Creative Pedagogies in Practice:

Case Studies from Creative Futures Academy at University College Dublin

Editors: **Annette Clancy** & **Victoria Durrer**

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Professor Regina Uí Chollatáin, Principal UCD College of Arts and Humanities
An tOllamh Regina Uí Chollatáin, Príomhoifigeach, Coláiste na nEalaíon agus na nDaonnachtaí, COBÁC

Is mór an onóir agus an pléisiúr é domsa fáilte a chur roimh an fhoilseachán gradamach seo **Creative Pedagogies in Practice: Case Studies from Creative Futures Academy at University College Dublin.** Déantar torthaí na hoibre CFA le blianta anuas a cheiliúradh anseo agus tréaslaím an saothar seo agus an anailís a léiríonn ardchaighdeán na hoibre a rinneadh, le húdair uile na n-aistí leis na baill foirne uile a raibh ionchur acu in dul chun cinn an togra seo. Is léiriú iad na haistí seo ar dhíograis agus ar fhís na mac léinn ar chúrsaí an Acadaimh i gCOBÁC agus osclaítear fuinneog ar fhéidearthachtaí cruthaitheachta agus ceannródaíocha na nEalaíon agus na nDaonnachtaí. Ní mór saothar, fís agus taithí saoil na n-ealaíontóirí cónaitheacha a lua anseo fosta, a chuir go mór le saothrú an mheoin úir a chruthaigh spás agus fóraim úra do mhic léinn agus do bhaill foirne araon, chun tuiscintí nua a fhorbairt ar luach na cruthaitheachta mar mheán acadúil agus mar uirlis chultúrtha. Déanaim comhghairdeachas le gach duine a raibh ionchur acu san fhoilseachán seo agus tá mé ag súil le neart eile tograí tionscantacha sna blianta amach romhainn.

It is a great pleasure to welcome this new publication, **Creative Pedagogies in Practice: Case Studies from Creative Futures Academy at University College Dublin.** This volume attests to exciting and pioneering work which has taken place under the auspices of CFA, funded by the Higher Education Authority's Human Capital Initiative scheme.

CFA is a groundbreaking partnership between three leading creative institutions – the National College of Art and Design (NCAD), University College Dublin (UCD), and the Institute of Art Design + Technology (IADT). Together we are developing new approaches to Higher Education in the creative arts, drawing on our traditions, achievements, and expertise in the creative sector. Importantly, we are also addressing the challenges of future skills needs and engaging with Ireland's vibrant creative sector by innovating in our classrooms and forging new approaches to teaching and learning. As this volume attests, great strides have been made to create new pedagogical contexts which empower our students to be dynamic agents of creativity in a rapidly changing world.

Special thanks to colleagues in the College of Arts and Humanities, especially in the School of English, Drama and Film, the School of Art History and Cultural Policy, and the School of Music, who have made the Creative Futures Academy a reality. Our academics and our support and professional staff continue to encourage our students to explore new possibilities and build on innovative ideas as we embrace the next chapter. The vision and unstinting commitment of our Director of Creative Futures Academy in UCD, Professor PJ Mathews, embodies the essence of engaged creativity in research and in teaching and learning. Aligning with our newly launched UCD **Strategy to 2030, Breaking Boundaries,** we look forward to the application of new and dynamic strategies bringing the current reality of the CFA to the next level. The contribution, experience and vision of our Artists-in-Residence added significantly to the development of a new mindset which created new forums and space for students and staff to better understand the value of creativity as both an academic medium and a cultural tool.

This publication will undoubtedly be an invaluable resource in assessing and breaking new ground in the creative and cultural arts and industries, and we look forward to showcasing the success of the programmes and collaborative networks within the Academy. The unique collaboration with our partners enables us to explore new and exciting avenues which enhance our research while we look at our academic and creative landscape through a new and exciting lens.

I congratulate all involved in this publication and I look forward to many more in the celebration and recording of the work of the Creative Futures Academy.

Introduction: Professor PJ Mathews

Director UCD Creative Futures Academy

As citizens of the digital age, university students today have unprecedented access to information, banks of knowledge, creative tools, data sets, networks of connectivity, and Artificial Intelligence. Simultaneously, they also confront new social and economic pressures—the housing crisis, time poverty, mental health challenges, work-life balance, and commuter fatigue, to name but a few. As educators, there is an onus on us to respond to these changing contexts with renewed pedagogical ambition and care.

As we come to the end of the first phase of work of Creative Futures Academy at UCD, it is appropriate that we consider what has been achieved. This collection of case studies on creative pedagogy reflects on the work carried out by academic staff, supported by funding from the HEA Human Capital Initiative. A key objective of this funding has been to incentivise innovation in higher education provision, building on best practice nationally and internationally. This collection of case studies is conceived with that goal in mind and is offered as our contribution to contemporary thinking on creative pedagogy. Central to the mission is a sectoral focus on student learning in the creative and performing arts, which we share with our partners in NCAD and IADT. A further consideration has been the need to address provision of future skills for the cultural sector and the creative industries—a domain experiencing disruption and rapid transformation in the digital age.

In UCD we responded to these challenges at undergraduate and graduate levels by developing a new BA in Creative and Cultural Industries, and a new MA in Writing for Stage and Screen. A number of additional modules were also devised as enhancements to existing BA pathways. The case studies collected in this volume are drawn from these programme innovations. A key resource informing these pedagogical innovations is the CFA Creative Attributes Framework, a pedagogical tool jointly designed by academics across the three institutions. This framework supports the planning and development of programmes in the creative arts and empowers learners to connect the curriculum to professional practice. Key insights were also gathered from our engagements with the CFA Industry Council, a valued advisory body to the Academy.
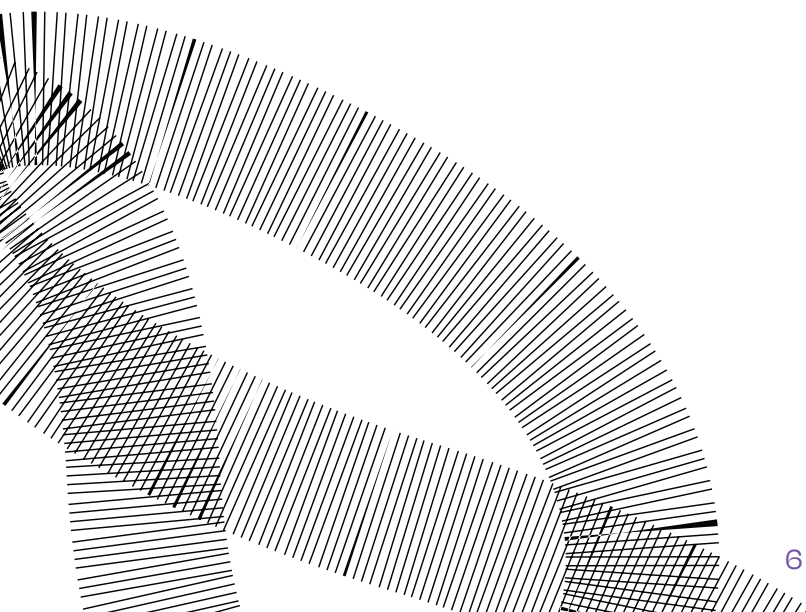
As this collection testifies, our new programmes have generated a rich harvest of stimulating and innovative pedagogical approaches and practices. To read through these case studies is to encounter inspiring accounts of: experiential learning through game play; new approaches to digital literacy; cross-institutional pedagogical collaboration; student self-expression through creative practice; creative deployment of industry professionals in the classroom; the use of the university campus as an experimental lab; the pedagogical value of Artists-in-Residence; the importance of technical facilities to student learning; and the merits of collaboration with national cultural institutions. Strikingly, these testimonies also demonstrate the considerable agility, thoughtfulness and bravery of their authors as they reimagine the possibilities and dynamics of classroom practice.

While acknowledging the support of our funders, it is abundantly clear that the great progress made over the span of this project could not have happened without the dedication, hard work and imagination of the brilliant team of academics who have contributed to the Creative Futures Academy project at UCD. It has been a truly inspirational experience to work with such a gifted team that strives relentlessly to bring the classrooms of the future into being. Our new state-of-the-art facilities—the Trapdoor Theatre and the Creative Arts Research Lab—have also opened up so many new pedagogical possibilities, for which we are grateful.

I would like to thank the wider CFA Academic Development Group, expertly led by Nic Pillai, Elaine Sisson and Bernie McCoy, for opening up the possibilities of inter-institutional collaboration across IADT, NCAD, and UCD. It is tremendously gratifying now to see NCAD students attending CFA electives on campus at UCD (and vice versa), and to have colleagues from IADT co-teach on CFA modules at UCD. These represent the beginnings of collaborative links that are bound to strengthen in the coming times. I am grateful to Louise Allen CFA Programme Director for her support, and to Sarah Glennie, David Smith and Regina Uí Chollatáin for the outstanding collaborative spirit they bring to the Creative Futures Academy. Final heartfelt thanks go to Annette Clancy and Victoria Durrer for their inspiration and skilful editorial stewardship of this volume.

Editors' introduction

Creative pedagogy has been widely explored across all stages of formal education. For those of us teaching in the arts and humanities, we are acutely aware that 'being creative' is often linked to employability across various public policy domains, including enterprise, education, training, and skills. This association is particularly evident from the second level onwards (Robinson et al., 2018; Campbell, 2018). However, creative pedagogies extend beyond employability concerns, often emphasising critical thinking, problem-solving, and interactive, action-based, or project-based learning and assessment. As Selkrig and Keamy (2017) note, 'creative pedagogies can be seen as a meeting place (Thompson et al., 2012) where hybrid pedagogies are developed and default pedagogies are challenged' (p. 321).

Yet, creative pedagogy is much more than this. As these case studies demonstrate, it is also an approach that fosters self-awareness. Our collection reflects on our own teaching practices, exploring how creative pedagogy shapes our identities as educators.

Rather than presenting an exhaustive literature review in this introduction (see Davies et al., 2013; Harris and de Bruin, 2018), this collection focuses on the process of developing and refining our pedagogical approaches. Pedagogy, after all, is not a static set of practices but an evolving process.

As a group of colleagues from University College Dublin (UCD), we came together under the supportive framework of Creative Futures Academy (CFA) to share our teaching experiences, challenges, and successes. While we had not previously collaborated, CFA provided a space for us to connect, reflect, and experiment with innovative teaching methods. Teaching, as we know, is both messy and joyful. Even when we feel confident in our subject matter, the classroom remains an unpredictable space—a complex interplay of cultural, intellectual, social, psychological, and emotional dynamics. Despite this, opportunities for educators to come together, share, and critically examine their teaching practices are rare. Academic journals, exam boards, and staff meetings offer limited space for such deep reflection and dialogue.

Over the course of two workshops in 2023/24, we discussed our beliefs about learning and considered how our students might describe their classroom experiences. We shared moments of joy and inspiration in teaching, as well as the challenges we face. Through writing, reading, and discussing one another's reflections, we deepened our understanding of our own and others' practices—while also confronting the difficulties of writing about pedagogy itself. CFA, with its emphasis on cross-institutional and cross-disciplinary pedagogical approaches, provided a collective and supportive space to experiment with and develop novel teaching methods. Through collaboration, we gained greater insight into our shared commitment to engaging creatively in our teaching.

With this in mind, this collection focuses on the educator's perspective. The case studies capture our enthusiasm for our subjects and the sense of play many of us incorporate into our teaching. The emotional dimensions of teaching and learning permeate these case studies. What emerges is the recognition that educators need administrative contexts that provide a sense of safety to challenge the pedagogical traditions of their disciplines (Robinson et al., 2018). Stepping beyond these boundaries requires an engagement with anxiety, which is 'an integral part of learning, whether in the role of tutor or student' (Vince, 2010, p. S30). With adequate containment, anxiety can become a productive force for creative learning. Containment, in this context, refers to 'an overall design or structure for learning' (Clancy, 2019, p. 179). As evidenced in these studies, our colleagues have considered not only how to design meaningful learning environments for students but also how to navigate their own anxieties as educators, using them as opportunities for growth, embracing the classroom as a place of learning for student and educator alike.
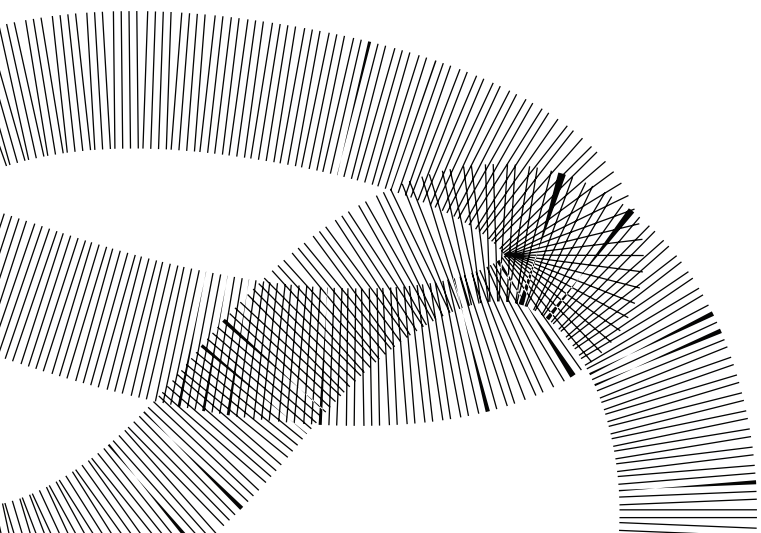
Contributions

The case studies are grouped into three thematic sections: **Playing through Disciplines, Making it Real,** and **Fostering Collective Space.**

Playing through Disciplines

This section explores the role of interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity in creative pedagogy. **Fullam** describes a module that employs video games as a framework for critical and cultural studies. Using the game-making tool Twine, the module bridges arts and humanities with computer science, engaging students through gameplay, research, and creative design to emphasise experiential learning and digital literacy. **Comyn, Fama, and Snow**—two UCD literature professors and a studio-based lecturer from IADT—detail a pilot module that replaces the traditional literature essay with a creative model–making assignment. The module integrates art-student mentors, fostering transdisciplinary peer relationships between IADT studio-art students and UCD literature students. The case study highlights the value of studio-based learning, collaboration, and 'thinking-through-making'. **Moran** explores a songwriting module that expands students' capacity for self-expression. Balancing music theory with creative writing, the module emphasises collaboration, peer learning, and hands-on engagement through in-class exercises, homework assignments, and guest artists.

Making it Real

This section presents case studies focused on experiential learning. **Clancy** teaches people-management by integrating professional actors into the classroom. The approach highlights the emotional and political dimensions of leadership, emphasising reflection as key to transformational learning and challenging traditional, rational management education. **Mathews** details a module designed to cultivate creative skills in English, Drama, and Film students. By integrating real-world creative processes, sector experts, and self-directed projects, the module foregrounds the creative process and employs reflective journals as an assessment tool. **Humphreys** outlines a module on film programming that incorporates industry professionals. Students engage in a group project to design and present a double-bill film programme, gaining practical insights into industry roles and the intersection of academic learning with professional practice. **Durrer** reflects on the inaugural year of Cultural Policy in Context, a module where first-year students use the university as a 'policy laboratory,' devising cultural policies that support student culture and creativity. Her case study highlights the personal and individualised nature of teaching cultural policy.

Fostering Collective Space

This final section emphasises collaboration and the importance of creating supportive spaces—physically, administratively, and emotionally—for both teachers and learners. **O'Halloran**, interviewed by Clancy, discusses a screenwriting module focused on mentorship and collaboration. Developed with screenwriter Mark O'Halloran and film scholar Nicolas Pillai, the module integrates peer review and personalised feedback to support script development. **Murphy and Pillai** reflect on the establishment of the **Creative Arts Research Laboratory (CARL)**, designed to foster creative work among students and staff. Their case study examines the integration of practical spaces within existing university structures and the emergence of a community of practice. **Pillai** explores the hybrid graduate module **Creative Approaches to Graduate Research**, co-taught with Mathews and Collins. The module encourages students to engage with research dissemination through various creative forms, emphasising trust, vulnerability, and community in learning. In the final case study **Collins** highlights the importance of creative pedagogies in providing students with 'space to grow' by supporting diverse learning styles. Through collaboration with two National Cultural Institutions, she designs inclusive assessments that foster emotional engagement with poetry.

Collectively, these case studies offer a snapshot of creative pedagogy in practice within Creative Futures Academy at UCD. They illustrate the power of creativity in fostering deep learning, interdisciplinary collaboration, and reflective teaching practice. Ultimately, this collection affirms that creative pedagogy is not just about teaching methods—it is about cultivating spaces where both educators and students can experiment, take risks, and develop their practice.

Annette Clancy and **Victoria Durrer**

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Playing Through Disciplines

1: Twine Tales:

Bridging Arts and Science through Video Games and Interdisciplinary Pedagogy

Dónal Fullam

Introduction

This case study outlines Video Games: History, Technology and Culture, a 5 credit Creative and Cultural Industries module for undergraduate students in University College Dublin, with an average enrolment of 56 students. The module introduces video games within a framework of critical and cultural studies and incorporates tools that enable students from humanities and computer science disciplines to engage in creative technical practice. Video games combine visuals, audio, narrative and gameplay mechanics to form holistic experiences, and this module presents an overview of these creative elements, along with an exploration of the technology used to combine them into cohesive, interactive experiences. This study focuses on the module assignment, which is split into two parts: a short essay, and a digital component created in Twine, a free, open-source tool for telling interactive, nonlinear stories. Students who take the module come from across the university, but primarily from arts and humanities, and computer science. The incorporation of an accessible game making tool into assessment bridges a gap between the research focus that arts and humanities students are immersed, and the technical skills focus of computer science students, through a framework of research-led creative practice.
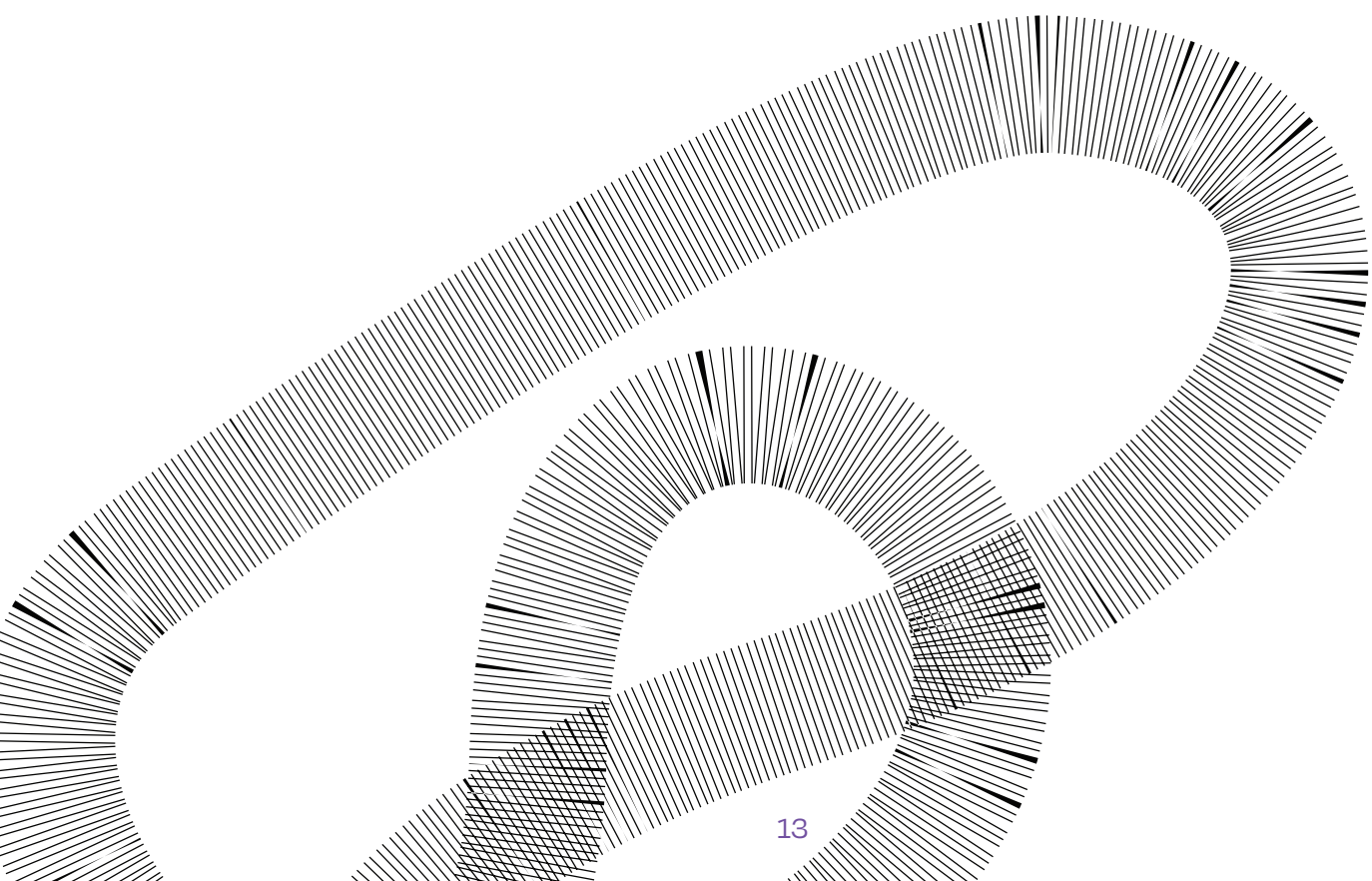
Teaching context

This module was designed by Donal Fullam to introduce a critical, cultural and technological framework for understanding video games, motivated by my experience teaching a module called Music History Since 1750. Central to the design of Video Games: History, Technology and Culture is the explication of theoretical concepts with practical engagement through gameplay, leading to an assignment that includes a creative practice element. Just as students taking music history courses listen to compositions from various eras to understand stylistic developments and socio-cultural contexts, students in this module study but also play video games spanning different genres, platforms, and eras, and then use this experience to design a short game.

