas they gave you and connections you see to your work, your life, this course, etc. 3) Bring to class and trade.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Design Thinking Gallery (online): Improve Something</td>
<td>Challenge #2, Online Presentation 1) Review the ideas you generated. Generate more if you’re not happy with your alternatives or don’t have at least 20 or don’t have some pretty crazy ones in the mix. 2) Narrow down your ideas to the 2-3 you think are most promising as a foundation for your solution, either individually or in combination. 3) Course blog: Post a) your Challenge Question, b) a summary of at least one of your solutions with a visual to help us understand how it would work, and c) your candid assessment of its originality and value (including problems to be solved). Be sure to include all team member names!</td>
<td>How To 1) Adopt a playful and courageous attitude. In the two weeks leading up to this class, learn how to do something completely new to you. (See form for more detailed instructions.) 2) NYU Classes (form): A description of what you learned how to do, how adventurous it was, how you learned it, and your experience. 3) Bring to class: What you made (or be prepared to demonstrate what you learned in some other way).</td>
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<tr>
<td>(No class)</td>
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<td>Optional: Eavesdrop 1) Eavesdrop on a conversation. (Booths in coffee shops, crowded restaurants, and cell phone talkers are good for this.) 2) Write a short (~100 words) biography of one of the speakers. Include what you heard, if you wish, but focus on using your imagination to complete the individual. Use a red font for what you know for sure from what you heard, green for what you imagine that seems reasonable, and blue for what you imagine that makes the story more interesting, compelling, or fun.</td>
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Background Readings, Videos, etc. (not required, but enthusiastically recommended!)

- ABC Nightline, “The Deep Dive. One company’s secret for innovation” (video).