By immersing themselves in gameplay experiences, students gain firsthand insights into the theoretical principles discussed in lectures and readings, which inform their own research and design. For example, discussion about flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) is complemented by playing flow focused games; discussion about narrative structure is complemented by playing narrative driven games; and engagement with games about warfare is complemented with exploration of the connections between the video game industry and the global military–industrial complex. Students build on these in-class activities to research material for a short essay on a similar topic, which is then incorporated as the research component for a technical and creative project built using Twine. Twine games consist of 'passages', discrete chunks of text that are linked together to create branching interactive stories, which are published as HTML files, and can be opened in any browser. Twine is particularly accessible because students do not need to write any code to get started, but stories can be extended with images, video, audio, variables, conditional logic, CSS, and JavaScript.
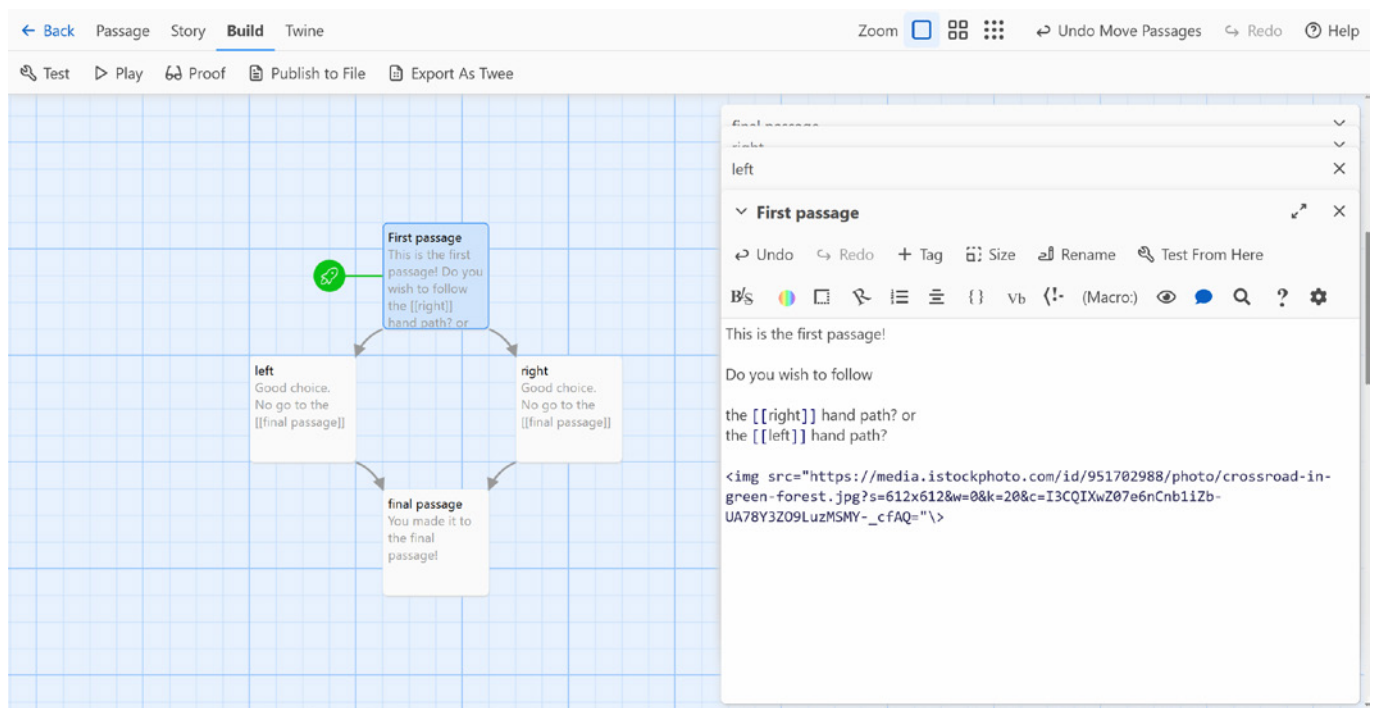

Figure 1.1: Twine user interface, and passage building
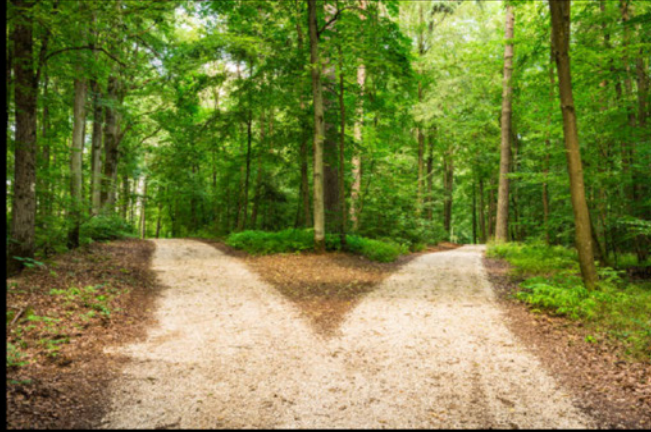
Figure 1.2: Twine player view, in browser

This in-class discussion and gameplay > research and writing > creative/technical design pipeline works well to engage students coming from very different disciplines by creating a framework that bridges some of the gaps between arts and humanities and computer science pedagogical approaches. It also provides a suitable range of methods so that students who are studying computer science, and who may not normally write essays, can potentially focus more on the technical component, while students who are immersed in research and writing have the option to focus more on the discourse component of the assignment. At the same time, interactive in-class activity and a creative practice assignment framework enables students from both humanities and computer science disciplines to reach across what is sometimes thought to be a pedagogical and methodological divide (Bernard, F. St., 2022).

Humanities subjects traditionally emphasise critical thinking, interpretation, and understanding of human culture, history, literature, and art. Pedagogical methods generally include close reading, discussion, and essay writing. Interdisciplinary connections are encouraged, but they tend to be within humanities fields. Computer science generally focuses on computation, problem-solving, programming and automation, usually with more focus on applied disciplines than the humanities. Pedagogy often involves hands-on coding, logical reasoning, and project-based learning, with interdisciplinary integration typically occurring within STEM fields. A core design principle of the module and assessment is to introduce students from both sides of this divide to research methods and technical tools that can be combined in valuable ways.

Literature review

The integration of video games into university curricula represents a relatively new field of techno-pedagogy that seeks to leverage the interactive and immersive nature of digital games to introduce novel learning opportunities across various disciplines. deWinter et al, (2010) argue for the inclusion of video games in educational settings and assert that they can be used to teach multiple literacies, including written, verbal, critical, visual, and technological. They also caution that video games are not neutral tools but are inscribed with ideologies and biases that must be critically examined within the classroom. The 'Video Games and the Humanities' series (Aghoro et al., 2024) provide a multidisciplinary approach to video game scholarship, focusing on the interplay between games and academic theories. This series highlights the reciprocal influence between video games and academic fields, proposing a dynamic relationship that augments both areas.

Twine can be incorporated to encourage creativity and engagement in higher education settings. Ferns (2020) discusses Twine's role in the creation of personalised storytelling that allows learners to move beyond passive consumption to become producers of media and culture. Ferns also highlights how Twine can be used to combine creativity and coding, as students gain insights into storytelling techniques, but also HTML, CSS, and JavaScript, forming a bridge between technical and creative elements that encourages students to think holistically about digital artefacts.

Video game pedagogy in the humanities tends to focus on incorporating games into the curriculum to foster critical understanding of the medium itself, just as other media forms are incorporated within various fields. As video game techno-pedagogy continues to develop, the boundaries of learning and engagement can be expanded by incorporating gameplay, but also by incorporating accessible game making tools into the teaching and assessment repertoire. This benefits both arts and humanities and computer science students by merging research, creative practice and technical skills.

Teaching activity

In conjunction with a focus on the medium itself, this module incorporates video games as learning tools in the classroom. An advantage of this pedagogical approach is its inclusivity, enabling active participation from many students regardless of their prior gaming backgrounds, skill or knowledge. Unlike a music history course which may exclude participatory aspects altogether, or else presuppose or rely on a certain level of musical proficiency, a video game module designed in this manner welcomes students with diverse levels of experience, across disciplinary areas.

Through structured gameplay sessions and guided discussions, students develop an appreciation for video games as important cultural artefacts, but also acquire critical analytical skills applicable across various disciplines. This pedagogical approach draws inspiration from teaching Euro-western music history, where auditory experience is paramount. Similarly, in the video game module, the interactive experience is central to the learning process. There are several differences in these approaches though, as picking up and using a generic game controller is usually more accessible than playing an instrument or singing in the classroom. For Music History Since 1750, the interactive components I introduced were generally reserved for 20th century avant-garde compositions that were designed specifically for the purpose of inclusive interactivity. In contrast, students do not have to play specialised instruments or sing to participate every day in the video game module.

Unlike a music history survey module, which may inadvertently exclude those without a musical background, the video game module is generally very inclusive, allowing students from a variety of educational backgrounds and with various skill sets to participate and engage with the material firsthand. Students are invariably very keen to participate, making it very easy to find volunteers to play various games, so that specific aspects can be analysed. The immediacy and participatory nature of this approach means that discussing a complex sociotechnical concept like algorithmic culture can be rendered quite straightforward through playing Minecraft. These in-class activities and discussions are also great stepping stones for students to move towards devising and realising their own projects.

Evaluation

Student progress is evaluated through assignments that consist of two components: a 1000-word essay on a specific topic explored in class, and the creation of a Twine project that includes components that are taught in class. Students are instructed to create a Twine project that illustrates the essay topic in some way, using specific techniques and elements: text, branching paths, multimedia, and variables. The design of a Twine project using these elements is introduced in conjunction with an exploration of the wider video game landscape, and the emergence of the media form as an amalgamation of these creative and technical elements.

Twine is used because of its user-friendly nature, making it accessible to non-technical students, while also being open to more complex technical exploration. It is very easy to begin using the online or download version of the software because the interface is straightforward and visually organised, in contrast to primarily text-based code editors that require knowledge of a programming language. Twine's visual node-based structure and HTML publishing format means that it requires very little technical knowledge to begin creating branching interactive narratives, and to also publish them online. Students begin creating simple stories by connecting passages using visual links and are gradually introduced to the inclusion of more complex elements.

The Twine component of the assignment is evaluated according to how successfully specific elements (branching structure, player choices, multimedia and variables) are integrated, how they are used to illustrate the essay material, and how engaging the overall project is. These evaluation parameters are somewhat fluid - if a student can capably illustrate their research through a well written, engaging, interactive short story, then less complex technical elements can be employed. On the other hand, if a student is more interested in exploring the technical possibilities of the format, their project can be less focused on writing. Both cases require similar research led approach and should illustrate the subject matter explored in the essay through an interactive, choice-based narrative.

Discussion and implications

One of the key strengths of this module lies in its ability to engage cross-discipline students through hands-on, experiential learning, and the leveraging of these in-class class activities as a springboard towards research-led creative assignments. The incorporation of an accessible game-making tool into the assessment framework enables students engaged in different studies to express their understanding and creativity in a tangible, interactive format. The module was designed to include students from subject areas that are often assumed to be detached from each other, by enabling arts & humanities students to be technical, and by enabling computer science students to be creative researchers, and to ultimately transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries. In the classroom, this is accomplished by bringing critical theory of technology and cultural studies together through interactive in-class activity, and in assessment this is accomplished by introducing a research-led creative practice assignment.

Twine is a pivotal tool in this pedagogical framework, serving as a bridge between arts and science students, and the divergent pedagogical approaches employed within different academic schools. Its user-friendly interface and flexible design enables students to explore both technical and creative dimensions of interactive storytelling, and to articulate their research findings and creative insights in a compelling manner. Incorporating Twine within this framework enables students to successfully combine research, creative practice and technical skills, which they can also use as a good foundation to understand the wider sociotechnical systems in which we are enmeshed, and which are explored throughout the module. The concept of participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006) emphasises active engagement, collaboration, and shared creativity. Twine aligns well with this concept, with low barriers to entry, a large network of community forums, and ease of online publishing.

Twine allows students to build branching narratives, and by making choices within the story, players experience firsthand how algorithms shape outcomes. Decisions mirror algorithmic processes - each link represents a computational step, and players experience how their choices affect the narrative trajectory. A hands-on introduction to basic programming techniques in Twine prompts discussion about the structure of computation and the role of algorithms in our lives. How are they designed to influence our preferences and cultural consumption? This framework renders our algorithmic culture (Striphas, 2015) legible and palpable for students, and as they engage with the algorithmic systems that structure our choices within video games, they also gain insights into how these kinds of systems extend to almost every other facet of our lives.

By enabling students to combine research, creative practice, and technical skills, this pedagogical framework fosters engagement across diverse academic backgrounds, and provides a foundation for navigating the complex sociotechnical systems of our contemporary digital landscape. Twine serves as a powerful tool for experiential learning, allowing students to explore the interplay between narrative, technology, and culture while gaining insights into the algorithmic processes that shape our choices and experiences both within video games and beyond. As we continue to expand our understanding of video game pedagogy, this module underscores the potential of interactive storytelling platforms to encourage critical inquiry, creativity, and digital literacy among students in higher education.

Twine advice and final reflections

For educators who may be considering using Twine in their own classrooms, the first step is to go to the website (Twinery.org), follow the tips, and create something straightforward. Once you are comfortable with the basic practical skills, introduce branching narratives, and start thinking about consequences, alternative paths and how different choices can impact interactive stories. Learning to use variables and conditional logic through practical application in Twine opens new creative options but is also a great way to grasp the fundamental structures of computation which form the bedrock for the algorithmic culture in which we are now all entangled. Introducing Twine to students can follow the same sequence.

Designing and implementing Video Games: History, Technology and Culture has been extremely rewarding. The opportunity to engage students in discussion about a medium that they are generally already passionate about and familiar with is always very productive, and the mix of humanities and computer science students opens space for far reaching creative, practical, and theoretical considerations. The location of video games at a contemporary nexus between art and technology presents unique opportunities for students from across the university to engage from very different entry points. Twine is an excellent tool to bridge these points together, through research-led creative and technical project work, within an overall framework of critical, cultural and technological inquiry.

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2: Piloting Creative Pedagogy:

Building Fiction/Model Making in the Literature Classroom:

Sarah Comyn, Katherine Fama & Fiona Snow

Introduction

The pilot project described in this case study explored the value and sustainability of creative assignments for the literary studies classroom through a semester-long process of collaborative research and design. The inter-institutional team was composed of two literature professors from University College Dublin (UCD) and a studio-based lecturer from the Institute of Art, Design and Technology (IADT) with expertise in model making and creative arts pedagogies. Our team worked to rethink lighter-touch models of creativity in the literature classroom: the small creative exercise, the modified final essay assignment. Such smaller scale creative assessments were not yielding guidance, confidence, or transformed learning outcomes for literature students considering creative work. Our goal was to centre, fully support, and rigorously define a creative central assessment for the undergraduate literature studies classroom. The resulting Creative Pedagogy Pilot Program ran across Spring 2023 and was implemented in UCD as part of the Architecture and Narrative seminar the following term. We developed an ambitious final semester assessment that asked transdisciplinary, cross-institutional student teams to translate a fictional scene into a completed model and audiovisual presentation. The form of this assessment complemented the semester's intersectional literary considerations of nineteenth-century domestic space. This case study will recount our collaborative process of creative research and assessment design and our findings.

The starting goal: Replacing the final essay with creative assessment

The work of literary analysis is assessed through a range of analytical modes: classroom discussions, close reading assignments, and shorter exercises including precis, annotated bibliographies, and discussion questions. Most semesters conclude with a longer research essay, which brings together the learning outcomes, required knowledge, and skill sets required of students. While smaller assignments offer variety and skill building, the essay is repeated in most modules across the curriculum and has become a rote, stalled process. Busy students writing several essays in a cramped exam period report finding time too short to advance research skills, incorporate creative thinking, or evolve their writing. We decided to replace, rather than adjust or revise one final essay assignment. Creative written assignments have been offered in the past but have not offered the necessary constraint, scaffolding, or workflow to represent a comparable, clear alternative to the analytical essay. From design your own prompts to syllabus revision assignments, such creative writing options remained unchosen, even by students who had expressed a desire for creative assessments.

We arrived at two goals. The first goal was an immersion in studio processes, allowing the responsible design of a creative assignment that could be reasonably and fairly achieved by literature students in a university setting. Our second goal centred on building a partnership between literature and art students who would collaborate on a module assessment. Guided by art-student mentors, UCD students would represent elements of a literary text in visual or material form.

The incorporation of studio education

To design a large-scale creative assessment, we began by exploring the scope of practices within established creative arts disciplines, and to determine which were appropriate (and achievable) within the disciplinary conventions, module learning outcomes, temporal and material constraints, and skills and experience of students and faculty.

Third-level practice-based programmes in art, design and craft are primarily taught in studios. Studio-based learning in the creative arts is characterised by a number of distinctive modes of teaching and learning including:

- An ongoing process of collaboration and negotiation between lecturers and learners as the means of formative assessment. (Barry, 2014).

- Modularised practice-based assignments running consecutively allow concentrated periods of thinking-through-making. (Davis, 2017)

- Emphasis on the development and process of work, with process work being captured (and assessed) through artists notebooks. (Markussen, 2017)

- Embodied engagement with materials, techniques, is essential for the realisation of novel outcomes. (Kimbell, 1990; Orr, 2007)

- Lecturers and educators who are themselves active creative practitioners pass on their knowledge through an apprenticeship or atelier model of teaching. (Cross 2006)

- Students must become comfortable with doubt and not knowing as foundational modes of creative practice. (Boelen, 2019)

Literary Study and the Studio Intersect

Many of the features above are substantially facilitated by the studio; a space and place of learning that is organised both physically and metaphorically to support all modes of participation necessary for an effective practice-based education in the creative arts (Tasker, 2011). However, the pilot project described in this case study would not have full-time access to a studio, nor was it aiming to recreate the conditions of full-time study in the creative arts[1]. The trimester's 80 hours of independent learning time familiar to literature students, would have to be remade into collaborative research, designing, and building time. Necessary skill sets (from collaborative production, to project management and design and construction skill sets) would be new to students. Finally, formative assessment processes were new to instructors and students; an emphasis on process had to be introduced and quantified through a learning journal.

Rather than recreate studio learning, our pilot aimed to incorporate select studio-based pedagogies across institutions and disciplines, by pairing art and literature students. The transdisciplinary use of such creative pedagogies is described by McIntosh and Warren (2013) and EQ-Arts (2021) as allowing students to encounter risk taking, co-creation and collaboration as part of their learning. However, such transdisciplinary use of creative practices is rarely straightforward, particularly in traditional academic university-based disciplines. Lyon (2011) describes creative arts pedagogies as maintaining a pervasive outsider status at third level as a result of uncomfortable histories between creative arts practices and mainstream academic traditions that are predominantly text-based and disembodied (p.xi). In other words, the literature students would be prepared to research and write rather than make collaboratively, to be graded on product rather than process, to achieve and master material independently rather than engage in a process of experimentation and collaboration.

This pilot aimed to balance the issues above by both embracing creative arts pedagogies at a scale that was achievable for the literary classroom, the Architecture and Narrative module, and campus exchanges; and by taking the time to understand the practice of creative arts education. It was key that selected methods be embedded meaningfully, rather than merely appropriated or introduced without scaffolding. Such aims resulted in a pilot focused primarily on formative assessment practice, which captured the process of thinking-through-making and guided the role of dialogue and collaboration.

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1 UCD Literature students were provided with visits to and use of studio space at IADT, a short commute away. We were also fortunate to have building and art materials supplied by IADT and by a grant from Creative Futures Academy (CFA). Art-partner students supervised project budgets and purchasing and storage of projects, and took on the mentoring/ teaching role of expert creative practitioners.

The pilot process[2]

Week one

Following brief introductions and goal definition, Week one began on the UCD campus with an activity lead by modelmaker Fiona (from IADT), who immediately asked Kate and Sarah (from UCD) to work with the built environment. Fiona had prepared art kits in a box, with supplies for cutting, gluing, colouring, and building. We took new drawing notebooks outside and drew the Newman arts block, attending to scale. Taken at first glance, the 1970 building features a multistorey collection of concrete blocks, piled together around strong horizontal lines. We next came inside and searched out a space to make a model of the building: assessing scale, piling wooden blocks, cutting roof pieces. This felt risky and uncertain for Kate and Sarah; we each would have taken much longer to do the task individually. But working in a group, we played to our strengths, suspended perfectionism, and erected a model of Newman Building in about ten minutes. This exercise modelled the possible speed of construction, rendered decision making explicit, offered a crash course on team work, and perhaps most importantly: allowed us to experience the risky (and fulfilling) feelings of creative practice that we would be asking of our students.

Though we didn't know it in week one, we would decide to have our UCD students repeat our timeline directly, including the modelling introduction. We recommended that students in a 12-week course spend five weeks on the project, with three studio sessions. While this might seem brief, it is both longer than they tend to spend on essays and necessary for a successful project. They followed our timeline, though they had additional work time where we stepped away from the project to address curriculum and assessment development. Their task, like ours, would be to render a scene or site from their fictional text in three dimensional, modelled form. They were encouraged to document their process and decisions, and to make construction choices with relation to the form of their text, spatial theories from the course, and historical contexts.

After this first session, Kate and Sarah recognised the need to document research, ideas, building process, missteps, and decision-making in text, photograph, image, and voice recording. We did this simply, with an iPhone, project notebooks, and a google drive. We made discussion recordings after each session to digest what we'd learned, challenges faced, and stages accomplished. We found that this recording time (and the range of modes) yielded the most insights about both our design process and our course development. We would later ask students to repeat this process of reflection in a project journal.

Week two

Week two saw a first visit to IADT, where Fiona gave Kate and Sarah a tour of the IADT studio facilities. We were immediately struck by one of the first hurdles our UCD students would face: the lack of any student-centred studio space in which to meet and design, build and store works-in-progress. Instantly, the necessity of Creative Futures Academy (CFA) materials grant, and a more robust partnership between both faculty and students. Our students, like us, would need art partners and institutional support to proceed. This, in turn, would open up a range of opportunities for IADT students to act as art mentors and develop relationships with transdisciplinary peers in UCD.

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2   The writing of this case study highlights the ways in which we occupied various roles, both as a team of three educators and at times as individual learners. The three of us worked as peers designing the course, but at times the pilot process notes reflect Kate and/or Sarah's perspectives as learners. As such, the meaning of the word we in this case study shifts throughout.

Fiona presented two short videos which introduced two very different types of miniatures: a set of professionally-finished miniature interiors commissioned by a wealthy patron and permanently exhibited in the Art Institute of Chicago; and miniatures created by an artist from found objects. The two videos prompted us to think about scale and artisanship and how we didn't need students' models to be exact replicas, but imaginative reflections on the spatial and narrative form. Building and design processes would necessitate alternative forms of reading and analysis. Such construction of models requires decision making and the interrelation of literary and material structures. The challenge would be to explicitly demonstrate these translations, to capture them in the student learning journal.

These videos and discussions fed directly into the second half of the day when we began model making with match-boxes.

The videos had us primed to think about these everyday objects as miniature rooms, gallery spaces, or portraits. What was interesting during this exercise was how different the approaches to the exercise were: Kate had done significant homework researching contextual images, whereas Sarah had an idea about the representation of a change in scale and perspective as a visual representation of the growth and rebellion of the text's protagonist. Fiona strategically left the room to gather some materials, which provided us with an opportunity to speak through ideas more fully, finding opportunities in which our individual preparations could meet in a single plan, but also establishing what expertise each of us could bring to the project. This was a moment in which we experienced the opportunities group work presents for students and the crucial need for discussion time and idea development to be built into the assessment curriculum. Having the matchboxes in front of us invited play and encouraged us to visualise our collaborative ideas together. We were all surprised by how quickly we moved from concept to a full prototype and a clear plan for the next stages in our pilot.

Photo 2.1: Week one Project prototype development

With the prototype suddenly sitting in front of us, Fiona asked about the final assessment. We began to negotiate the relation of art object, process records, and an explanatory presentation. In order to emphasise process, we quickly evolved the solution of a graded learning journal and recorded project presentation, leaving the art object intentionally ungraded. The assessment was taking form. Fiona would go on to provide a useful weekly cue, asking at each meeting whether we had produced an assessable output. This also prompted a discussion about how to ensure a move beyond direct representation to a consideration of narrative form in the models.

Week three

Week three began with an introduction to vector drawing and laser-cutting by Fiona, which opened up significant representational opportunities for Kate and Sarah's model, allowing for 3-dimensional aspects which could be used to create shadows and movement in filming the model. We also considered combining our artistic skill sets in constituent models, hand embroidery, drawing and painting.

Fiona prompted the team to think through our artistic and analytical processes by asking which one of the choices made for the model each week mattered. Was each change aesthetic or grounded in textual form or context? This prompt rendered group decision-making processes explicit, and forced Kate and Sarah to articulate how we could encourage students to record decisions and justify choices. This initiated a robust discussion about assessment, course outcomes, and what was reasonable to ask of students. We all discussed the value of the final essay to the literary studies module and the expected time students spend researching, drafting and editing their argument; searching for equivalence in the modelling assignment.

We had to acknowledge that we were already asking students to negotiate teamwork, new skill sets, and an entirely new project form. We concluded that to make this assessment an achievable and valuable replacement for the essay, we needed to constrain the assessment considerably and provide clear guidance and scaffolding to the students. This pushed us to map out the various stages of the model making through a journal assessment for students that would clearly show they were being graded on design deliberation and process rather than the artistic merit of their final model.

The debate we had about reasonable assessment and the competing demands of our students raised the significant challenges creative assessment and cross-institutional collaboration faces in being sustainable.

Weeks four and five

Week four was dedicated to the final stages of model making and filming. We began the day quite anxious about whether we would complete the project on time, but were once again struck by what can be accomplished in a productive collaboration where tasks are clearly delegated and there is consistent communication. We were working in the IADT studio and laser-cutting room and the setting definitely contributed to our success. We had space in which to work, to have our models in front of us, to see each other's progress and to help each other when necessary. This again emphasised the importance of providing space for our students in which they could create and collaborate together.

By week five, our project was physically complete, with the art object finished and a video of our work recorded. We decided to leave the video in rough form, so that what we modelled for students would be intentionally limited. They would see our art project, prototypes, and informal workbooks, but not the finished way we described our design choices and project in the media recording. Kate would use this partial project to demonstrate in class the ways in which the art project itself told very little about the scene, visual translation, or critical readings, arguing for the media recording and notebook as the centre of the project's work and value.

During Week five, Kate drafted the workbook to share with the group. Students using the workbook would write more words than during an average trimester but would focus on discovery and documentation instead of refinement and polish. The workbook included a project guide, a schedule, pre-project planning work, five sets of discussion and research prompts, and feedback questions for students and their art partners. During the Week five group meeting, we workshopped the draft 30 page project workbook, making edits to the language surrounding final assessment, media forms, data protections, and scheduling precision.

We would not grade the art object but would evaluate each team on a recorded presentation of the object, and their processes of research, design, and refinement, as well as teamwork and thoughtful consultation with the art partner. As such, the project workbook had to teach students what we meant by process, break tasks into discrete chunks, encourage consistent, unrefined preparatory writing, drawing, and research work, and anticipate and address likely problems.

The schedule we designed provided a high degree of detail and constraint, providing specific date limits for group meetings, art partner meetups, an ungraded midterm evaluation, a midterm close reading exercise, and a final submission date. We required students to record progress, prompts, and problems on a week-by-week basis. This necessitated more planning than a usual semester and coordination between the two school schedules.
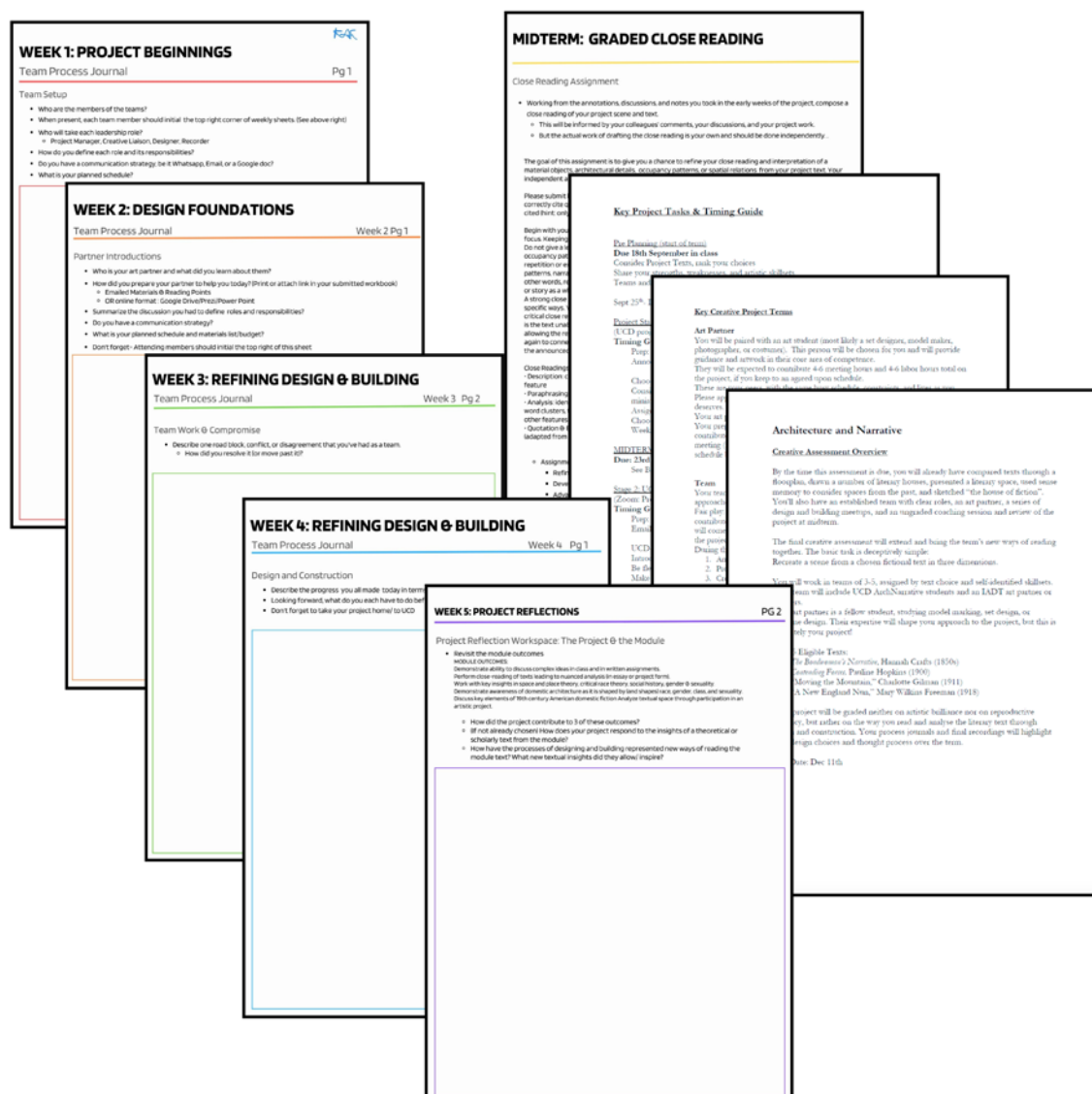

Figure 2.1: Finished Project Workbook Excerpts

Key Pilot Lessons

Interdisciplinary design partnerships

This pilot program has provided evidence that the development of successful creative assessments for the humanities classroom requires robust, transdisciplinary (and in our case inter-institutional) research partnerships that centre training and pedagogical exchange. Effective design required our team to work fully through the timeline and assignment.

Institutional and disciplinary barriers

We entered into the pilot confident that funding for skill development and materials would enable us to design effective creative assessments. But a key outcome was the recognition of barriers to creative assessment. Over the course of the project, we recognised the following institutional barriers:

- Lack of a Studio: While classrooms could be used for group work and even construction, students cannot access space independently for necessary working time or storage.

- Limited Student Skills: Our students had to develop both the construction skill sets required and the confidence to risk their grade on an unfamiliar process. Our students are experienced, independent writer-researchers but have not yet developed teamwork or project management skills.

- Limited Classroom and Independent Time: Our curriculum has limited classroom and expected student hours. Many of our students have long commutes and heavy work schedules; even these scheduled hours often prove impractical.

- Limits on Faculty Time: Most staff lack the time necessary to learn new skillsets, undergo a pilot trimester, and manage new modes of assessment.

Constrained assignment and process focus

As literary practitioners, Kate and Sarah found it tempting to think of creative assessments in terms of freedom and flexibility. But from studio pedagogy, we learned that constraint is actually enabling. Because students are already managing new forms of risk, teamwork, and skill development, we had to temper expectations and constrain the assignment tightly. Rather than simply ask them to record process, we designed a project journal that defined specific elements and exercises in a weekly schedule. We also preselected texts, assigned a short close-reading assignment to identify literary forms, set specific milestone deadlines, specified required meetings, and provided art partners to assist with construction and project management.

Grades would be assigned for process-related components (an initial close reading, the Project Journal, and a brief audiovisual presentation of their findings). The aesthetic accomplishment of the art object would not be graded. Formative assessment on the journal was provided midway through the project, in order to guide their recording process and troubleshoot reported student progress. Students were asked to record contributions as the project proceeded and to write a final self-evaluation.

Curriculum developments

Insights gained from the pilot about how to create a classroom environment in which students feel comfortable being creative have also been extended to the design of smaller scale in-class activities and continuous assessments: a close-reading exercise involving a bingo game for a class on literature and financial crises; the creation of a boardgame that maps 19th century colonialism for a class on settler colonial literatures. Fiona taught us to always be mindful not only of the structural challenges our students face, but also the barriers created by the fear students may feel in response to a creative assignment. Using everyday model-making materials (such as matchboxes or Post It notes) takes away the anxiety of not being able to draw, creates new ways of seeing, and gives students permission to be creative in their own ways. The classes engaging these creative assessments have continued to build enrolments, boost student satisfaction, and generate new pathways for collaboration.

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3: Meeting Student Needs Across an Interdisciplinary Module

Peter Moran

Introduction

Techniques of Songwriting is an interdisciplinary undergraduate module that has been co-taught in every autumn and spring trimester since its launch in Spring 2022. The module is delivered collaboratively by faculty from the UCD School of Music (Peter Moran) and the UCD School of English, Drama and Film (originally Jonathan Creasy, and more recently, Christian Wethered). As an elective module open to students from any discipline, and jointly delivered by two schools within the College of Arts and Humanities, this course attracts a diverse cohort with varying levels of experience in both music and creative writing. This case study outlines how the module was designed to meet the needs of students with different levels of experience and varied academic backgrounds. It also explores how assessments are structured and how delivering the module twice a year has enabled iterative improvements to its format and content.

Module context

Techniques of Songwriting is a 5-credit, Level 2 module. It consists of a weekly two-hour lecture over a 12-week term. The two lecturers alternate weeks for most of the trimester, with both co-teaching the opening and closing sessions. The module currently accommodates 30 to 40 students per trimester. The course began as a pilot project in Spring 2022 with a small cohort of 12 students from UCD, the National College of Art and Design (NCAD), and the Institute of Art, Design and Technology (IADT). With increasing demand, capacity has gradually been expanded to 20, 30, and now up to 40 students. To further address this demand, the module is offered twice each academic year, in the autumn and spring trimesters. This frequency has allowed the teaching team to experiment with various teaching approaches and content, refining the programme to better serve a diverse cohort. Students come from a wide range of disciplines at UCD and beyond. Many study creative writing with little or no musical experience, while others are musicians with limited experience in creative writing. Some students can read and write musical notation or have studied music theory, while others rely solely on their ear and are unable to identify the notes of the musical scale.

As an elective, the module also attracts students from disciplines outside the College of Arts. To date, participants have included students from Economics, Finance, Psychology, Sociology, Law, Science, Mathematics, Agriculture, Computer Science, and other fields.

Figure 3.1: The diverse range of needs which an inter-disciplinary module must serve

Co-teaching an inter-disciplinary module across two schools was a new experience for all involved. The initial pilot scheme was delivered in an experimental format, outside of term time, and to students from multiple institutions. Therefore, participation in this first iteration of the module was voluntary and not for credit. This experimental trial period allowed us to develop the module format and content, and to collect valuable and in-depth student feedback. After one or two trimesters, we had established a very clear idea of what we could expect from a typical student cohort. Most students tended to have a good understanding of which chords belong in the same key, for example, without necessarily being able to explain why, or to name the individual notes in a chord. And while they learned how to play with the rhythms of their words, only a few could go as far as changing time signatures during a song. Armed with this knowledge, we refined how we delivered and graded the module, by including more in-class exercises and homework assignments, and making these continuous assessments a key component of the final grade.

This module was initially designed by Peter Moran to help students who may have limited experience or theoretical knowledge of music or creative writing to expand their capacity for self-expression. The initial module outline was further developed in its creative writing component by Jonathan Creasy.

Teaching activity

Many students who take this module are primarily interested in writing and performing their own songs on stage, and some will already have some experience in this area. However, new songwriters tend to fall into a handful of common traps, tropes, and clichés. There are over-used chord progressions, for example, which beginners will often fall back on, or simplistic rhythms or monotonous melodies, all of which can show a student's lack of experience. One classic example which illustrates the point is the medley Four Chords by the Australian musical comedy group Axis of Awesome. Here, the band demonstrates perhaps the most widely used chord sequence in all popular music, as they sing a single line from dozens of different songs in quick succession (Raskopoulos, J., et al., 2011). By studying this example in class, we warn the students how thoughtlessly resorting to overly familiar tropes can rob a song of the power of personal expression and can instead render it bland or even comedic. But even these basic musical elements can sometimes find their proper place in the songwriter's toolkit.

Therefore, the main objective of this module is not to tell students **how** to write, but rather to broaden their creative language.

The module also touches on the many other contexts, beyond solo performance, in which songwriting skills may be employed, (e.g. collaborative artistic projects, community work, theatre productions, schools' programmes, etc.). To this end, we aim to equip the students with a variety of techniques which can better serve them in a wide range of creative professional environments.

The music component of the module covers four core topics: rhythm, chords, melody, and accompaniment. In these classes, we analyse songs across all eras and genres, including pop, rock, folk, trad, soul, jazz, hip-hop, classical, comedy, musicals and opera.This stylistically rich and varied approach allows the module to connect with the diversity of student interests in the class. One student, when asked for feedback on the question 'How useful did you find the music classes', wrote:

> "It was taught in a very accessible way. It was possibly the first time I had been taught music theory in a way that was easy to understand."

The musical examples provide a model of what good writing looks like. For example, the internal rhymes and alliteration of Gilbert and Sullivan's **Modern Major General** (Gilbert and Sullivan, 1879), Outkast's **Ms. Jackson** (Benjamin and Patton, 2000) can steer the students away from writing simplistic end-rhymes, while the complex chord changes (Stephenson, 2002; Allan, 2020) of songs like The Beatles' **Michelle** (Lennon and McCartney, 1965) challenge the students to add chromatic notes or borrow chords from other keys. Similarly, the melodic twists and turns (Whitesell, 2008) of songs like Joni Mitchell's **California** (Mitchell, 1971) teach students how to create interesting and unpredictable melodic phrases that can span the full range of their voice. And to demonstrate how a song's accompaniment needs not default to a basic guitar strumming pattern, we show how accompaniments can be created to reflect the meaning of the lyrics, with examples ranging from Schubert's **Gretchen am Spinnrade** (Schubert, 1814) to Dolly Parton's **9 to 5** (Parton, 1980) to Bo Burnham's **Welcome to the Internet** (Burnham, 2022).

After studying these, students are given 15 minutes to work together to compose and perform a short piece of music of their own, employing the rhythms, chords, melodic devices, or accompaniments studied in class. To further consolidate these skills, they will then develop these ideas further in their homework assignments. At the end of the trimester, they submit an original song drawing on any number of the creative writing skills and musical techniques taught in class, supported by a written commentary reflecting on their work.

The creative writing component of the module includes a brief history of lyric writing, from Ancient Greece to the modern day, and analyses of the lyrics and poetry of other writers. But the primary focus is to assign specific creative writing tasks each week. These include exercises on object writing, ekphrastic writing, and understanding the classic writers' dictum: 'show, don't tell' (Lubbock, 1921, p. 21).

The students write their weekly exercises in a dedicated writing journal, which serves several purposes. Firstly, it simply generates a larger quantity of ideas for the students to work with, which allows them to pick and choose their best ideas and develop them in more detail later. Secondly, it develops their ability to write on a topic from different perspectives, whether that might be, for example, writing from the subjective experience of an inanimate object, or seeing the world through the eyes of someone of a different age, race, or gender, and so on. Most importantly, a regular and continuous writing practise helps new writers to develop their creative 'voice', their own personal writing style (Pattison, 2009; Rubin, 2023).

For most of the term, classes alternate each week between creative writing lessons and music theory classes (Table 3.1). At least one week is reserved for a special guest artist or an industry representative to meet with the students. The final weeks are given to a review of the students' works-in-progress, in which feedback is offered on their music and lyrics, allowing them time to refine their work before their final submission.

Week 1	Module Introduction and First Creative Writing Exercises	Week 7	Creative Writing Class
Week 2	Music Theory: Rhythm	Week 8	Music Theory: Accompaniment and Layers
Week 3	Creative Writing Class	Week 9	Special Guest Artist or Industry Representative
Week 4	Music Theory: Chords	Week 10	Review of students' first draft (Music)
Week 5	Creative Writing Class	Week 11	Review of students' first draft (Lyrics)
Week 6	Music Theory: Melody and Hooks	Week 12	Review of Module

Table 3.1: Example of an alternating schedule of an inter-disciplinary module

Experimenting with cross-institutional enrolment

This module was originally run as a pilot scheme in which we sought to accommodate students from other Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) within Creative Futures Academy (CFA). In its first iteration it was delivered as an intensive two-day workshop before the start of regular term time, with a review of the students' work organised later in the term. This format was particularly designed to accommodate students from NCAD and IADT, and it was based on other experimental formats which were being explored in CFA's postgraduate modules at the time. However, this format was not best suited to an undergraduate module, as the students needed more time between classes to digest and internalise the course material. Additionally, the schedules of the different institutions were not in sync, and those who missed one day, missed too much of the module.

In the second iteration of the module, the course was delivered through four half-day sessions spread out across a full term, but the time between classes was too great to maintain consistency and again the different institutional schedules proved challenging, and we saw a steep drop-off in attendance from students outside UCD towards the end of term. Following that experience, we returned to the traditional module format of delivering 12 regular weekly classes across the UCD term. From there, our enrolment and attendance increased consistently. Later, through close collaboration with our partners in the other HEIs, we were eventually able to accommodate students from outside UCD within our regular weekly teaching schedule.

Guest artists and industry representatives

In the first year of the module, we invited representatives from the Irish Music Rights Organisation (IMRO) to talk to the students about copyrighting their work and earning royalties. However, since almost all students enrolled in the module were only finding their feet as songwriters – with many just writing their very first song – this industry talk was not ideally suited to this class. What was of benefit to the class were visits by professional songwriters. When we launched the module, we were very lucky to cultivate a relationship with the renowned Irish songwriter Paul Brady, who had just recently been presented with UCD's prestigious James Joyce Medal.

Brady generously listened to each student's work in his own time and then visited the class to share his personal response to each one. However, since most students were so new to the art form, we found that Brady's high level of expertise - and indeed, his self-confessed lack of practical teaching experience - meant that his feedback was of limited value to the students. On the other hand, his personal reflections on his own songwriting process proved much more valuable, offering great insights, eliciting many questions from the students, and igniting lively class discussions.

The following year, we invited songwriter Brían Mac Gloinn of Irish folk group Ye Vagabonds to visit the class. Mac Gloinn, who has much more experience delivering creative workshops, was much more at home in this environment. His workshops introduced the students to his own methods and perspectives on the creative process, and he was very comfortable engaging with beginners and experienced musicians alike.

Photo 3.1: Techniques of Songwriting class with Paul Brady (March 2022)
Photo: PJ Mathews

Photo 3.2: Techniques of Songwriting class with Brían Mac Gloinn of Ye Vagabonds (October 2024)
Photo: Peter Moran

Challenges and opportunities

In our regular weekly lectures, setting the right tone for the music theory content of this module required careful consideration due to the widely varying levels of experience. Students' progress was closely monitored, and detailed feedback was gathered at the end of every trimester.

Interestingly, perhaps because the nature of the module is so personal, being focussed on a form of self-expression, students occasionally become defensive or entrenched in their artistic positions. They may cling to the familiar and, whether out of fear or from ego, they can be slow to move outside of their comfort zones or cross their 'sensitive line' (Whetten and Cameron, 2016, p69). These tendencies are discussed openly and supportively in class, and they are addressed directly by the evaluation criteria set out below.

For example, we have seen several students over the years submit songs containing only the basic chords, and they will seek to defend this creative decision on an artistic level. However, this is usually just a thinly veiled attempt to hide a lack of self-confidence (or in some cases, a laziness or a hesitancy) to grapple with the more advanced techniques. As noted by Clancy (2021) 'Researchers have determined that groups... seek to maintain self-esteem by acting conservatively, when organizational learning may require challenges to group identity (Brown and Starkey, 2000, p.178).'

And since, as Clancy further notes, 'the role of the professor is to give voice to the unconscious dynamics of the group' (2021, p.178), we have come to adopt a two-pronged response to this challenge. Firstly, we demonstrate, through an open class discussion, how many students feel vulnerable or inadequate when trying to express themselves through a new artistic language. Secondly, we can simply refer to the grading criteria and ask the student which of the techniques taught in class are being employed in their song. In this way, they can clearly see how their grades will be affected if they do not rise to the challenge, but at the same time, they are made to feel safe and supported while they do so.

On the other hand, a student can still make a strong artistic argument for deliberately choosing to omit certain of the module techniques in favour of their own ideas.

For example, one student, who was exploring an idea for a children's musical, wrote a song about the story of the Emperor's New Clothes. Since this was a children's song, the student deliberately employed only simple chords, rather than the more advanced chords we had studied in class, but the student was also able to integrate other lessons from the module into her writing. She had learned, for example, how a child's vocal range is smaller than an adult, and she carefully composed the melody accordingly. Then she further explored how the melody itself could reflect the themes of the song. In this case, she based parts of the vocal melody on the notes of a trumpet fanfare, which would represent the emperor's grand entrance, and later used ironically to represent his fall from grace.

Finally, for the less musically experienced students who may need help engaging with these more technical issues, they are encouraged to collaborate with other students in the class who may have more knowledge of music theory. In these collaborations, and writer can still express their ideas in a creative way while a musical partner can help to interpret them in a musical way. The details of their collaboration can then be described in the critical commentary that supports their final submission.

Developing the module content to suit diverse experience levels

The first music lesson is on rhythm. It focusses on the relationship between strong and weak syllables and strong and weak beats. This first lesson is designed to accommodate the less musically experienced students. Lyrics are displayed in a grid representing four beats per bar, with the further subdivision of each beat into four semiquavers (Figure 3.2).

1				2				3				4			
															I
am	the	ve-	ry	mo-	del	of	a	mo-	dern	ma-	jor	ge-	ne-	ral	I've
in-	for-	ma-	tion	ve-	ge-	ta-	ble	a-	ni-	mal	and	mi-	ne-	ral	

Figure 3.2: Displaying the rhythms of syllables in a grid representing four beats, and the further subdivision of each beat into four semiquavers.

The module's pilot scheme showed us how students could struggle to integrate new musical techniques into their personal language, and so new teaching methods were introduced in subsequent terms.

Creasey's creative writing exercises had already proved the effectiveness of dedicating class time to workshopping new techniques, and so a similar approach was adopted in Moran's music classes. These in-class group exercises ensured that students had a firm grasp of each assignment before they were expected to complete the task by themselves at home.

Still, when it came to submitting their final song, not every student could break through that barrier of broadening their personal language. And so, we learned to dedicate the last few classes of the trimester to reviewing the students' songs and offering feedback on their works-in-progress before they submitted their final draft.

While continually reviewing the module's effectiveness, some music topics which proved too advanced for the general student, were approached from a new perspective or dropped from the course. For example, a discussion of modes and scales was dropped from the course, while a dense theory lesson on the construction of major and minor chords was replaced with a simple chart showing how these chords are traditionally grouped together and how those groupings can be subverted for dramatic expressive purposes.

Evaluation

Homework assignments were not initially a major part of the module because the classes already involved a high level of engagement and interaction. However, we soon found that students who were capable of correctly answering questions in class could still struggle to apply that same level of understanding to their final song, and so homework assignments were introduced. As one student wrote in their feedback, when asked if there was anything they would change about the module, the simply admitted:

> "I would have asked more questions about the music assignment because, when I went to do it, I realised I didn't understand it as well as I thought I had in class."

That is why, when further support proved necessary, class time was set aside to workshop the homework assignments in groups before students completed the task at home. In this way, the weekly music assignments and creative writing exercises came to form the bulk of the students' continuous assessment grade.

However, one last technical loophole was discovered when it proved possible for a student to pass the module despite little or no engagement with music theory, so long as they scored highly enough in creative writing to balance it out. To address this issue, the continuous assessment grade was split into two separate components such that students had to pass both the music and creative writing components independently (Figure 3.3).

The final component of the evaluation was the submission of an original song drawing on the techniques taught in class, supported by a written commentary reflecting on their work. This approach ensures that all students are compelled to engage with the course material and not simply fall back on familiar habits, because the written commentary must outline which techniques they have used and to what affect.

Assessment Type	Description	% of Final Grade
Assignment	Students must submit music homework assignments based on topics covered in class.	35.00
Assignment	Students must submit creative writing assignments based on topics covered in class.	35.00
Individual Project	Students will submit a first draft, and then a revised final draft, of an original song with an accompanying commentary detailing which of the module's techniques have been used and how.	30.00
Total		**100.00**

Figure 3.3: Module Evaluation

Discussion and implications

Designing and delivering an inter-disciplinary module to suit the needs of students from different academic disciplines with varying degrees of musical knowledge or creative writing experience has presented many fascinating challenges. As the module has been refined and strengthened through repeated iterations, it has been possible to slowly increase the module capacity to meet demand, and while the intensive days of pilot scheme were initially delivered by both lecturers together, it was soon possible for the lecturers to simply alternate each week, once the module content and format was more firmly established. Finally, the module format had become so standardised by 2024 that, with module capacity continually increasing, additional grading support was provided to keep up with the weekly homework submissions, and the classes were once again opened to students from our partner HEIs.

Advice for others

Student feedback was a crucial part of this process. Each trimester, we distributed printouts in the final class of term and collected hand-written, anonymous responses. This ensured a 100% rate of response when compared to the more usual (and highly unreliable) online student surveys. Starting our pilot scheme with a small class size allowed us to find our feet before increasing the module capacity. Expanding the class-size slowly over several trimesters allowed us to respond effectively to new and unforeseen issues as they arose, rather than being inundated all at once.

On a practical note, any inter-disciplinary module must, of course, draw on multiple lecturers from across different disciplines, ideally with a working knowledge of each other's field. This may mean having two lecturers working together over one or two trimesters to establish the format and content of the module. This dual role is an added cost administratively, but it is very worthwhile if the module is to be run on a regular basis over many years.

And finally, when teaching a creative mode of self-expression, a core philosophy must be to honour the students' current standard and mode of expression, while agreeing that those parts of their identity will not be lost as they push themselves to integrate new and unfamiliar languages. We must remind students that the skills they have developed thus far in their creative journeys are already 'in the bag'. They can draw again on these skills later in life if they wish, but they will not learn anything new or benefit in any way if they only fall back on those old familiar skills while they are in college.

Our goal as teachers, and their goal as students and as artists, must be to ensure that they leave our class with more skills, ideas and experiences than they came in with.

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Making it real

4: Management on Stage:

An Actor-Centric Pedagogical Exploration

Annette Clancy

Introduction

Launched in 2022, University College Dublin's (UCD) BA Humanities in Creative and Cultural Industries is a new four year degree funded by Creative Futures Academy. I teach a new module entitled Managing Culture to a second year class of 33 students, 26 of whom are women.

This module aims to equip students with both theoretical knowledge and practical skills, whether they intend to work independently, start their own businesses, or join an established organisation. It emphasises the importance of understanding the emotional and political dynamics involved in learning and management. Traditional management education often prioritises rational approaches—'the idea that "rationality" - along with its close cousin "efficiency" is the sensible "good guy" that is to be used as the touchstone by managers' (Carr, 2001, p.421). To provide a more balanced perspective, this module addresses topics such as the emotional and political dynamics of leadership and management; the psychological contract; handling difficult people; understanding introverts and extroverts; and developing essential leadership skills.

My experience has been that for students, learning about organisational dynamics is sometimes challenging because traditional methods rely on approaches to learning which do not accurately reflect 'issues of power, anxiety, uncertainty, conflict and difference' (Vince, 2011, p.332) that permeate organisational contexts. In addition 'prescriptive approaches to learning' (p.332) such as role play (Kettula and Berghäll, 2013) or improv (Higgins and Nesbitt, 2021) are attractive for extroverted students but not necessarily for introverts (Cain, 2013). In role play scenarios students tend to be aware that they are 'acting' therefore the emotional connection to the material often remains tenuous. In designing this new module I wanted to introduce a creative way of helping students learn about these dynamics experientially while also ensuring that as many students as possible felt included. I decided to invite actors into the classroom to improvise a scenario with which the students and I could work.

In advance of reflecting more deeply on the class context, I outline below the theoretical context in which the pedagogical model is situated.

Literature review

As an experiential educator I am influenced by the idea that 'knowledge is created through the transformation of experience' (Vince, 1998, p.304). Experiential processes have the potential to lead to transformational learning–the capacity to reflect on the experience, and to learn from it (Finch et al., 2015, Kolb, 1984, Tomkins and Ulus, 2015). I am therefore motivated to create learning environments for my students in which the classroom itself becomes a 'live laboratory' (Allen, 2018, p.307) in the 'here and now' for learning. This is the context into which I invite actors to perform a scenario based on a workplace relationship that I hope resonates with the students and to which they apply their learning during the module.

There is a substantial body of literature on the application of arts-based pedagogies to management learning. These approaches employ a diverse range of media such as choral singing (Sutherland, 2013), jazz (Barrett, 1998), photography (Sievers, 2016), drawing (Vince, 2008), film (Champoux, 1999), and theatre (Beirne and Knight, 2007, Dow et al., 2007, Golden-Biddle, 1993, Greenberg and Miller, 1991,Taylor and Ladkin, 2009). These forms have been used to teach a wide variety of topics such as business ethics (Brown, 1994), management theories and concepts (Champoux, 1999), decision making (Holtom et al., 2003) and whistleblowing (Comer and Vega, 2006). However, as Beirne and Knight (2004, p.592) note 'much of this interest creates theatre as technology, as a corporate resource that can be used to manage attitudes and behaviour, and to deliver trainable and controllable forms of learning'.

My focus here is on working with two actors who use improvisation which is a key aspect of their professional practice (Katz-Buonincontro, 2011). My experience of working with theatre-based practice is that it generates immediate and compelling engagement that is 'relevant to the emotional and cognitive complexities of real-world leadership' (Tawadros et al., 2015, p.337). In this sense, I work with experienced practitioners who are able to respond in the moment to students' experience of their performance. My objective is not to create an environment in which learning is predictable and controllable but to create 'a safe and effective "container" (i.e., an overall design or structure) for learning' (Clancy and Vince, 2019, p.179) in which the unpredictable and spontaneous are surfaced for exploration and understanding.
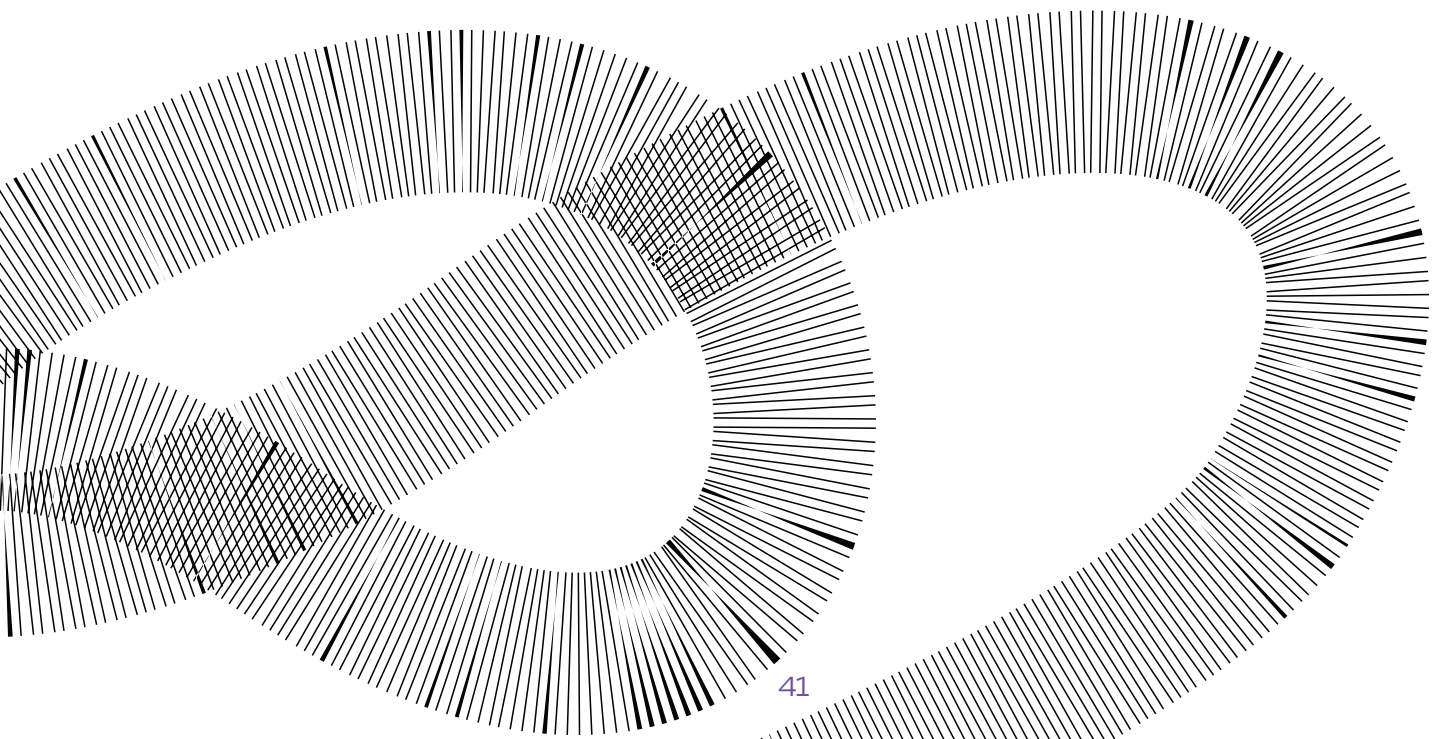
Learning activity

I have built an excellent working relationship with two professional actors[3] David Herlihy and Lesley Conroy who have helped me to design an actor-centric pedagogical method. This is the first time I have worked with them and used this model in an undergraduate class[4]. The learning activity takes place mid-way through a 12 week module.

Drawing on Baol's work (2000) the model involves six stages:

1. I meet with actors in advance of the class and ask them to create characters who have a personal life and a work life and who work in a 'creative organisation'. No script is prepared and no rehearsal of a scenario takes place
2. the actors come to class and improvise a short scenario in a work setting (approximately 10 minutes) while students observe
3. once the scenario has concluded I facilitate a discussion with the students about the scenario and what has been evoked for them by the performance. I then ask students **what would need to happen for the characters to have a 'more productive' encounter?**
4. students make suggestions and the actors listen
5. the actors re-run the scenario taking on board students' comments
6. I facilitate a discussion with students about the second performance

On the day of performance no special preparations are made. Students sit around tables as they ordinarily do and the actors use a table and a chair at the top of the room to create David's 'office' which is in a 'creative agency' in which David and Lesley are partners. I use a PowerPoint slide to indicate 'the agency' on screen.

Lesley knocks on David's office door to remind him about office drinks at the end of the week. David is clearly not happy because he has forgotten to read an email (or has he been left out of an email?) about an important decision that needs to be taken. There is a tense exchange as both realise that they are missing crucial information. David becomes angry with Lesley, raises his voice and shouts at her to leave his office. The scene touches on a number of themes the students and I discussed in class over the previous weeks (the psychological contract, leadership, communication, power and politics).

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3   I am grateful also to John O'Brien who has directed the actors in most of these cases and assisted in working with the actors in creating characters (although not in the instance I describe above).

4   I have worked with both actors and used a similar model at MA level teaching.

During the performance the students are engaged in the unfolding drama. Unlike most weeks, there is complete silence as students fix their attention on the characters. Once the scenario finishes I facilitate a conversation with students about what they have seen and what they felt. This opens up a very engaged discussion around power and emotion in organisations. In particular, students are concerned about how to manage emotion, how to deal with it, particularly the women as they think of their roles in organisations.

Photo 4.1: David Herlihy and Lesley Conroy. Photo: Dunk Murphy

When I ask what needs to happen for the characters to have a 'more productive encounter' Lesley's character is asked to be more facilitative of David's mood and emotions. The discussion is focussed on taking the emotional 'heat' out of the discussion.The actors run the scenario one more time. This time, Lesley is more accommodating of David's feelings but the tension is not alleviated and the communication between both characters does not seem to have been resolved. This scenario ends after three minutes.

I turn to the students and facilitate another discussion.

This time students begin to discuss emotion rules (Hochschild, 1979) and how the invisible architecture of organisations determines what can be said and withheld. It also brings to the surface the unspoken issue about power and gender dynamics. I wonder why so many students suggested that Lesley's character facilitate David's feelings even though he became angry and cursed at her?...I ask students what might be going on? This breaks the ice on a discussion that becomes very moving. Students begin to talk about how they feel conditioned to 'unsee' this type of anger...female students in particular feel that they should 'manage men's feelings' and 'not trust' their intuition. Male students discuss their anxieties about anger in the workplace and how fearful they are that their behaviour will be misinterpreted. The following quotations from their journals give some insight into their thoughts.

Photo 4.2: Students watching the actors perform. Photo: Dunk Murphy

"I immediately criticised Lesley for her delivery and mannerisms instead of focusing on David, who swore aggressively at her and threw a tantrum. When I reflected on it more, I realised that instead of calling out inappropriate behaviour from a man, I blamed the woman...to avoid the apparent issue." – Female student 1

"The feedback the class gave was that Leslie should have entered nicely and should have been more accommodating to David and his emotions, essentially to not rock the boat... However, barely anyone critiqued David's attitude, which showed how women are always expected to bend over backwards or tip-toe around their male partners or co-workers." – Female student 2.

"Apparently, most of us have a stricter and higher standard for females in the workspace. This unconscious double-standards shocked me as an example of performing hegemonic masculinity." – Female student 3

"It really put into perspective how sometimes people do or say things because of something that we initially aren't able to see. It also really conveyed the difficulties we all have with pride and trying to keep face. What was shocking was after the first set of changes we suggested it didn't solve the problem. It was a good reminder that these situations are always more difficult than initially seen." – Male student 4

Photo 4.3: Class discussion following a presentation by the actors. Photo: Dunk Murphy

Evaluation

This module has two assessments – the one that is relevant to this teaching activity is a reflective journal in which students capture their learning from each week's activity. The journal is submitted at the end of the module. All students commented favourably on the class:

> "It made for a very enjoyable and interactive class that helped me understand how to resolve these situations." – Female Student 1

> "I felt as though this class was exceptionally useful because it made the concepts seem far less abstract. I think that I gained a much deeper understanding of the module content through this lecture because I could see how the management concepts could be applied to real world scenarios." – Female student 2.

> "I like the uncontrollability shown in the performance which implies that in reality, even if the management strategies are applied, the manager should understand the difference in the individual that people react to..." – Female student 3

> "Among all of the previous case studies and examples this was the best at putting what we had been learning into reality. Getting actual actors helped to take away the façade of the roleplay in order to help set the situation in reality. " – Male student 4.

I was very pleased at the way students engaged with the exercise. What was distinctive about the work was the deep connection between students and the characters created by the actors. This led to a rich and interesting discussion among the students about emotion and power dynamics. The discussion on gender dynamics was particularly impactful, as this topic had not been directly addressed in previous classes. Nonetheless, it resonated deeply with the students, who spoke eloquently and passionately when invited to share their thoughts. This illustrates the power of this form of engagement to bring forth and support 'difficult' conversations. The work deepened and complemented the previous weeks' intellectual and rational engagement and helped students to understand that both reason and feeling have a role to play in understanding people in organisations. This achieved my aims of (a) creating a 'safe and effective container for learning' (Clancy and Vince, 2019, p.179), (b) introducing students to the emotional and political complexities of working with people in work settings, (c) creating an experiential event in which all students could be involved.

Advice for others

As previously discussed, there are myriad ways of working with artists in the classroom. This project moves a step beyond a simple invitation to artists; it involves actors who are skilled at improvisation, and who are willing to partner in the design of a pedagogical method. In this instance we adapted Baol's (2000) method and added more emphasis on facilitating discussion with the class.

This brings me to an important aspect of the overall design in this particular instance. Working with the emotional and political complexities of organisations requires an encounter with anxiety–(in the example above, students were surprised and anxious about their criticisms of Lesley). The ability to contain students' anxieties is an important aspect of the overall design (Gilmore and Anderson, 2011). Therefore designing the intervention and inviting actors to the class is only one part of the process. Skilled facilitation of students' emotions is the second. Working with professional actors for whom improvisation is a key element of their professional practice is an important factor to consider. Not every actor is comfortable in this space and not every actor is willing to work in the third-level classroom. Also, working with a director is key to the initial stages of creating a model and in supporting actors' work practice.

The work with actors took place mid-way through the module. I had undertaken work with the students on the topics I was fairly sure would arise and I used the weeks after the session to continue this work. In this way, I provided a scaffold by which we could return to any of the topics that arose out of the dramatic work. This is important to consider as not every student will contribute in a group discussion on the day.

The intention of this project is to create a learning experience for students which is experiential, inclusive and creative. Securing students' feedback is an important element of the process to ensure that it is meeting the learning outcomes and adding value for all learners.

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5: Moving out of the Comfort Zone:

Developing Creative Practice Within A Traditional Humanities Curriculum

P.J. Mathews

Introduction

This case study will reflect on the genesis, development and pilot phase of a new second year undergraduate module, Creativity in English, Drama and Film, dedicated to developing creative skills and fostering the production of creative outputs/artifacts by students taking the English, Drama and Film BA Humanities degree at University College Dublin (UCD). This is a five credit module with an average class size of 25 students. This face-to-face module is delivered as a two-hour class over a twelve-week trimester. Learning formats include workshops, seminars, peer-to-peer group work, lab-based learning, and self-directed learning.

The focus of the module is on the processes of creative production and collaboration across the three subject areas of English, Drama, and Film. Students learn by:

- engaging with academic staff, content creation experts, artists-in-residence and guest speakers from the creative industries;

- responding to a bespoke funding call based on real-world expectations;

- completing a mock funding application based on that call;

- producing the creative output pitched in the funding application;

- presenting their creative work at a showcase in the final week of class.

- consolidating their learnings in a reflective journal

Indicative creative outputs include: a performance, short film, original piece of creative writing or art work, podcast, zine, online exhibition, programmed event, research project/ critical engagement.

Teaching context

This course was designed to offer students the opportunity to experience a practice-based module in the context of a largely academic-focused humanities curriculum offered at UCD. In designing this module I was motivated to make space for students to mobilise and develop their creative skills across a range of disciplines relevant to the creative industries. A key consideration was the access that students now have to a wide range of creative tools with the ubiquity of smart phone technology. Furthermore, a high percentage of English, Drama and Film students have a deep interest in, and experience of, creative activities and practices outside their formal studies. Many are keenly involved in student societies in the areas of drama, music, film and tv.

This module allows students to 'learn by doing' and to develop practice-based skills and knowledge. As Beetham and Sharpe (2013) point out:

> "In a digital age, the opportunity to 'learn by doing' has become more accessible than ever. Technology allows for simulation, experimentation, and real-world problem-solving, all of which help learners acquire and apply knowledge in a hands-on, immersive manner." (p. 88)

Assessments evaluate student creative outputs but also their engagements with, and reflections on, the creative processes they have experienced. Many of the students taking this module will find employment in the creative sector. This course affords them the opportunity to learn from creatives, and to generate portfolio work orientated towards the creative industries. Students with a lesser investment in a pathway towards the creative industries benefit from the development of transversal skills in the creativity domain. The module aligns with and enhances more traditional academic offerings, and builds confidence in students to experiment in the development of their creative practice. The process of student peer-to-peer showcasing of work raises the level of creative achievement across the entire group.

Over the course of my academic career my teaching has been mostly based on my research in the field of Irish writing and culture. My assessment strategies have tended towards conventional essay/exam assignments. In developing this module, I was motivated to move beyond conventional 'chalk and talk' approaches and to leverage my own creative experience. The challenge I set was to draw on my creative practices as a musician, theatre director, tv script writer, and executive producer, and my knowledge of the creative industries, to develop a new pedagogical approach to creative process.

Literature review

The literature on human creativity is vast with important contributions from most fields and disciplines. As Sternberg and Kaufman state, creativity is often defined as 'the ability to make contributions that are both novel and task appropriate, often with an added component of being high quality, surprising or useful (2018, p.xviii). This approach to creativity is very much aligned with the methodologies of the psychological sciences. Within arts and humanities, a more circumscribed approach connects creativity with original human contributions to the creative and performing arts. In this domain there is a developed sub-field which focuses on definitions of creativity, empirical measures of creativity, and whether creativity is an innate talent or a quality that can be nurtured. The work of D.J. Running is exemplary in this regard with its attention to categories of creative acumen such as, product-based, process-based, and performance-based creativity (2008, p.41-48).These latter considerations have informed the design of the module under examination in this case study.

In matters of pedagogy, the former psychological approach has been in the ascendant for some time now as educators focus on the value of creativity as a transversal skill that can enrich all fields of human endeavour. As Wang, Zhang, and Pan note, 'Creativity has been identified as one of the 21st century learner's essential talents and the key to success in higher education' (2023, p.1). Livingston observes that college students now have ever-expanding access to information, data, knowledge, and networks of interaction and collaboration (2010, pp.59-62). This paradigm shift, he argues, requires university educators to respond with new pedagogical approaches. Although recognising the value of creativity as a transversal skill in this manner, the main raison d'être of this module is to allow students to develop creative work in the cultural domain. As Many of these learners will progress after graduation to careers in the creative sector/industries there is a pedagogical emphasis on real-world learning. 'In such settings, learners engage with real tasks that have real consequences, facilitating deeper and more meaningful learning' (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 2000, p.34).

Caution should be exercised in relation to the development of new pedagogical approaches that seek to mobilise creativity, and by extension, culture, for economic expansion and unsustainable growth. Recent work by Justin O'Connor reminds us that 'culture is not itself an industry, nor is its function to produce "jobs and growth" or "catalyse innovation"' (2024, p.1).His work is a timely reminder of the importance of creativity in addressing the challenges of social transformation:

> "Culture is how we remember the past and imagine the future. It is part of how we become free individuals in a democratic society." (2024: p.228).

Considering this, the development of creativity as a catalyst for promoting student thinking and decision making is key a consideration in the design of this module.

Teaching activity

As outlined in the introduction, this module is set up to allow a number of complementary pedagogic processes to develop simultaneously over the course of the trimester. These include creative skills development, engagement with real-world creative processes, learning from sectoral experts, and self-directed creative production. In week one, students are introduced to the core teaching team that will mentor and support students over the course of the trimester. My role as module coordinator is supplemented by the work of my Digital Content Support colleague, Dunk Murphy. Dunk's role is to offer technical and professional support to students as they execute their projects. His expertise is in the field of digital content creation including film, audio, animation, photography web design and graphic design. Students have access to the Creative Arts Research Laboratory (CARL), a dedicated space which supports the technical requirements of digital content creation. Classes also take place in the Trapdoor performance space, a state-of-the-art black box theatre with 145 retractable seats. These classroom settings give students experience of industry-standard facilities in film-making, digital content creation, script and text presentation, and the performing arts.

In weeks two to four of the module, students engage with a real-world funding call, modelled on those issued by the Arts Council of Ireland. They are tasked with analysing the call and completing a detailed funding application form, due for submission in week four. Students must concisely describe their proposal, artistic goals, challenges, schedule of work, target audience, and thematic relevance. They are not required to address finance and budget in this exercise.

Simultaneously, learners gain valuable insights from a number of guest speakers who are distinguished practitioners in the creative industries. Coming from a wide range of disciplines and backgrounds, these guests impart valuable advice and perspectives on their own journeys from graduation to employment in fulfilling careers in the creative industries. Much of this learning is in the form of life lessons, personal insights, challenges met and overcome. It provides students with practical insights into the necessary skills and characteristics for a successful career in the sector. This builds on work in relation to Creative Futures Academy Creative Attributes Framework, introduced at the start of the module. This framework was designed to highlight the key attributes, skills, and personal characteristics that are critical for success in creative and professional fields

Past guests have included: Jenny Jennings, Co-Director THISISPOPBABY Theatre Company, Gráinne Humphreys, Director Dublin International Film Festival; Joe Csibi, Director RTÉ Concert Orchestra; Sandrine Ndahiro, Editor, Unapologetic Magazine; Simon O'Connor, ex-Director Museum of Literature Ireland. These highly experienced industry guests offer invaluable insights into career pathways, employer expectations, creative collaboration, creative start-ups. Guest interactions are informal and anecdotal, with plenty of opportunities for questions and relaxed exchanges with students.

From weeks five to twelve, the emphasis shifts to a more concentrated focus on student project work. Time is set aside for students to work on their creative projects in Trapdoor and CARL, with input from Dunk Murphy and myself. Students can chose to work alone or in groups, and they are encouraged to share expertise and engage in peer-to-peer learning.

In week nine, students present in class on the progress of their work to that point, with three weeks to go until the final showcase. Dunk and I, along with an invited industry guest offer feedback on the presentations and brainstorm with students on the project challenges yet to be met. This is a valuable 'sense-checking' session in which students can problem-solve, gameplan, work on logistics, and make final modifications to their projects in the run in to the project showcase.

In the final week, projects are turned in, running orders set, and final logistics are worked out for the project showcase in Trapdoor on the last day of class. On the day, students introduce their work and present it to a small invited audience of peers, academic colleagues, and industry guests. The module ends on a high, as students embrace the sense of accomplishment of having their work showcased before their peers and invited guests.

Evaluation

In this module there are three assessment components:

1. project proposal (20%)
2. creative project and reflective journal: (70%)
3. attendance (10%)

The assignments are designed to test the student's engagement with the creative process from ideation to project proposal to project completion. A key component is the reflective journal submitted the week following the showcase, in which students record their learnings on the creative journey they have just completed.

Project Proposal: The funding call set by myself, outlines the brief for the project, with ten thematic focus areas. Indicative themes include: celebrating campus life; creativity in the digital age; art and activism; UCD's literary heritage. Students are required to engage with one or more of the specified themes. They have the choice of producing group, linked, or individual creative projects.

Students complete a detailed mock application form, responding to thirteen questions. The questions are designed to elicit considered responses in relation to project details, artistic goals and ambitions, proposed schedule of work/ project milestones, research materials, intended audience, and thematic relevance. In week five, students are given feedback and grades on submitted proposals.

Creative Project: Completed projects are showcased in a live event in Trapdoor Theatre in week 12. This marks the culmination of the trimester's work and provides an opportunity for students to have their work seen by their peers, the teaching team, and invited guests. The expectation is that the projects will be completed to a high standard and showcased in a professional manner, yet in a supportive environment. Students learn to present their work professionally, with a set running order, and with a commitment to collectively delivering an engaging 'show' beyond their individual contributions.

Reflective Journal: The week following the showcase, students submit a reflective journal (1500 words) with a specific focus on their **creative process**. They are prompted to report on three main points, as follows:

- Your learnings as you moved through the stages of the project. It is good to report the challenges, frustrations and failings as well as the eureka moments.
- How did you fertilize your brain? What did you learn from the guest speakers and mentors? What resources / readings / talks / films inspired you and influenced your thinking and methods? What did you learn from your peers in class? Include a 'Works Cited'.
- Learnings: What worked or didn't work? What would you have done differently? What skills have you acquired? What have you learned about your own creative potentials? What creative attributes did you develop? Are there any projects or career pathways that you would like to pursue arising from this project?

Although this module encourages students to produce high quality creative work, there is a central focus throughout on creative process. The final project and reflective journal are very much regarded as companion pieces, and are awarded a composite grade. In this module students are encouraged to take risks and move outside their comfort zones. In the main, projects are completed to a high standard. However, if a student fails to deliver on the promise of their proposal, the journal offers the opportunity for reflection on what went wrong and what might have been done differently. Reported learnings and insights of this nature can potentially merit a high grade for the module, despite shortcomings in the project execution.

Discussion and implications

This module is currently in its fourth iteration. It was born out of my personal desire to pivot my teaching in the direction of creative practice. It felt like a risk to move outside of my traditional teaching area and methods but it was a risk worth taking. In the beginning I had fears that students would not respond to an atypical module like this, that they would not take the work seriously, and that engagement would be a challenge. Happily, the opposite has been the case. In the reflective journals students regularly report high satisfaction with the module, particularly welcoming the opportunity to learn and be assessed in a different way. Many point to the real-world nature of the module as a positive. In the words of one student, 'I enjoyed the fact that there were actual things at stake'. Others remark on the importance of the module as a confidence-building exercise in relation to their own creativity. To quote from another student journal: 'it helped me to be confident, not to be scared anymore of bringing my creative side out'. Creative skills development and learning to work with other creatives are also highly regarded in student reflections.

It has been gratifying to see students respond to this module so positively. Student engagement has been first-rate: class attendance is high and assignment completion rates are excellent. Almost all students have produced well-achieved creative outputs. A marginal cohort struggle to succeed at the task. In most cases, this is due to over-ambition rather than delinquency, and valuable lessons are learned and reported. On the other end of the scale, one student who completed a short play for this module subsequently developed it for professional production. It was performed as part of the programme of the 2024 Dublin Fringe Festival. In this regard, the module has shown potential as a useful entry point for learners into the creative industries.

Some early challenges have been overcome. We are fortune now to have state-of-the-art facilities available in CARL and Trapdoor, and excellent technical support from my colleague, Dunk Murphy. Also, my confidence in embracing the uncertainties of a creative journey with a group of undergraduates has grown with each iteration.

Advice for others

A module like this which aims to move learners out of their academic comfort zone to embrace creative practice needs to offer them freedom to experiment with guardrails and supports. Bringing in guests from the creative sector to share 'warts and all' experiences gives students permission to fail as well as offering advice on how to succeed. Establishing a clear brief for students in the form of a funding call document also gives them conditional freedom and establishes clear expectations. It is vital that they learn about project management as well as ideation and skills development. Mastery of creative process rather than the production of excellence should be the focus. Establishing a showcase event for students' work clearly signals to them that their work is being taken seriously, and creates an exciting learning experience that will have a lasting impact. It aligns also with the expectations of the creative industries where hard deadlines are the norm.

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6: Cinema Creatives:

Engaging Students with Professional Practice

Gráinne Humphreys

Introduction

For the past 30 years I have worked in film programming, most recently as the Festival Director of the Dublin International Film Festival (DIFF) where I programme an annual showcase of 120 films and events. I have taught classes in film appreciation for a variety of institutions but the last ten years I have focused on industry related teaching working with filmmakers of all ages and experience on festival and exhibition strategies. I graduated from University College Dublin (UCD) in 1994 with an MA in Film Studies. During my time at UCD, I gained four years of experience in film programming through the UCD Film Society, a student organisation that curated and screened a programme of films three evenings a week and produced student short films.The invitation to participate in the first years of Creative Futures Academy (CFA) offered an exciting opportunity to return to UCD and engage with third level students in a concentrated focused way. This paper will outline the origins of the Cinema Creatives Module, its structure of weekly guests and the learnings from the module and next steps.

Cinema creatives

Cinema Creatives is a module offered by Creative Futures Academy within the School of English, Drama and Film. It is an elective module for first-year undergraduate students and is scheduled during the autumn trimester. The first year of the module took place in 2021 and I have now taught the module four times.

The class size ranges from 121 to 145 students with approximately 2:1 ratio between female to male students. The students are usually between 18 –22 years of age with very few mature students. Informal surveys reveal that the students are already writing screenplays or have taken part in filmmaking and approximately 10% of students have made short films. The students are very familiar with contemporary cinema and recent releases but less knowledgeable about older titles and especially Irish cinema. Classes are held in a large lecture theatre in the Newman building on the UCD campus. Tutorials are held in smaller rooms and all film screenings and viewings are viewed by video links. Students receive career resumes as well as a selection of media interviews, both print and online for all guests and are encouraged to view films in advance of classes.

Research & design

For the past seven years, I have organised an annual film event called First Frame as part of DIFF, designed for film students at this level from across Ireland. The event brings students together for focused conversations with film professionals, who share insights into their careers and creative processes. Most participants are undergraduate film production students, typically in their second or third year. The event has been highly successful, serving as an effective model for students, lecturers, and filmmakers alike.When designing Cinema Creatives, I returned to this structure. However, as the module is taught as part of an undergraduate degree at first year level and has a broader range of students, there was an opportunity to introduce students to the wide range of careers in cinema from writers, directors and editors as well as distributors, cinemas, film critics and festivals. I wanted students to see the multiple entry points; to see the different approaches taken by my guests and the leaps and missteps of a creative career in development.

For years I have been asked what my job entails and what exactly a film programmer does, and I have glibly replied that a film programmer is the person who has the remote control on a Saturday night. The Cinema Creatives module was an opportunity to create a teaching plan around film programming, which would allow me to both analyse my own approaches; and to support and nurture this skill within an educational framework. It was also hugely important that the module would have a group project, where students would work together to propose and debate the merits of different films before finding an agreed double bill. This group dynamic is a significant element in film programming, and I wanted to create an assignment which would have industry led elements such as designing a pitch document, identifying target audiences and marketing plans. I wanted the students to analyse their own film taste and celebrate their own knowledge and use this knowledge to design a film programme for others.

Photo 6.1: (L) Ailbhe Keoghan, (R) Gráinne Humphreys. Photo: Dunk Murphy

Overview of the module

The structure of the module is 12 weekly conversations followed by a tutorial. I wanted to focus a class around 10 career interviews with filmmakers and film creatives, such as critics, curators, distributors and marketing professionals. In advance of each class, students watch a key film text and prepare questions for the guests. The format of the class is as follows: guests outline where their interest in cinema started, their educational or training background, their first films, their career trajectory, and current projects. These conversations include film clips illustrating key moments, skills, or approaches.

Because the module features new contributors each week, I aimed to design assignments that were both manageable for first-year students and focused on key learning objectives. The learning objectives for the module are as follows:

Students will be able to

- identify and describe key jobs/roles in film production, exhibition, and distribution.

- define the job of film programming and its importance to the film industry. They will execute (with a group) their own short programme.

- develop collaborative working skills, written and oral communication skills, visual analysis skills.

- have a rich understanding of the Irish film industry, including elements they may not have been familiar with like producing, programming, and exhibition.

The assessments for the module are centred around the presentation and reception of cinema, while also introducing students to the creatives involved in film production.

There are three main assessment points in the module:

1. **Reflective Diary**: Students are expected to maintain a reflective learning journal throughout the module. This diary will allow them to document their learning process, reflecting on the taught material, classes, tutorials, and assignments. For me, as the module coordinator, the reflective diary provides valuable insights into the students' understanding and engagement with the course. The reflections are submitted weekly throughout the module and graded at the end of the module.

2. **Group Work Assignment**: In this collaborative assignment, students present their choice of a double bill of films. This includes selecting the titles, conducting research, identifying the target audience, and delivering the presentation. It encourages teamwork, lively debates, and creative decision-making; balancing individual contributions with group work. This assignment is presented on the final week of the module.

By keeping the assignments relatively straightforward, I aimed to create a learning environment that challenged students while remaining accessible to their level of experience.

Reading material

For the first year of the module, I wanted the students to be fully prepared in advance of meeting the module guests and I focused on speakers' biographies, interviews and links to their films. I struggled to source the proper framework for the module until I found **The Film Experience: an introduction** (Corrigan, 2021). The opening chapter (pp. 2-81) gives an overview of the cinema landscape which allows the module coordinator to contextualise the creatives and skills discussed in the module. Many of the key texts are first person based such as (Lumet, 1995) which I hope supports students to understand the creative process while also addressing the gaps in cinema history. I also use podcasts and interviews with industry practitioners such as film festival programmer Kim Yutani (2023) as a way of building out the reading lists and allowing students to connect with key industry professionals.

A short note on reading material and film programming

My initial research included reading several recent publications, such as Bosna's **Film Programming: Curating for Cinemas, Festivals, Archives** (2015) which is considered a key text in this area. However, given that the students would be delivering a double bill as their final assignment, I wanted to include a more industry facing text which I found with the help of ICO Online Guide to Programming (Independent Cinema Office, 2018). This introduced a clear and open approach to the exhibition landscape, aligning with the practices and values of the Irish film industry.

Viewing material

Films were selected in discussion with the guest speakers and were made available to students as online links to watch in preparation for classes. I programmed short films and documentary as well as feature films and tried to keep a broad range of genres and styles in the selection. Irish films are slightly easier to request as private or Vimeo links. This is not my preferred presentation format, but we also used the UCD Cinema to host several previews for the class. These screenings allowed students to see the projection booth of a cinema and see the cinema from another angle.

Guest speakers

As the director of DIFF, I leveraged my extensive network of contacts to invite many of Ireland's leading filmmakers to participate in the module. Film artists such as directors John Butler[5], Cara Holmes[6] and Ross Whitaker[7]; screenwriters Mark O'Halloran[8] and Ailbhe Keogan[9]; the film programmer Alice Black (Head of Film, Light House Cinema[10]) and film critic Jessica Kiang (Variety[11], New York Times[12]) brought international experience to their participation.

Photo 6.2: (Left to Right) John Butler, Gráinne Humphreys, PJ Mathews. Photo: Emer Beesley

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5   https://www.imdb.com/name/nm2899940/?ref_=nv_sr_srsg_0_tt_0_nm_8_in_0_q_John%2520Butler

6   https://www.imdb.com/name/nm2993022/?ref_=nv_sr_srsg_0_tt_0_nm_8_in_0_q_cara%2520holmes

7   https://www.imdb.com/name/nm3145173/?ref_=nv_sr_srsg_0_tt_0_nm_8_in_0_q_Ross%2520Whitaker%2520

8   https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0641177/?ref_=nv_sr_srsg_0_tt_0_nm_8_in_0_q_mark%2520o%27halloran

9   https://www.imdb.com/name/nm5222015/?ref_=nv_sr_srsg_0_tt_0_nm_1_in_0_q_Ailbhe%2520Keogan

10   https://www.lighthousecinema.ie/

11   https://variety.com/author/jessica-kiang/

12   https://www.nytimes.com/search?query=Jessica+Kiang+

Guest speakers combined both a specific role and a strong ability to communicate their work to this class: for example, short filmmakers and Warner Bros executives discussing their marketing strategies for Barbie (Gerwig, 2023). I worked hard to encompass the breadth of the industry connecting with global and local film successes. I believe there was a direct correlation between the quality of the guest speakers and the high attendance rate for the module year on year. Both the film industry and educational institutions in Ireland share a vital need to champion and promote greater diversity across all panels and events. In the Cinema Creatives module, I have made it a priority to include filmmakers of colour and members of the LGBTQ+ community to discuss their work and their perspectives on diversity in filmmaking and cinema as a whole. After each class, these guest speakers stay on to engage with students in a more informal setting, allowing them to ask about internships or other questions they might not feel comfortable asking in front of the group. This experience reinforced the importance of showcasing a broad range of voices and creatives, ensuring that students can see themselves and their communities represented.

Delivery in person

This public interview format included guests responding to questions from students about their work/ life balance, important mentors, key professional relationships, and advice for emerging talent. This ability to engage with guest speakers in person was key to the module's success. As module coordinator I wanted to ensure that the class was both informative and relevant with references to recent cinema releases and industry news.

The class took place on Friday mornings at 9am in a large theatre-type teaching space. Despite this time slot, the student attendance was strong and stays at approx. 65-70% throughout the term. I firmly believe that the attendance stays high despite the early start because the speakers are interested in one-to-one conversations after class.

Each year Cinema Creatives has included some screenings of new films for the students, these screenings are free of charge and first come first served basis. These screenings of new pre-release titles take place in both the UCD cinema and the Light House Cinema and the data from the post screening surveys are presented in class to show audience development trends. Our distribution speaker chooses these films and so a simple screening becomes a case study of key module activity. The films which included Final Account (Holland, 2020), Emily (O'Connor, 2022), How to Have Sex (Walker, 2023), screened without fanfare and students watch the films, its subsequent release with new eyes and we chart box office and critical response throughout the length of the module. Due to the popularity of the class, many distributors have started to preview films in UCD cinema to engage with this developing cine literate community.

Assignments

Due to the complex structure of a module with new contributors each week, I wanted to try and keep assignments relatively simple and at a suitable level for first year students. I wanted to create assignments which would focus students' attention on the presentation and reception of cinema, while introducing them to the creatives involved in the films' production. Reviews, podcasts and presentations were opportunities for lively debate and creative decisions. As previously mentioned, there are three assessments for the module.

Assignment 1: Reflective diary

This assignment asks students to contribute a 300-word reflection at the end of each week on learning from the class and tutorials. The assignment encourages students to actively listen and contribute during class and record their learnings on the Brightspace (UCD's Virtual learning environment) on a discussions forum which is visible to all. This format has been reworked over the past four years, enabling the Module Coordinator to review the classes and learning with a view to future learning.

Assignment 2: Review or podcast

This week five assignment requires students to produce a four-minute podcast or film review. Students are expected to incorporate insights from the required readings and film texts assigned for the class on film criticism. For example, in 2022 the film texts were: **Handsome Devil** (Butler, 2016) and **Katie** (Whittaker, 2018). This assignment connects the students with the world of mainstream media and criticism. Many of the students are already familiar with Letterboxd[13] which is a social platform that allows film fans to upload and share their reviews. I wanted the assignments to connect with one or more areas of the module, for example the review assignment connected the class on film criticism with the filmmaker responsible for text being reviewed. Ireland is a small country, and I wanted the class to see the interconnectedness across the creative industries including filmmakers and critics. The standard of delivery is always remarkably high, and the podcasts produced were of an especially high standard.

Assignment 3: Group presentation - everyone's favourite assignment.

This assignment is much loved by the students and tutors alike. Over the two weeks of the module and as a group, the students must research and design a six-page slide presentation of a double bill of films of their choice. The double bill is presented to the class during the final tutorial. Over the past four years, this assignment was often the hardest to manage but has been consistently championed by the students and the teaching staff. I outline the assignment at the first lecture, the programming groups are assigned by week four, and the development of the groups' double bill is supervised as part of the tutorials and then presented, which is a quick turnaround for the work involved. This is a first-year module, and the students have not formed strong connections with each other and there can be issues relating to the choice of films; the public presentation, and the contributions of individuals. The presentations were initially presented in a lecture theatre but once we moved them to a smaller space, students were happier with their own public speaking. Despite these issues it has a high success rate of bringing students together. The quality and standard of the presentation is remarkably high and when external guests have taken part in the final presentation, they have been hugely impressed by the work.

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13   https://letterboxd.com/

Some of my favourite presentations include the following pairings below.

The Proposition (Hillcoat, 2025) **and The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford** (Dominik, 2007). This is an example from the first year of the module. It was a very impressive presentation with great use of film stills and included wonderful research and connections between the two films including the music of Nick Cave and the group also outlined a very special Gala event screening in the National Concert Hall with specially designed posters, invites and specific themed cocktails.

Alice in Wonderland (McLeod, 1933) **and Alice in Wonderland** (Burton, 2010). This presentation included two adaptations of Lewis Carroll's classic text with a well-designed slideshow; wonderful images and energy outlined the connections between the two films. This presentation outlined the difficulties of deciding on these two versions of Lewis Carroll's novel and replicated the visual puns and humour of the films in the presentation.

Clue (Lynn, 1985) and **Knives Out** (Johnson, 2019). This presentation focused on a popular sub-genre of the America mystery and connected two films with a presentation which used clips from both films and clever use of stills. The group used humour to great effect and the presentation was very well delivered.

The Truman Show (Weir, 1998) **and Parasite** (Joon-ho, 2019). This excellent presentation included a rare foreign language film which was very welcome, the group highlighted key connections between the two films and two cultures. This was a very well researched and delivered proposal, and I was very struck by how the group made a specific point to outline the different roles of the team and showed how the group had designated the key tasks and worked together to shape both the assignment and the presentation.

Industry engagement

This is the point at which Cinema Creatives meets the professional arts closest. Since the start of the module we engaged with the UCD Film Society to encourage closer collaboration between the students and the society. Members of the society have attended the final presentation of the double bills in order to facilitate the film society seeing these double bills first hand and including them in the society's programme. In a similar way, guest speakers from The Lighthouse Cinema have asked students to send their double bill with the intention of including these double bills in their future cinema programmes. The students start the module with a little knowledge of film programming and at the end their work is being evaluated by industry professionals with the real possibility of a public presentation in a Dublin cinema. The target audiences outlined in their proposals are not merely family and friends but the general public. This gives an extra dimension to their assignments; the students are more ambitious in scope in their presentations.

Creative Futures Academy context

This module is part of Creative Futures Academy. The class is designed with the goals and aims of CFA in mind and the active participation of arts professionals. The CFA's commitment to the promotion of artists and creatives and engagement has been an undoubtedly key element of this module. The students we meet are already aware and excited by their own potential, I hope that the module taps into their optimism and expands their viewpoint.

Initiations and introductions

Cinema Creatives takes place in the Autumn trimester of first year with a fresh cohort of students attending university for their first time. They are anxious and eager, and I use 15 minutes before each class to discuss box office figures, film news, casting gossip and to create an informal atmosphere. The class draws a cohort of students who are making films in their spare time and are remarkably familiar with cinema and television but there is a lack of knowledge about Irish cinema and the key names and films in our national cinema.

I am convinced that this module has provided an entry point for UCD students into the Irish film community. Since the module started DIFF has had an 80% increase in UCD students applying for paid internships, volunteer positions, and related roles. The festival has employed several UCD students and recommended them for other festivals and events.

My experience

The class started in the autumn of 2021 and returning to UCD as a lecturer was intimidating and while I worked hard to connect with Brightspace, UCD is labyrinthian as an organisation. It was difficult to connect the module I designed with the regulatory assignment and grading systems. I felt my lack of teaching experience most acutely through my engagement with tutors and in designing clear assignments and evaluations However, my UCD colleagues were extremely helpful, the students and filmmakers loved the class, and their enthusiasm kept me going. It is a large group with over 120 students who signed up for a class on a Friday morning. It is also important to say that each autumn I work on delivering an international festival, but this class also shaped my practice, and the film festival has benefited from the experience of leading this module. I have become more aware of the tastes and interests of this age group; their references and influences are rarely seen in mainstream media and their cinema going habits are very different than audiences ten years older. Their schedules are very different, and I have accommodated this knowledge into my own festival schedule. I'm also aware of how rarely people of their age are asked to host interviews and participate in public panels which I incorporated into my planning. I should also say that we have not lost a single guest over four years. With the active engagement of both my CFA colleagues - especially Nicolas Pillai, Amy McDonald and PJ Mathews; and Harvey O'Brien and Jorie Lagerwey from the School of English, Drama and Film; we have grown and refined the module each year, amending the assignments and timelines.

Conclusion

I love this module; it has an energy and immediacy which the students respond to. It is inexpensive and draws a large cohort of students each year. It brings professionals in contact with emerging talent and a visibility to a wide range of roles and skills within the industry. We need to increase the professional connections with the students, especially the opportunities offered by the UCD Cinema and UCD Film Society. It also gives me a wonderful opportunity to talk to fascinating filmmakers who in turn inspire and encourage the next generation. For students, this module encourages them to think about their future careers and we need to support them as much as possible, if not for our own retirement plans but their Oscar speeches*.

*A very special thank you to Annette Clancy for her editorial and people whispering skills

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7: The University as a Laboratory for Policy Making

Victoria Durrer

Introduction

"Getting to know cultural policy and intervening in it is an important part of participating in culture"

(Miller and Yudice, 2002, p.34)

This article describes an approach to teaching and learning activity aimed at introducing first-year undergraduate students to the field of cultural policymaking. It has emerged from a module, entitled Cultural Policy in Context that I teach on University College Dublin's (UCD) BA Humanities in Creative and Cultural Industries (CCI), a four year degree programme. Established in 2022 and supported by Creative Futures Academy, the CCI programme was designed by the School of Art History and Cultural Policy. It aims to equip students with insights and skills for developing a career in the creative and cultural industries. While having a set of core modules based in the School, which focus on management and the context of and experience of working in the creative and cultural industries, students also select modules across subjects of more specific interest in them. This offer includes studies in art history, film, and visual culture; literature, folklore, and Irish; music performance and production; media and communications; IT, business and law. Students learn through lectures, seminars, site visits and guest speakers, and engage with diverse assessments (including videos, podcasts, and group projects). Students registering for the programme most typically have plans to work in some area of the creative and cultural industries. Cultural Policy in Context is a core CCI module for first-year undergraduate students on the programme in the Spring term.

This case study reflects on the first year (2022/2023) and initial design of Cultural Policy in Context. It begins by situating the reflexive framework by which it was designed, thus explaining the rationale underpinning the pedagogical approach taken. I reflect on the discipline of cultural policy, particularly the lack of discourse around the teaching of the subject in academia, especially undergraduate level, before reflecting on my own professional and pedagogical history (Warren, 2011), both of which have very much shaped the module design. Subsequently, I detail and reflect on the module content and my own learning gained regarding the teaching of this subject.

Literature review

Up until this point, I had only ever taught cultural policy at postgraduate-taught level. So, I was both daunted and excited by the task of designing and delivering Cultural Policy in Context. While academic literature in the field of cultural and creative policy and labour studies examines the impact of policy on those working and studying in these disciplines (e.g.; Ashton and Noonan, 2013; Comunian, et al., 2015), there is no examination of module design nor how cultural policy is taught to undergraduate students. What literature does exist focuses on postgraduate level courses of study, likely due to the growing prevalence of courses globally at that level of study (Cuyler et al., 2020; Durrer, 2018; Durrer, 2020; Gaio et al., 2024; Heidelberg and Cuyler, 2014; Spence, 2023). This literature highlights the tension between the agency of practitioners in shaping the structure of cultural policies that impact upon their practice as well as calls for the decolonisation of the curriculum, particularly with regard the importance of student and educator reflexivity, addressing local or emplaced considerations—the situated contexts of policy--and active learning as 'pedagogical strategies' (Gaio, et al., 2024, p.154). An examination of the teaching of cultural policy at postgraduate level (Culyer, et al., 2020; and Durrer, 2018), indicates that these programmes tend to teach policy analysis, focusing less on its making or implementation. This curriculum feature is in contrast with a key focus of research on the personal, social and institutional dimensions of policymaking in cultural as well as broader public policy and administration studies (Cairney, 2011; De Beukelaer and Spence, 2018; Durrer et al., 2018, 2023; Gross, 2020; Lee and Lim, 2014; Lee, 2018; Stevenson, 2023). This disconnect between research and teaching may limit the potential for students who are entering creative and cultural fields to engage critically and actively as agents in the policymaking space either as advocates, agitators, or initiators (Durrer, 2018; Miller and Yudice, 2002; Wesner, 2018).

There has been some reflection on the teaching of public administration and public policy more broadly (Denny and Zitoun, 2024; O'Neill, 2022). Some of this work recognises the relevance of practice-based approaches, providing students with real-word scenarios for policy advocacy or policy-making and encouraging greater interest in the topic of policy though applied learning (Hearne, 2008; Weaver and Nackerud, 2005). However, as this literature tends to cover public health, social work and other policy areas outside of the cultural sphere, I was largely left to my own devices in approaching the design of this undergraduate module.

Reflexively approaching new module design

In order to clarify these devices, on which the module was developed, I will make some effort to explain what I have come to 'believe about teaching' and why that has come to be the case (Warren, 2011, p.139). Doing so is an admission that our own disposition as educators, greatly influences what and how we teach. I drew on my own past experience as an arts manager, a former local authority arts officer, and as an 'accidental teacher' (Tomlinson, 2011), all of which have shaped my values as an educator today and the design of Cultural Policy in Context.

First, I recalled my most recent experiences of teaching arts students in different contexts on the island. I had become acutely aware of the absence of the policy landscape in undergraduate creative arts practice curriculum. While I had worked with students who had extraordinary command of the histories, traditions, and innovations of the creative arts forms in which they hoped to develop a career, they had much less of a sense of government actions (or inactions) in relation to arts, creativity and culture, the broader cultural ecology and their local, jurisdictional and global interdependencies (of creative arts forms, practitioners, venues, industries, education and more), nor how these might relate to the lived experiences of the creative and cultural work in which they might engage (Bell and Oakley, 2015; de Bernard, et al., 2023, Durrer, et al., 2023). I therefore deduced that I would be faced with first-year students who may be vocationally-minded with great interest in applied teaching and learning approaches (Cuyler, et al., 2020; Durrer, 2018). They would likely require support developing familiarity with the wider policy context in which creative and cultural work takes place. As a result, I understood that the module needed to balance a provision of baseline information—the who and what of policy—with theory and practice.

Cultural policy studies is complicated by the fact that defining the scope and topic of culture when wedded to policy is in-and-of-itself an interminable debate influenced by the shifting philosophical viewpoints of time and place (Bell and Oakley, 2015; Williams, 1983; Yúdice, 2009). This complexity deepens within a CCI programme that--like many within higher education (Durrer, 2020)—takes a generalist approach to course development, catering to the range of potential interests from the fine performing and visual arts, to cultural institutions, film, broadcast and streaming, to design, and gaming.

Secondly, I reflected on my own past experiences of being a student. My own pedagogical history (Warren, 2011) consisted of an environment of listen, remember, repeat. This way of learning had gotten me far—I have a skill for last minute cramming—but the information I learned this way is the least of what I recall from being a learner. The learning environments that have stayed with me are classes that emphasised 'active learning' (Bonwell and Eisen, 1991) and those that encouraged an evaluative or critical engagement with the topic of study. These prompted awareness that knowledge in fields of study is dependent upon different epistemological and ontological positions. With a need to facilitate students' awareness of and engagement in questioning positionality, but with the scope of the module so potentially broad, it would be important to set some parameters.

Finally, I considered how I, myself, came to be what I would call an accidental teacher of cultural policy. Having studied for a PhD in the subject later in life than many and arriving in an academic post after working for some time in arts management and policy, I am a firm believe that the classroom is a place of learning for both student and educator (Durrer, 2020; Tomlinson, 2011). Drawing on my experience as a practitioner-turned academic and the value I place on policymaker-engaged research and teaching as a result, I sought to design the module as a kind of workshop in which to practice both policy making and analysis (Allen, 2018, p.2).

Module design

Cultural Policy in Context is a 12-week module that meets once a week for 2 hours. As indicated in Table 7.1, it sets out to introduce first-year students to cultural policy and its significance, seeking to support students in becoming more familiar with what cultural policy is, how it operates, its purposes, and its impact on the work in which they plan to engage upon completion of the programme. Learning outcomes in the first year were wide ranging seeking to develop student capacities to:

- Identify interactions between public policy and culture.
- Use appropriate terminology to analyse these interactions.
- Recognise and critically assess various forms of cultural policy.
- Understand key players in Irish cultural policy-making.
- Comprehend cultural policy-making processes.
- Question core concerns and definitions within cultural policy.
- Analyse values associated with cultural policies.

Drawing on the reflections above, the remainder of the paper will describe the active learning model applied to the subject of cultural policy. The hope is that peers may be able to adapt and consider elements for their own teaching as appropriate. At the close of the paper, I will reflect on the lessons learned that I hope may assist colleagues.

Week	Weekly Topic	Objectives	Learning Activities	Application to Policy Design
1		Module Introduction		
2	**The 'culture' of cultural policy**	Get a sense of where 'culture' as a policy construct is located in Irish Government Recognise how a public policy defines culture Recognise and evaluate the values and priorities set out in a public policy Identify and critically engage with the forms that cultural policy takes	Examination of the state bodies / agencies that engage in cultural policy Group analysis of a national cultural policy document	Introduction to key policy elements: key terms (creative and cultural life); values; stakeholders; differing interest. Policy presentation: layout; design; photography / imagery
3	Introduction to the 'ecology' framework	Review what is understood by the creative and cultural industries Consider the key policy concerns for the creative and cultural industries Grow our understanding of the main government bodies and associated agencies involved in the field of Irish cultural policy making Get a sense of how these government bodies and associated agencies interact with the creative and cultural industries Get a sense of how the creative and cultural industries interact with each other	Analysis of an organisation and how it interacts with stakeholders in a broad cultural ecology; consideration of the policy interests that come to play in that interaction	Consideration of the ecology of the university and the university's place within a wider cultural ecology
4		Mapping Methods for Informing Policy		
5	Making Policy	Get a sense of what a local authority Arts Office is and does Gain an understanding of how public policy interacts with creative and cultural industries at local level Meet and talk with a key policy maker about the policy making process Gain understanding of how and what priorities get set in the policy making process Get a sense of who and what organisations might be policy 'stakeholders' Think about how UCD may interact with its surrounding area Gain an understanding of how policy is made Identify and critically engage with the forms that cultural policy takes	Guest speaker: local authority arts officer	Consider the following areas discussed with the guest speaker and how you might apply them: What research, data or information might inform your policy? Whose ideas will you include? Why? How will you include them? What other organisations and groups might it be useful to link to or connect with when developing the policy?
6		Values in Policy Making		
7		Reviewing and Monitoring Policy		
8		Group Working & Researching UCD: Student Life Workbooks Due		
9	Researching UCD	Think about what we feel are the important sites, assets and infrastructure of UCD Think about how our policies might engage with, enhance or challenge these sites, assets and infrastructure to support student creativity and culture	Campus Tour	Review of physical assets, societies, broader policies that might impact ours.
10		Setting Policy Vision & Objectives		
11		Progressing Policy		
12		Presentations		

Table 7.1: Insights into module plan

Keeping things open, with specificity

In line with the broad ranging field of the CCIs (Throsby, 2008; O'Connor, 2024) and the generalist nature of higher education programmes, the interests of students within the UCD programme vary year on year and may range widely from theatre to fashion to film, visual arts, video game design, dance, and more. Recognising the need, explained above, to set parameters but in ways relevant to the wide interests of students, a place-based, cultural ecology framework was applied to the module. This framework sets Ireland as the state policy context within which a range of profit and not-for-profit organisations / companies interact with one another in ways that rely on–and impact–creative and cultural workers (de Bernard, et al., 2023).

In the first year, the broad reach of the ecology was illustrated through the example of animation company, Cartoon Saloon. Based in Kilkenny the for-profit company emerged through initial connects between students studying together at third level. Their work depends on connections with a wide range of art forms, ranging from digital to visual and performative. Today, they are an Oscar-nominated, animation company, producing series and films that are shown on Irish public broadcasting as well as global streaming platforms. They have received public subsidy and support at national (Arts Council) and international level (European Union). Though their engagements shift at times, they have been highly-engaged in the local area, previously involved in an annual local festival and in the non-profit sphere through the showcasing of their work in public art galleries and The Ark, Ireland's children cultural centre. Having students research and reflect upon these interconnections (see Photo 7.1) aims to raise awareness of the many policy agents and actions impacting the broader system of Irish creative and cultural industries.
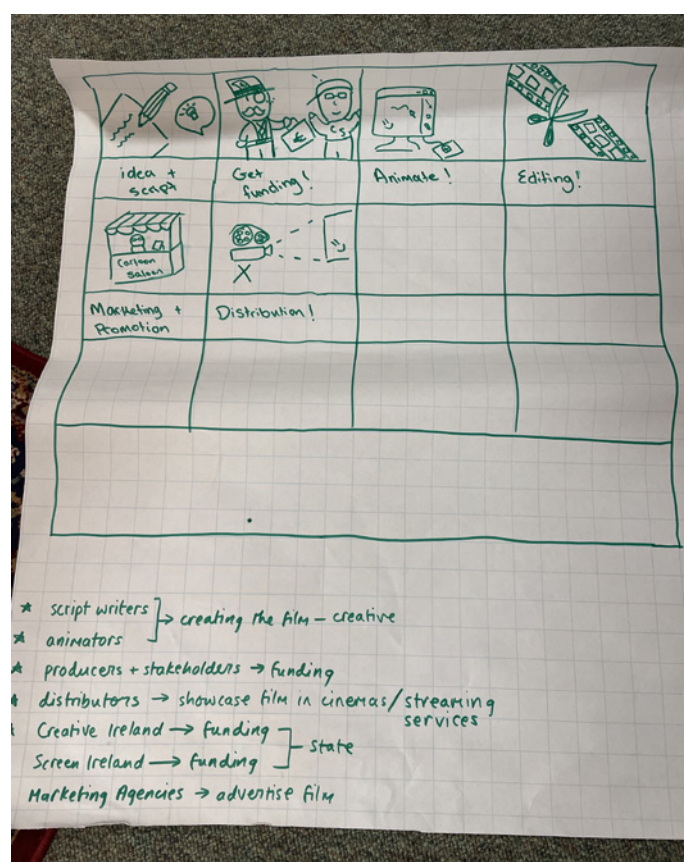

Photo 7.1: Students examine the policy relationships in the cultural ecology through the lens of Cartoon Saloon. Photo: Victoria Durrer

Active learning through group project and workbooks

Building from the ecology frame and aiming to support student agency in both university life and their future career development, students work toward a final group assessment to draft a policy that is aimed at 'supporting the creative and cultural life of students at UCD'. Asking students to design a policy for UCD seeks to highlight the role of the higher education institution, University College Dublin, as both an institutional actor within the Irish cultural ecology (Gilmore and Comunian, 2016) and as the setting through which the students' own engagement with the creative and cultural industries become established (Ashton and Noonan, 2013).

Students are provided support in group working through the provision of a group charter template, which assists students to articulate, discuss and confirm in writing, individual roles and responsibilities as well as a work timeline. Students are asked to complete a policy template, provided as a guide, that details their policy vision, values, objectives, proposed actions and measures of success. As depicted in Photos 2 and 3, they then present their policy ideas in class on Week 12 to an audience of university colleagues and peers, including those from our College of Arts and Humanities, Creative Futures Academy, and the Students' Union as well as the local authority arts officer for the area.

Photos 7.2 – 7.3: Students presenting their policies to an audience of staff, faculty, and external guests.
Photos: Dunk Murphy

To assist thinking, students were asked to keep a weekly journal or workbook, an individual assessment, which is submitted in Week eight. Guided by set questions based on weekly readings, videos and / or audio posts, and always closing with a question on the applicability of the session's content to the design of the group policy, this assessment serves as a building block to help students consider how they might apply the theories introduced in module sessions to their own policy proposal.

Real-scenarios integrated within module content

Sessions focus on the main institutions, agencies and bodies that make and shape cultural policy in Ireland at local, national and supranational level; therefore covering the structures of how the European Union, key national ministerial departments, higher-education, cultural institutions, local authorities, venues, companies, artists, and creative and cultural practitioners make, engage in and are impacted by cultural policy. Upon introducing the ecology framework in more detail in Week three, sessions introduce theories and methods underpinning the design of policy, such as methods for assessing assets and needs, identifying and articulating values, and setting aims and objectives.

Current examples and policy documents are drawn on every week to make real the environment about which they are learning. Students engage in policy analysis. They examine policy documents at national, university and organisational level together in the classroom prompted by questions regarding terminology and meaning, underpinning values, the impact of shifting economic, social and political contexts, and the use of visual representation in policy documents. Students also meet and hear from policy makers and creative and cultural professionals on the experience of making and implementing policy.
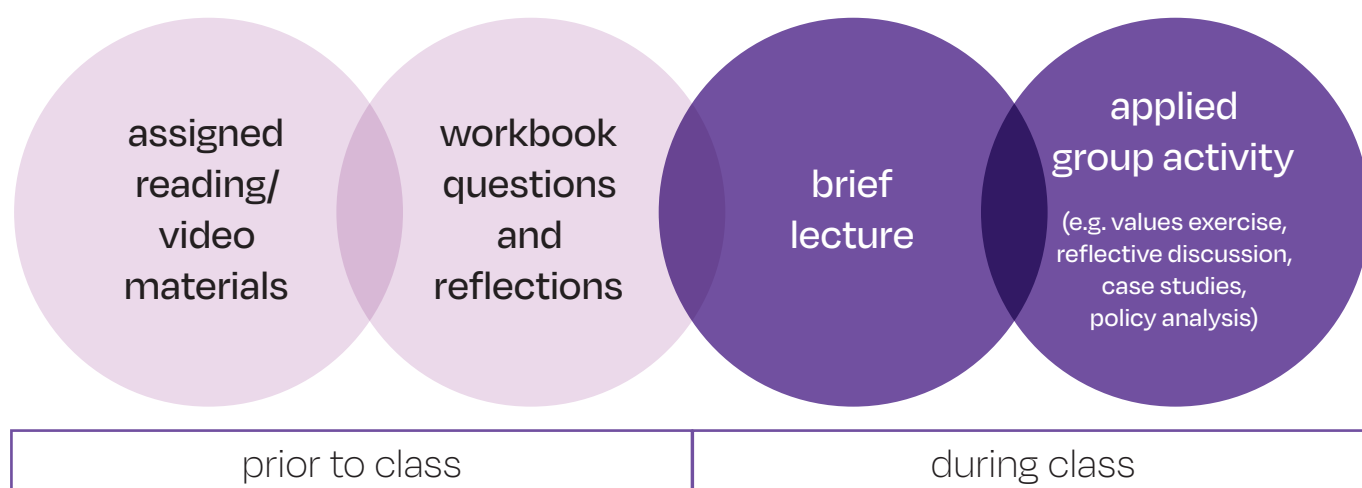

Figure 7.2: Weekly session format

Workshop-based learning environment

The module is designed with the weekly session (see Figure 7.2) as a laboratory or workshop environment (Allen, 2018) to assist the application of learning and idea generation. Each two-hour session begins with a short lecture on different policy issues, followed by students working in their groups to apply the lecture and their own journal work to the type of policy they might design for UCD. Particularly from Week 9 (see Table 7.1), students are focusing more so on the environment, conditions and context of UCD student life and considering the policy design assessment, which is purposely set broad and with lack of defined terms in order to raise awareness that choices must be made and explained in policy.

Working through a discussion of values underpinning policy (European Commission, 2022), inspired by The Choices Programme at Brown University (no date), they are asked to prioritise only 10 key values for their policy out of 15 through the use of cards, each of which indicating one value, e.g. participation, equality, diversity (see Photo 7.4). Students must become aware of and begin to debate the values most important and least important to them. They discuss both similarities and differences in certain values, such as excellence and innovation.

Photo 7.4: Students discussing value priorities for their own policies. Photo: Victoria Durrer

As shown in Photo 7.5, students also engage in mapping activities (Duxbury et al., 2015), mapping their own experiences of and movements across the UCD campus and hearing that of their peers, the nature of shared and uncommon encounters, interests and places emerge. They begin to articulate a policy problem (Cairney, 2011) and consider whether they may be able to serve all students, e.g. undergraduate and graduate, arts and non-arts, or if they should focus in on a particular group or community of interest.

Photo 7.5: Students mapping their engagement on UCD Campus. Photo: Victoria Durrer

Reflection

Reflecting on student engagement overall, I can say with confidence that the module design facilitated active learning in the classroom. Yet, of particular focus for this paper is the learning I gained as an educator. The module design was particularly aimed at supporting students to connect policy theory to policymaking practice through the use of real-world cases and guest speakers and the simulation style group assessment to write a policy for UCD. Active learning culminated in the policy proposals presented in Week 12, which provided unique opportunities for student and staff engagement with one another. Of particular note was the role of the module in facilitating student engagement with the structures and environment of UCD. As first year students, the class was initially daunted by the prospect of writing a policy document for a university at which they had only spent one semester. Yet, the task encouraged students to engage with and critique the campus learning environment. While proposals varied, they included a focus on enhancing the colour and vibrancy of campus, and developing societies and activities geared towards supporting students' interests. Through the focus on the university, these types of proposals made evident students' critical and evaluative engagement with policymaking spaces and how they impact upon people.

The policy presentations provided an opportunity for students to voice their interests and concerns. Faculty and staff attending the presentations engaged actively with students in a question and answer session afterwards (see Photos 7.2 – 7.3). This provided another avenue of learning. Colleagues and I gained a new opportunity to hear about students interests, their perceptions of the university and of their programme of study. Students shared the challenges of commuting to campus and how this impacts their experience of university life, their access to extracurricular opportunities and their learning experience. In this way the module provided a new means by which to engage with student voice.

This real-world and inter-group engagement was balanced with the individual, personalised workbooks, which provided an opportunity for me to check-in, individually on student learning and assess understanding and the success or not of the module design, upon their submission in Week 8. While all students may not have engaged with the workbook entries prior to attending each class, the act of their completion in Week 8 did provide a private space for students to evidence engagement with readings and develop and note ideas for the upcoming policy design assignment.

Finally, the two-hour workshop style environment of the class sessions (Figure 7.1), which linked reading with in-class lecture and finally group activity and further provided opportunity for me as a teacher to gauge not only the comprehension of module content, but also the progress and dynamics of group work.

Upon reflection, the strengths in the module lay in the active learning elements embedded throughout its design, including engaging with the university context as a kind of policy laboratory. However, it is worth noting that in attempting to set parameters for the module, the module objectives remained too wide-reaching. Their breadth and scope is reflective of my own anxiety to plan a module that would ensure students might get everything they could from the only module that covers cultural policy on the programme. While student discussion and assessments indicate that they gained an awareness of the policy landscape framing the creative and cultural work in which they are interested, the depth of this awareness may be of less importance than the provision of opportunity for students to grasp the choices, values and decisions underpinning the conception of policy and who and what such decisions might impact. It will be worthwhile to speak with these students in their final Year four to see how, if at all, this learning has resonated with them as they prepare to enter the environment of work post-graduation.

How I marry these two elements–seeking to teach students about the CCI policy landscape while gaining awareness of the act of policymaking–in future iterations of the module, will likely remain a constant source of reflection for me. I remain reassured, however, that learning is an ongoing process, for student as well as teacher.

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Fostering Collective Space

8: Artist-Academic Collaboration in Screenwriting Pedagogy:

A Conversation with Screenwriter in Residence at Creative Futures Academy, Mark O'Halloran

Annette Clancy

Mark O'Halloran, screenwriter in residence at Creative Futures Academy at UCD, sat down with Annette Clancy to discuss his role in the MA Writing for Screen module. This case study presents an edited version of their conversation.

Introduction

MA Writing for Screen module is a 10-credit course offered in the Autumn trimester by the School of English, Drama and Film at University College Dublin (UCD). It is designed to provide students with a comprehensive introduction to screenwriting. The module emphasises a blend of theoretical knowledge and practical skills, facilitated by a collaboration between an academic and creative practitioner. This approach aims to equip students with the ability to not only write compelling screenplays but also to understand the broader industry context and their potential career paths. The module is co-taught, with Dr Nicolas Pillai serving as the Academic Lead for Creative Futures Academy (CFA) project, and Mark O'Halloran as the CFA Screenwriter-in-Residence. This collaboration is central to the module's pedagogy, bringing together the strengths of academic theory and real-world industry experience.

Module description

The module welcomes students with or without prior screenwriting experience, but encourages them to read and view widely, recognising that good writers are engaged with the world around them. The primary goal of the module is to foster a supportive community where students can develop their creative work, share their writing, and learn from each other. This collaborative environment is designed to mitigate the isolation that can accompany writing, and to encourage students to take risks and produce work of which they are proud.

The module's structure includes a variety of activities:

- **Script Development**: Students develop their own screenplays through individual supervision and peer review. This involves intensive work on drafts, incorporating feedback from both the instructors and their classmates.

- **Discussions**: The module includes discussions on readings and screenings, covering both theoretical and practical aspects of screenwriting. This exposes students to a range of perspectives and helps them understand the techniques used by successful filmmakers.

- **Industry Engagement**: The module also features talks with industry guests and considers different career pathways, giving students a realistic view of the screenwriting industry

- **Screenings**: The module incorporates regular film screenings, many of which are organised by the CFA, to expose students to different styles and forms of screen storytelling

By the end of the module, students are expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes:

- **Mastered ideation techniques** through self-reflection, improvisation, and collaborative work

- **Developed their own methods** for integrating formal qualities of screen media within their writing

- **Engaged with diverse theoretical and critical writings** regarding the process of writing for the screen

- **Surveyed opportunities** in the current Irish and global markets for writers

- **Generated professional standard script and pre-production documents** for future development

The module's assessment is comprised of two key components:

A Short Screenplay: Students must submit a professionally formatted short screenplay (10 pages) along with a one-pager, which makes up 60% of their final mark. This screenplay should demonstrate the student's understanding of cinematic form, and the one-pager should outline their vision for the film as a commercial product, including the intended audience and distribution plans

An Essay: Students must also submit a 2000-word essay that demonstrates how they have deployed a chosen element of film style or form within their screenplay.

The syllabus is structured around weekly readings, screenings, and in-class activities designed to incrementally build the students' knowledge and skills. For example, early weeks focus on script formatting and developing a film pitch. As the module progresses, students engage more deeply with theoretical texts, develop their own scripts, and analyse their work through feedback and discussions. The course readings expose students to a range of ideas, theories, and approaches to screenwriting and filmmaking. The module also provides opportunities for students to engage with industry professionals, to learn about their careers and network.

The artist-academic collaboration and its impact on teaching

The collaboration between Mark O'Halloran and Nicolas Pillai is a cornerstone of the module. O'Halloran, with his practical background as a working screenwriter and script editor, provides a different perspective and skill set from Pillai who has an academic background. This collaboration ensures a balance between the practical and theoretical aspects of screenwriting pedagogy. O'Halloran describes his involvement, stating,

> "I don't come from an academic background, for starters, and so I suppose what qualified me for this is my practice and the work that I've been doing... I really love teaching, so it was a no brainer for me" (O'Halloran, 2024: np).

He emphasises the importance of having a working artist in the programme, stating,

> "I think it becomes more academic if you don't have a working artist attached to it... I think that the balance in the programme is between finding new ways to teach creativity, and if you don't have an artist in residence, then that's a very difficult thing to do..." (O'Halloran, 2024: np).

O'Halloran's approach to teaching is deeply rooted in his experience as a script editor and screenwriter. He sees the module as a space to mentor and support students in their individual writing journeys, focusing on the practical elements of screenwriting. He explains, 'when it's hands on and we're writing scripts, I take over as the kind of mentor or the script editor for each of the students... I take that work on board and then Nic takes on the more sort of academic goals that they have to hit' (O'Halloran, 2024: np). This division of labour allows O'Halloran to concentrate on providing personalised feedback and helping students refine their scripts, while Pillai can focus on the more theoretical aspects of screenwriting and film studies. O'Halloran reads, notes, and edits students' work extensively, often meeting with them individually. He reflects on this commitment,

> "I'm constantly reading, constantly giving notes, constantly doing edits on their work, and then doing, you know, half hour or sometimes an hour long meetings with each of them. So it is a lot of time, but I don't mind it. I get energised by it." (O'Halloran, 2024: np).

O'Halloran's teaching methods extend beyond mere technical feedback. He views the teaching process as a way to illuminate his own practice, stating,

> "I love reading people's scripts, and I love hearing stories from people, and I love hearing the kind of struggles that a writer goes through, because it illuminates your own practice as well. You know that you're not alone, and you're not suffering on your own." (O'Halloran, 2024: np).

He also emphasises the importance of helping students overcome creative barriers, adding,

> "I like being able to help people to get through barriers in their work and all of that and thinking about structure and thinking about story ... it's like you're exercising a muscle in your brain that is good for you as well."
> (O'Halloran, 2024: np).

O'Halloran's approach is also about identifying and nurturing potential in his students. He notes,

> "there are some students who are very fully formed when they when they start producing their work there, it feels as if they're super smart and that they've got really great ideas, and also the dedication to finish and to rework stuff"
> (O'Halloran, 2024: np).

He also finds value in seeing students struggle through complex ideas and eventually get to a good place with it, saying 'there are others who will pick a complex idea, and they struggle through it. But you're amazed. Then when it gets to the end of the year and you see that they have struggled through and they've gotten to some place with it' (O'Halloran, 2024: np). His passion for teaching is clear as he states,

> "I really love my students, you know, I love them, and I think they've all got something... it's the onus of a teacher or a mentor to bring them as far as you can bring them and...provoking them with difficult notes or difficult opinions on their scripts and all of that, and trying to bring them on." (O'Halloran, 2024: np).

He also finds joy in seeing his students succeed saying,

> "it's also the joy of that, when it works out is amazing."
> (O'Halloran, 2024: np).

The artist's involvement significantly impacts the programme's dynamism and relevance to the industry. O'Halloran's role is not just about imparting technical skills, but also about fostering a deeper understanding of the creative process, and the demands and rewards of working in the industry. His engagement ensures that students are exposed to both academic and practical insights, preparing them for the challenges and opportunities they might encounter as screenwriters. This artist-academic collaboration ensures that the students get the best possible learning experience, which they can take forward into their careers. The module's approach to teaching, with its emphasis on both creative and critical thinking, combined with the unique dynamic of artist-academic collaboration, provides a rich environment for aspiring screenwriters.

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9: Equipping Creativity:

Dunk Murphy and **Nicolas Pillai**

Introduction

In this case study we reflect on the first trimester that University College Dublin's (UCD) new Creative Arts Research Laboratory (CARL) has been operational. We describe ways in which it has resourced creative work by students and staff in the College of Arts and Humanities and beyond. We also note challenges of integrating this practical space within existing university systems and prevailing methodological approaches. We note that a key part of this work has been the institution of new processes in reaction to our experience of the first semester. This case study has been co-authored to reflect two distinct experiences of working in this space and the collaborative dynamic that emerged.

A new space

CARL is situated on the lower ground floor of UCD's Newman Building at the heart of the Belfield campus, on the same corridor as the more public-facing Trapdoor Theatre (O'Brien 2024, p.5). CARL and Trapdoor are linked through an infrastructure capable of streaming multiple channels of high-resolution audio and video for real-time editing and capture.
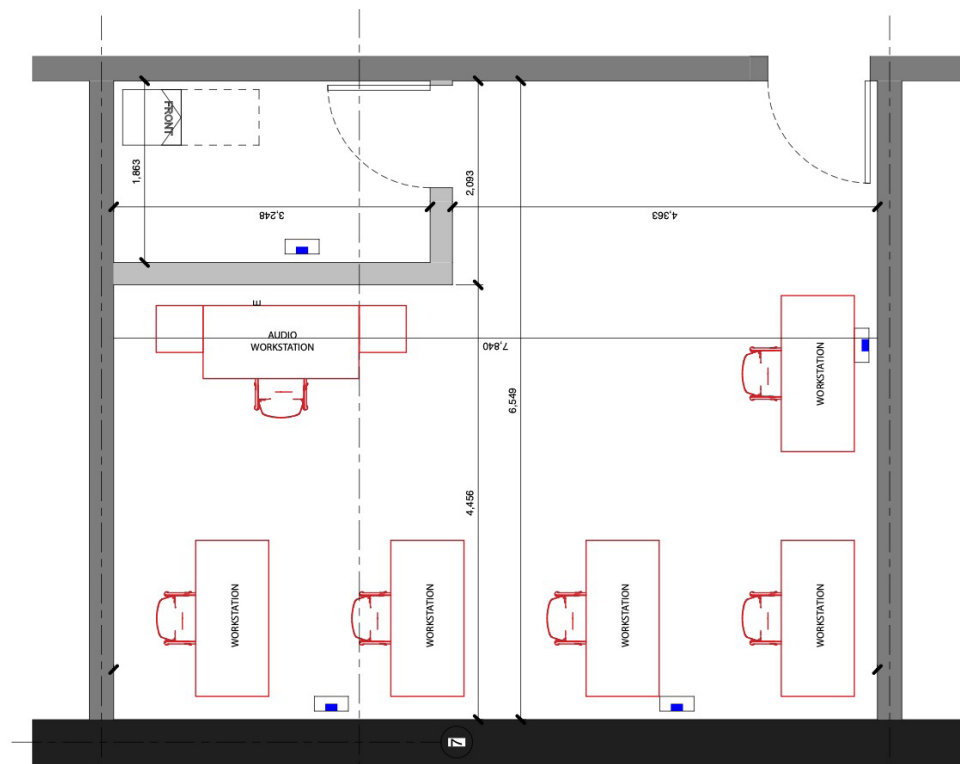

Figure 9.1: CARL floor plan

Both facilities were launched in February 2024, for the first time providing students and staff in the College with dedicated space for the development of practical performance and audiovisual work. Within CARL, six Apple Mac Studio computer workstations running Adobe Creative Suite software enable image, sound and video editing projects (Figure 9.1); a sonically treated audio booth allows for voiceover and podcast production (Photo 9.2); loose equipment such as mobile sound recorders, boom mics, tripod-mounted lights, GoPro cameras, a green screen and a large printer are available. Working with module co-ordinators, Murphy identified this suite of items as useful for student/staff practice-research and resourced them through the award of €55,000 UCD EQUIP funding, a competitive internal scheme for core research equipment.

Photo 9.2: CARL vocal booth. Photo: Dunk Murphy

Construction began in January 2023 with the intention that staff training could begin in October 2023. This was not to be. Global supply chain issues held up construction while delays with equipment delivery and install left us no lead-in before teaching began in January 2024. Three Creative Futures Academy (CFA) modules were scheduled to use the facilities: Producing Music, Film and Drama (BA students generate group creative projects based on archival material in the National Folklore Collection); Creative Approaches to Graduate Research (postgrads develop diverse creative projects based on their dissertation research with industry mentorship); Short Film Project (MA screenwriters develop short audiovisual practice-as-research projects). In addition, the space was made available for one day a week to the Clinton Institute/CNN MA in Journalism and International Affairs. We estimate that since February 2024, CARL has been used by over 300 students at BA and MA level.

Pillai co-ordinated the three CFA modules, using pedagogical and assessment frameworks based on his practice-as-research expertise (Pillai and Jackson 2021). Murphy helped students develop discrete projects as their proficiency grew with the CARL equipment, drawing on twenty years' experience working in the commercial and creative sectors. Acting as point of contact for students booking the room or borrowing equipment, Murphy established an informal 'drop-in' schedule for two days per week. Students borrowed equipment ad hoc, with demand prompting the purchase of some extra equipment. Together, we managed student expectations around what was possible in available timeframes.

Literature review

As collaborative partners, we share a basic approach that practice and theory are entwined. That 'art is thought and practice is theory' (Holdridge and Macleod 2005, p.143). The three CFA modules allowed students space to explore the nuances of this philosophy through assessed activities in the CARL.

However, we were aware that

> "many industry professionals, filmmakers, students and even some film production professors [...] do not recognise the valuable nexus between motion picture theory and practice." (Tomasulo 1997, p.113).

Equally, traditional academic research cultures can sometimes be dismissive toward production-based learning. Our aspiration has been to create a learning environment which allows students to interrogate these prejudices. This space of reflection helps students acknowledge

> "the theoretical and technical insights practice could produce, and the significance of creative work and its surrounding practices as a form of research and contribution to knowledge." (Smith and Dean 2009, p.9).

In turn, this allows students to understand

> "the impact that primarily academic research could have on creative practice, and the rich results the appropriation of a wide range of research practices by creative practitioners could bring." (Smith and Dean 2009, p.9).

Describing the provision of a digital media lab (DML) within Western Carolina University's Hunter Library, Kapel and Barker note the growth of learning commons and makerspace movements in Library and Information Studies. The integration of such spaces presents significant logistical issues amid already complex university processes. They note the benefits and challenges of staffing the space with a dedicated point person (a role Murphy has occupied in this first trimester) who is able 'to devote time to learning, training and maintaining the technologies housed in the DML,' while noting that this responsibility can become onerous 'as the space becomes popular and use increases' (2021, p.102).

Alongside the staffing of the space, an emergent aspect was how students chose to occupy the space themselves, forming parallel and overlapping communities of practice (Photo 9.3). This unpredictability was welcome, and we consider it an integral element, given that

> "studio production as research is predicated on an alternative logic of practice often resulting in the generation of new ways of modelling meaning, knowledge and social relations."
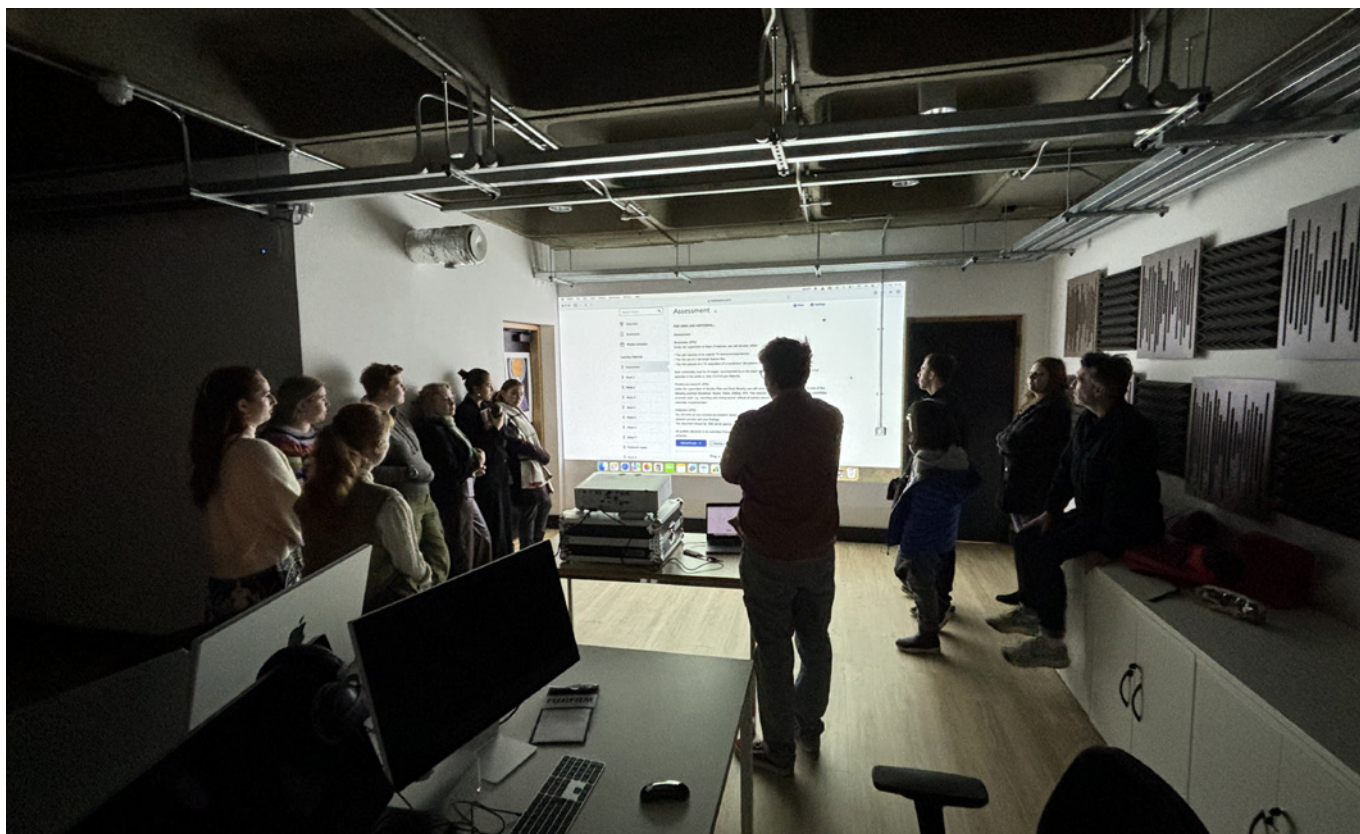> (Barrett 2010, p.3).

Photo 9.3: Short Film Project module in progress. Photo: Dunk Murphy

Approaches to group/ individual student projects

In this section, we contrast teaching approaches for (a) a group project devised by three BA students on Producing Music, Film and Drama; and (b) an individual project for Short Film Project. All modules began with class-wide discussions of assessment expectation, technical facilities and CARL scheduling led by Pillai. After this induction, individual projects then received informal tutorials that catered to specific needs. Given the broad variety of projects and differing skill levels among students, room booking and equipment hire was student-led (not all projects needed to use the CARL and some students used their own equipment). On a handful of occasions, converging deadlines across modules created pressure points but in general our system worked well.

Producing Music, Film and Drama

This group of three students chose to interpret a text from the National Folklore Collection which details superstitions surrounding weather and climate. They wanted to depict scenes described in the text through animated drawings and collage with the aim of achieving a bucolic, handcrafted aesthetic. The final output would be a three-minute stop motion animation film to be submitted along with individual reflective journals. All members of the group had expertise in illustration however none had previously produced animation. From their initial meeting with us, the group were encouraged to establish roles such as director, animator, background artist and editor.

The students used class time to explore the necessary equipment and materials. As well as CARL equipment (a high-definition stills camera, inverted tripod, LED lights), they brought along their own watercolour paints and papercraft materials. Murphy introduced the group to fundamental stop motion animation techniques: establishing scale and composing the image in-camera, achieving consistency of lighting, achieving smooth transitions by 'onion-skinning' between frames, implementing frame timing strategies. Many of these new skills became apparent in practice: for example, timing a scene with a sparrow swooping across the screen (Photo 9.4). This needed multiple attempts to achieve the desired pace, a process determined by trial and error, mastered through hands-on experience.

Photo 9.4: Still from Weather Superstitions animated short film. Photo: Dunk Murphy
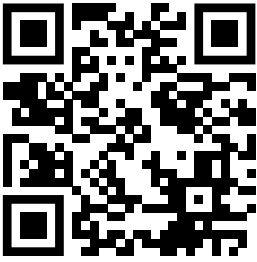
As the project required digital assembly in film editing software, Murphy provided guidance for the group in using Adobe Premiere Pro film editing software. During these sessions Murphy covered data transfer, project arrangement, screen panning, cropping, sound editing and rendering. After two short tutorials, a methodology was established that could easily be repeated without supervision until all scenes were completed (Photo 9.5). Students were encouraged to host their media files in the cloud to enable home editing. The final two sessions required very little facilitation from Murphy as the group supported each other, filling out their designated roles. A sense of pride was visible with the group spending many extra hours outside of class preparing their film for their end of term showcase. One group member observed, 'By creating art based on an archive [...], we are able to become a part of the stories held within it.'

Photo 9.5: Student group preparing inverted tripod and camera. Photo: Dunk Murphy

Short Film Project

This student chose to portray an ancient Bulgarian folk tale as a shadow puppetry short film for her assessment. As with the previous project, she had some experience with illustration and dramaturgy but very little familiarity with filming. A prime artistic concern for the student was capturing as much content in camera without the use of digital effects—this was central to her thesis (Photo 9.6). The desired aesthetic was an impressionistic textural experience aided with the use of voice-over narration and music. At the beginning of term, Murphy and the student sat for a 30-minute one-on-one meeting to evaluate expectations, technical challenges, scheduling and artistic concerns. This project required a darkened area for development and filming so booking a secluded workspace posed some extra consideration.

Photo 9.6: Assembling back projected screen for shadow puppetry. Photo: Dunk Murphy
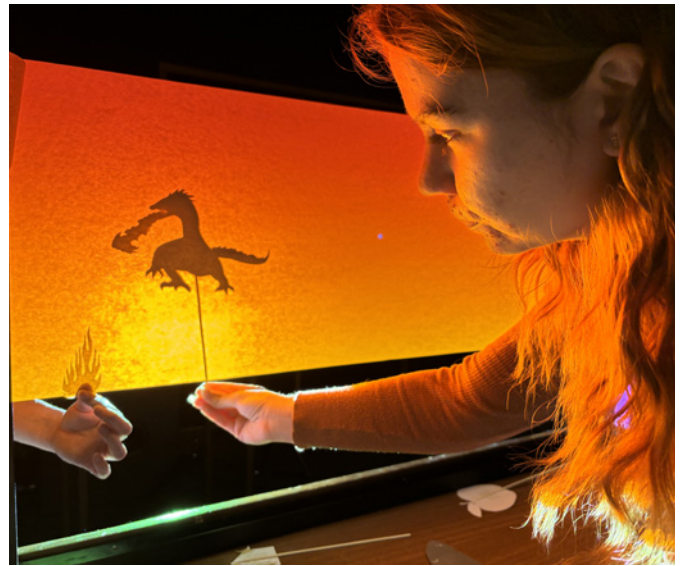

Photo 9.7: Testing back projected colour gradients. Photo: Dunk Murphy

This student scheduled a series of two-hour sessions with Murphy in the Trapdoor Theatre throughout the semester and was kindly aided by fellow students. Pillai was drafted in as a puppeteer. A high definition Digi film camera, digital projector, lights and tripods were booked as well as a final voice over and editing session. Much of this project emerged from hands-on experimentation with arts materials with an ad hoc back projection screen being built from a clothes rail and baking paper (Photo 9.7). Much of the action captured was a mix of planning and happenstance often having to contend with a plethora of physical challenges. Projects of this nature can result in excessive amounts of footage to be later edited. As the student became aware of this, she quickly adopted a ruthless filming methodology to adhere to the schedule.

The final stage of this project involved two short one-to-one tutorials introducing the student to voice-over recording and editing to a musical soundtrack in Adobe Premiere Pro software. Many of the considerations in this project were too specific to be addressed in an overall class context and much of the progress depended upon the student's intuition as she became more familiar with her tools. This student discovered a flair for directing and producing, employing an even mix of practicality and artistic vision as well as a keen interest in collaboration.

Conclusions

In this case study, we have described logistical and pedagogical processes developed during our first semester of teaching in CARL. Our hope is that these processes will prove to be agile and responsive as time goes on and requirements change. As noted above, we have been pleased to see a community of practice developing within CARL, where students pitch in and learn from each other outside of their assessment structures and across disciplines. Participating in this community seems to give students permission to be creative and to experiment without fear of failure. While the modules described above encourage creativity, we believe students also respond to the unique environment of CARL. Distant from other classrooms, with no natural light and walls clad in soundproofing, the space prompts students to shift gear, to learn in new ways and to be playful as they create.

As teachers, we have tried to strike a balance between making opportunities for these peer interactions and allowing them to develop organically. But we have also been learning how to work with each other in this new space. Part of this has been a process of sharing our distinct skills, so that Murphy has upskilled Pillai in technical media production, while Pillai has imparted strategies for syllabus construction and assessment. Another part has been developing shared approaches to student questions and concerns, which can range from the logistical to the pastoral. The flexibility of the CARL space has been useful to us as thinkers since it seems to enable problem-solving. As researchers, we are interested to see how teaching in the CARL will further develop our own understanding of the relationship between theory and practice.

If another School or University were to approach setting up a similar space to CARL, we would recommend assigning dedicated staff. Practical group projects can become expansive and cluttered so designing the workspace for this is key. Likewise, if more formal classes are to take place in such a space, flexible furniture arrangements are advised. The room allocated in UCD for the CARL had a prominent reverberant echo, so it was decided early on to treat the surfaces for sound absorption to minimise noise during project work. A learning space with expensive equipment requires access, supervision, maintenance and security so staff responsibilities must be established at an early stage. Students will have varying degrees of experience and acumen with creative technologies so employing an adaptive approach to learning is required. Lending out filming equipment will always require a modicum of trust, however the use of an equipment tracking app such as Asset Tiger can greatly improve workflow.

Capacity may be a concern for the future: it is difficult to see how many more modules could be accommodated if we are to preserve our precious 'drop-in' days. These are problems for us to tackle in the semesters that follow. What is clear is that the CARL has opened a space of possibility for students and staff at UCD. We are excited to see what comes next.

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10: Locating Emotion in the Creative Classroom

Nicolas Pillai

Introduction

This case study details the work undertaken over three years on Creative Approaches to Graduate Research, a 10-credit module for up to twenty MA and PhD students. The online module descriptor states that 'the aim of the course is to introduce students to processes of creativity and creative collaboration, and to encourage the dissemination of research through a wide variety of creative forms.' The module is delivered in hybrid format: students and lecturers meet at a Saturday intensive; students then submit creative proposal forms; students are then paired with industry mentors for three online or in-person sessions; students and lecturers meet again at a second Saturday intensive, structured around work-in-progress presentations; students submit creative artefact and reflection.

Teaching context

This module was co-designed by PJ Mathews, Lucy Collins and Nicolas Pillai as a vehicle to introduce practice-as-research methodologies into graduate study and to pilot ideas of creative assessment. In this case study, I wish to focus specifically on the question of the emotions and anxieties that result from creative work in the setting of a research university. These challenges manifest both for teaching staff and for students, forming complex matrices of trust and vulnerability, blockages of articulation and breakthrough moments, feelings of loneliness and inadequacy, growing community and joy.

In what follows, then, I will draw upon spatial metaphors to clarify what has happened during these interactions. I am interested particularly in how the physical and virtual classroom interacts with spaces that we create around ourselves as students and teachers: comfort zones and realms of authority. We might conceive of the module as a container, into which emotion is brought. How those emotions intersect and are attended to is an integral part of the work, one that can present significant challenges of pedagogy.

Literature review

As Batty et al., have noted, graduate study is often conceptualised as a transformative journey consisting of both learning (cognitive) and personal (emotional) qualities (2020, p.356). Supervision processes typically attend to the former, with the latter being seen to be the province of student support services and peer communities. However, to recognise the 'invisible work' of a doctorate is to acknowledge the emotional toll as well as the intellectual, with psychological and physical components as important constituent parts of any student's graduate experience (2020, p.355). When your PhD or Masters comes up in conversation, either currently or retrospectively, it is common to talk about how it made you feel (perhaps exhausted, inadequate, stimulated, or engaged).

Barnett argues that creative research and pedagogy challenge commonly held ideas around **where** the university is located. While student numbers and shiny buildings provide indices of neoliberal growth, for Barnett the university is a space of imagination located "in its imaginings" and so permitting challenge and subversion (2016, p. 8). Harte et al., (2019) emphasise the role of teachers as cultural intermediaries, equipping students with criticality that will enrich the creative sector but also feed back into pedagogy. For Guillaumier (2016), reflection is integral to the creative act and must be presented to students as part of practice.

For students, creative work can be a welcome alternative to traditional scholarship, but it can also generate anxiety. Freeman sees this anxiety as liberating, unsettling direct routes to outputs and so allowing new ways of thinking. However, as Clancy and Vince (2019) observe, this anxiety can sometimes overwhelm, prompting despair or anger. Evidently, the creative classroom is freighted; indeed, as Phipps reminds us, 'creativity' itself is a seductive and contested term, blank enough to bear various ideological loads (2010, p.46), subject to the ego and subjectivity of those who consider themselves qualified to teach it.
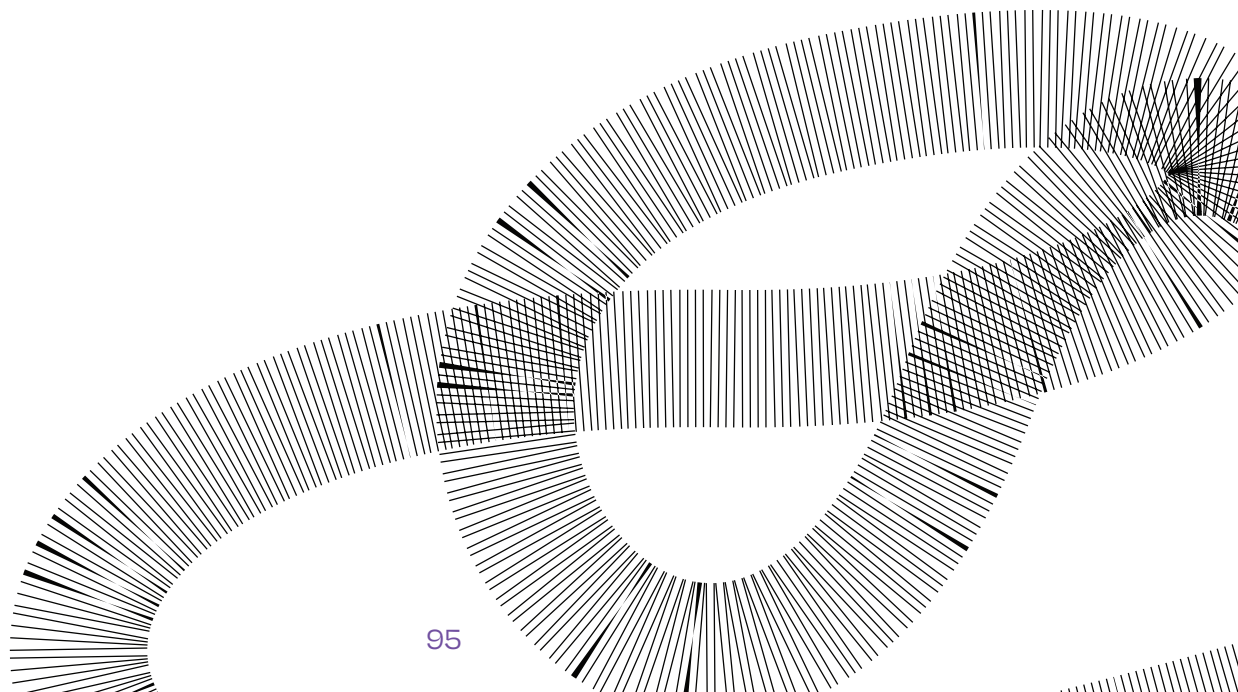
Teaching activity

A common trait in students who enrol on this module is the concern that they are not creative **enough**. The first Saturday intensive performs many functions: it introduces the student to the teaching team and to their peers; it explains the unusual structure of the module; it also reassures through anecdotal shared experience and achievable creative exercises. The latter are designed to dispel entrenched perfectionist tendencies in students, self-imposed barriers to experimenting with creative media.

Mentors are drawn from the professional networks of the teaching team, enabled by Creative Futures Academy (CFA) connection to industry. These interactions are the most invisible to the teaching team: guidance is provided to mentors and students on how interactions should be structured but students take the lead on arranging 3x 1-hour meetings (either online or in-person) with their mentor. Given the schedules of these arts professionals, online is usually preferred but in some cases, as for example when training in specialist technology is required, site-specific meetings occur. In the first iteration of the module (Spring 2022), Pillai and Jenny Jennings (Artistic Director in residence at CFA in UCD) provided an online tutorial for students on the etiquette of mentor interaction.

The second Saturday intensive acts as a coming-together after the mentorship meetings and as a work-in-progress presentation. In Spring 2022, a surge in Covid cases required this meeting to be rescheduled online. Spring 2023 and Spring 2024 have occurred in-person. What was common to both online and in-person versions of this intensive day was a sense of satisfaction from students, personal growth achieved through mentor interaction, a strong feeling of peer community and support in the student cohort and an emotional release at the sharing of creative work.

Photo 10.1: MA student Tracey Hayes shares her work in the second Saturday intensive.
Photo: Dunk Murphy

Evaluation

While the module facilitates a creative artefact, this is not the focus of assessment. This was a conscious decision from the outset, that assessment would focus on process, organisation and reflection rather than the subjective assessment of artistic excellence. Instead, students are assessed on their initial proposal form and their summative 1500-word reflection.

By not assessing the creative artefact, we risk devaluing the huge amounts of effort that go into these works. However, by shifting the emphasis of assessment from output/product to process/skills, we aim to liberate the student from the fears emerging from perfectionism. Our aspiration is that this will permit greater freedom in creativity.

The assessed proposal form is submitted one week after the first Saturday intensive. It asks students to outline their planned project, their timeline for completion, existing works that inspire them and their expectations of benefits and challenges from the project. With this information, the teaching team is able to assign mentors. The form receives a letter grade, provides text feedback to the student on the achievability of the project and represents 20% of the final grade.

For the summative assessment, students submit a digital version of their creative artefact and a 1500-word reflection. In the latter, students are asked to demonstrate their responsiveness to feedback, their judgement on the benefits and challenges of creative research, and the impact the module has had on them as researchers. The reflection receives a letter grade and constitutes 80% of the final grade.

An unassessed element instituted in Spring 2023 has proven successful. In the first Saturday intensive, students are asked to draw themselves as creative researchers, based on a simple pencil drawing exercise in Barry (2019). Some grumbling ensues and protestations that "I can't draw!" In the second intensive, having interacted with their mentors and generated a work-in-progress creative artefact, they are asked to repeat the exercise. The ease and enthusiasm with which they perform the task a second time is instructive. This graphic depiction of their progress and increased confidence functions as icebreaker, community builder and reflective tool.
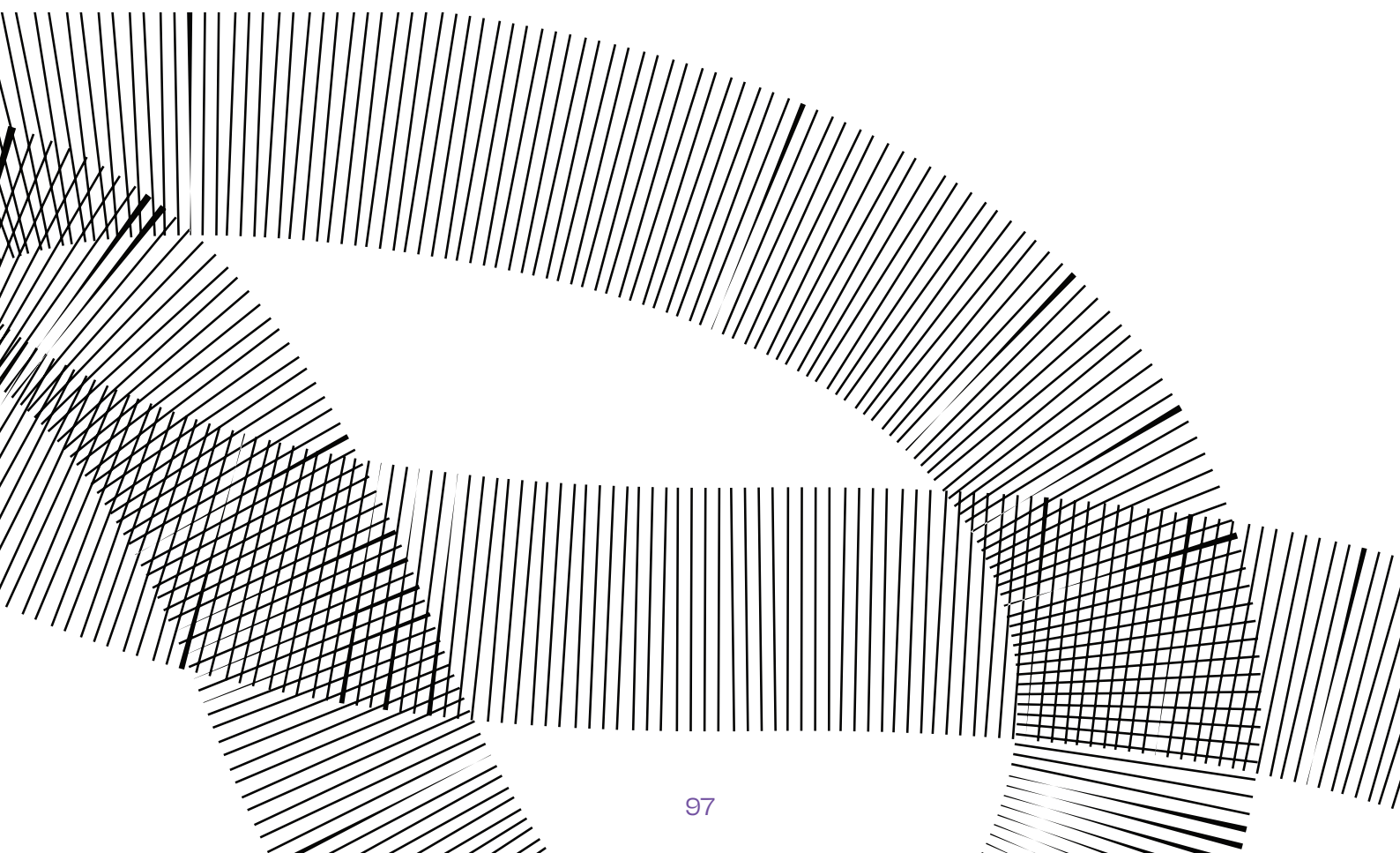
Discussion and implications

The account above describes a space engineered to encourage creativity. At one level, this is a physical space: an allocated classroom on a university campus. Working in tandem with this are a number of virtual spaces: the Brightspace VLE through which much logistical instruction is communicated, Zoom video conferencing which students use to interact with mentors, and Gmail through which individual students ask questions and seek reassurance from the teaching team. Less easy to describe are the dynamic spaces that open up between students, mentors and lecturers – permitting moments of insight, creativity and reflection. Bearing in mind Phipps' warnings, we must ask ourselves whether these are meaningfully different to those in any other classroom.

In Spring 2022, the first Saturday intensive took place in a wide shallow classroom with tiered seating. This layout unfortunately reinforced a separation between lecturer and student, counter-productive to the emotional space we hoped to develop. In Spring 2023, the module moved to a more suitable classroom: round tables made group work easy in this space and the walls were decorated by the fruits of the Barry pencil drawing exercise. As a result, the class seemed to take ownership of the space. For Spring 2024, the intensives were held in the new Trapdoor Theatre, a black box venue with retractable seating. This presented both advantages and disadvantages. Working in a dedicated creative space allowed students to immediately begin to imagine creative possibilities. However, the large room arguably made group work more difficult. This class were notably quieter in the first half of the day, and it is possible that their unusual surroundings were intimidating.

Virtual spaces present their own challenges. While all students are comfortable with email, one recurring issue for a module that recruits both MAs and PhDs from subject areas across the university is the fact that VLEs are used in very different ways by different departments. As such, VLE engagement has been ineffective in some cases, requiring extra work from the module co-ordinator communicating across different channels. The unsupervised mentor interactions require trust from both lecturer and student. No unsuccessful or incompatible interactions have been reported so far: this may be due to the guidelines the module co-ordinator provides to mentor and student, and also to the tacit vetting that occurs through drawing on the teaching team's networks. This is also a limitation, however: relying on these networks dramatically shrinks the pool of potential professional mentors.

To conclude, let us turn to the dynamic spaces between students and lecturers. These emerge from growing trust and a shared enthusiasm for discovery and mastery of creative process. Often, the teaching team felt they were giving permission to the students to be creative; often students turn to the language of childhood, play and joy to describe their experiences. This is not to say that these feelings do not play a part in other university settings. What seems distinct to this module is their intensity and the emotional work required of students and lecturers in locating them.

Advice for others

This particular nurturing, and the logistics of monitoring such distinct student projects, can be draining for the teaching team. The module has been capped at 20 students: in 2022, it drew six students plus four who registered but did not complete; in 2023, ten students who all completed; in 2024, nineteen students completed. To scale up would require extra teaching resource: each year, the teaching team has consisted of three academics or postgrads. It has been especially rewarding to see some students continue their creative practice beyond the confines of the module and, as academics, we have been enriched by our proximity to their inspirations and imaginings.

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11: Learning, Fast and Slow:

Designing Creative Assessments

Lucy Collins

Introduction

The study of poetry has become a challenging dimension of the English degree for many students. It is the form of writing least familiar to them from other cultural contexts and it presents immediate interpretative questions that require a certain degree of prior knowledge, both of poetic tradition and formal structures. This difficulty in initiating the process of interpretation can deter students from free engagement with the text, making even the most vocal learners reticent, for fear of producing a 'wrong' reading. This reticence in turn reduces the flow of communication between learner and teacher, limiting the potential for students to generate and test ideas. Yet poetry as a genre offers significant opportunities to explore the connections between emotional and intellectual response, and to address the subjective dimension of the reading process while remaining connected to the particularity of the text through its economies of style and form. The study of poetry also allows for prolonged engagement with short texts and facilitates organic approaches to reading both in class sessions and during periods of independent study.

Teaching Context

My teaching at University College Dublin (UCD) centres on modern and contemporary poetry within a variety of historical, thematic, and conceptual frameworks. In some modules critical traditions predominate but my broader aim is for students to engage more confidently with poetry and in ways that are meaningful for them as individual readers. Since arriving in UCD I have taught the poetry of W. B. Yeats in a variety of forms. Yeats is a quixotic and often troubling figure, and his work – especially the late poetry – can be very challenging, both in its ideological position and its intellectual complexity. The module under discussion here started life as ENG30620 The Poetry of W. B. Yeats, an undergraduate third year option offered to students studying English Literature as part of their BA degree. The module comprised 12 one-hour weekly sessions, with 25 students attending and completing a close-reading assignment at mid-term and a final thematic essay to close the module. Though spending extended time with Yeats's texts was satisfying for many learners, the module rewarded a relatively narrow set of skills and did little to open complex poems to inexperienced readers.

Engaging with colleagues in Creative Futures Academy made me aware of the value of introducing creative strategies for learning and assessment, especially in an interdisciplinary context. The result is a new option module, ENG31900 Yeats and the Arts, a seminar that explores the work of W. B. Yeats in the context of his artistic networks in theatre, book production and the visual arts. This has been expanded to a 10-credit offering, with two-hour weekly classes and more varied and interactive teaching modes. These classroom sessions are supplemented by online talks and video content, together with one-to-one meetings twice a term. In addition, archival workshops are held UCD Special Collections and the National Gallery of Ireland, with experts discussing a selection of print and craft materials and student exploring, and reflecting on, the experience from a personal perspective. This module now investigates a rich period in Ireland's literary and artistic past, drawing on students' prior learning, and their interests outside the classroom, and connecting these to their close engagement with poem texts. There are challenges to this approach, though – moving outside a shared disciplinary framework can lead weaker students towards over-simplification of debates, and the cultural emphasis of the course reduces the time spent on close reading techniques, which are a vital support for students reading poetry at an advanced level. In addition, those students not naturally disposed towards original or creative responses can be anxious about engaging with unfamiliar processes and unclear as to the relationship of creative process to the module aims. However, the benefits of shifting our focus as educators towards the experience of learning and away from specific and limited outcomes is enormous – and potentially transformative for the university sector. While a diverse range of disciplines are now open to incorporating creativity in their teaching and assessment practices, the study of literature, and of the arts more broadly, offers excellent opportunities to combine critical and creative elements in ways that are accessible to students at all levels.

Literature Review

While English as a discipline seeks to create students who are attuned to the complex political and philosophical underpinnings of the acts of writing and reading, it is both impossible and undesirable to exclude subjective learning processes even though these have historically received less attention from education policy makers. As Csikszentmihalyi has noted, behaviour is now valued more highly than subjective states – 'what is admired is success, achievement, the quality of performance rather than the quality of experience' (2002, p.139). Similarly, much of the attention now devoted to fostering creativity in higher education is driven by an awareness of its larger social purpose and its role in managing change (Gaspar and Mabic 2015). Philip (2015) following Jackson (2006) sees communication as key to clarifying the value and expectations of creative learning, making explicit how it differs from generic graduate attributes. Without this awareness, students may affirm the increasingly utilitarian character of university education, becoming less willing to engage in exploratory learning and less trusting of their intuitive responses. This occurs at the very time when the increasing complexity of learning in higher education demands a range of skills that require both self-reflection and innovative thinking. The role of creativity in building these skills has been recognised for a generation: Biggs (2002) links creativity to the capacity to work with problems that do not have unique solutions – a key aspect of literary study. Robinson (2001) finds a place for both expertise and play in creative development, while in their exploration of creativity in higher education the National Teaching Fellows chose to emphasise four elements: 'imagination', 'seeing unusual connections', 'original ideas' and 'combining ideas' (**Facilitating Creativity**).[14] All but two of the Fellows described themselves as creative and saw the teacher's own creativity as an important model and stimulus in the classroom, especially in building student motivation.

The question of risk is an important one to address, especially at a time when the attainment of transferable skills is prioritised, and when high grades are essential for admission to graduate study and training programmes. Creativity requires greater risks on the part of students than more conventional forms of learning, and the immediate benefits are less easy to quantify. Creativity also needs space to grow and is closely linked to the development of the individual student. In this respect it requires acknowledgment of the value of diverse learning styles. Research on personality types by Cain (2012) and by Kahneman (2011), draw attention to the ways in which different temperaments respond to the learning process. In her exploration of collaboration and creativity, Cain notes that while a stimulating environment may play an important role in the incubation of ideas, spaces of quiet concentration are often essential for creative acts themselves. As a poetry specialist I'm interested in the relationship between the stimulus needed to engage students in texts that may seem remote and unyielding and the quietness essential to deep thought.

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14   As part of a collaborative programme of research into creativity in higher education, the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and the National Endowment for Science Technology and the Arts (NESTA), commissioned the Creativity Centre to undertake a study of the views of National Teaching Fellows (NTFs) in England. 94 NTFs undertook an email survey and 21 were interviewed (**Facilitating Creativity**)

As Cain and others have argued, each personality type requires a different balance between times of stimulation and those of reflection. This not only suggests the need for flexibility in teaching and assessment methods – allowing time to reflect on and revisit key texts and debates – but also for students to be aware of their own learning needs. The importance of emotional intelligence as an indicator not only of human wellbeing but of individual success has been well rehearsed by Goleman (1995) among others, indicating the combined importance of emotion and intellect 'with emotions feeding into and informing the operations of the rational mind, and the rational mind refining and sometimes vetoing the inputs of the emotions' (1995, p.11). It is a similar dynamic of engagement and reflection that I want to encourage among students on my modules. In doing so I will also address the concept of learning styles and explore the disciplinary dimension of the formation of these styles (Tobin and Behling 2018).

Howard Gardner, one of the best-known exponents of the theory of multiple intelligences argues that the cognitive function is shaped by a range of different human capacities, and that

> "a fuller appreciation of human cognitive capacities emerges if we consider spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic, musical, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences... No intelligence is in and of itself artistic or non-artistic; rather, several intelligences can be put to aesthetic ends, if individuals so desire." (Gardner 1983, p.5).

While Gardner makes clear that his primary identification is as a psychologist, rather than an education specialist, his findings have major implications for teachers at all levels. Gardner has always been careful to distinguish between intelligences and learning styles, in part because of the ease with which the two have often been conflated. He advocates an educational strategy that both individualises and pluralises: the teacher should, as far as possible, strive to understand the learner as an individual and to encourage his or her development based on a unique intelligence profile. On the other hand, the teacher should aim to teach the required topics in a diverse manner, presenting them in a variety of ways. For this to work strong connections must be made between the experience of the individual student and the larger aims of the module. Starko (2021) suggests that learning itself is a creative process that involves students making information relevant by linking prior knowledge and new knowledge in an individually meaningful format (Cole et al., 1999, p.3); Barrett and Donnelly (2008) extend the observation thus:

> "Originality is not only about producing something new but also about combining old elements in new ways or applying old ideas to new contexts to work on a problem, advance a particular field and to add to the storehouse of knowledge and the repertoires of professional and artistic practices." (p.117).

In this context creativity is intimately linked to the creation of meaning but learners need a foundation of knowledge, and of meaningful inspiration, to release their creative potential.

Learning Activity

My redesigned module, ENG31900 Yeats and the Arts, needed a new assessment strategy to reflect the changed content and interdisciplinary focus. Since the course now addresses the varied artistic activity of the Yeats family, it attracts students with diverse interests in history, theatre, and the visual arts, as well as poetry. So, my first aim in completing an assessment redesign was to motivate them to draw on their existing interests and creative impulses to engage with a range of exploratory exercises. In addition to using available resources in public institutions – the National Library and the National Gallery – to enhance student learning, I devised an inclusive approach to assessment which incorporated this more outward-looking curriculum. For the continuous assessment dimension of the module – which accounts for 50% of the overall grade – I created ten short assessments. Students can attempt as many of these as they wish but will be graded on the best four. In formulating these assignments, I researched different learning styles, exploring the relationship between these and key elements of module content. So, the assessment range includes a poster presentation on the representation of landscape by W. B. and Jack Yeats; a mini-exhibition drawing on printed materials and art works from UCD Special Collections and the National Gallery of Ireland; a letter to the Irish Times making the case for or against the establishment of the Hugh Lane Gallery in Dublin; a diary entry recording the first performance of Yeats's At the Hawk's Well in Lady Cunard's London drawing room and an audio recording of the student introducing and reading their chosen Yeats poem.

I was aware that these assignments would require more direction and support from me, but I found that the process of putting together guidance notes and examples helped me to understand the level of challenge for students and affirmed the value of these tasks to their overall learning. One essential purpose of this process was to strengthen the relationship between the mode of assessment and the subject matter of the course. To combine these two elements, I used W. B. Yeats's Great Wheel (Figure 11.1) – a foundational expression of his thought – as a way for students to understanding their own learning progression. This diagram was how Yeats explored, amongst other things, the distinctive characteristics of individual human lives. I used it to present four kinds of assignment, each assigned to a numerical range on the wheel: Writing/Reading (1-7), Visual (8-14), Auditory (15-21) and Kinesthetic (22-28). These were colour coded to demonstrate where they can be situated on the wheel, and how they relate to one another. For example, the close reading exercise is located at 7, the poster presentation at 10, audio recording at 17 and mini exhibition at 26. These positions reflect the fact that each assignment uses a particular conjunction of skills, but all contribute towards the overall learning experience. Some students may choose to concentrate their efforts in two of the quadrants if they wish, consciously playing to their strengths. Others may decide to develop skills across the range, using the benefit of low-stakes assessment to explore processes new to them.

Figure 11.1: W. B. Yeats, 'The Great Wheel', A Vision. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, p. 66. Colour added.

A key element of the success of this project lay in communicating clearly with students and inviting them to reflect on their choice of assessment, with an awareness of its purpose within the module, as well as its relationship with their own skills and preferences. There was excellent take-up of less conventional modes – especially in visual presentation and audio recording. Some students who were a little less adept at extended writing exercises did brilliant and imaginative visual presentations. Given that the module is specifically designed to embrace different art forms, these modes of assessment also encouraged students to engage more deeply with visual culture and helped me to understand where those imaginative connections were really being made. Students were enthusiastic about the opportunities offered by these assessment modes, and I have, in turn, learned from their work in ways that will enrich future iterations of this module.

Evaluation

The re-design of this module has been satisfying in several ways. It allows some traditional approaches to learning about texts to sit alongside more creative, and therefore risky, responses and, in this way, encourages students to reflect directly on how their learning has been shaped by the process of engagement with diverse assignments. In the classroom more interactive and collaborative work helps the students to bond as a group yet also allows them to express their individuality more readily. They also display more initiative in delivering creative work and tend to begin planning earlier than for conventional critical writing. Both formal and informal feedback from the module has been strong with students particularly enthusiastic about the range of assessments available to them, and the opportunity to connect work on this module to their wider interests. The National Gallery visit was a particular highlight and exploring archival materials proved very stimulating, not only because students had the experience of learning in a new environment but because, by looking at notebooks and mocked-up designs, along with draft poems reproduced digitally, they were able to understand the trial and error of creative work. As a teacher I learned a lot from colleagues at the National Gallery of Ireland and at UCD Special Collections and this has, in turn, fed into my research and ongoing module development.

Advice for Others

Incorporating creative elements into an existing module is a manageable way to increase creative engagement on the part of both students and teachers. It has the additional benefit of inviting reflection on the value of more diverse learning and assessment practices and giving students more independence as learners. Involving colleagues and guest speakers from outside the university also models forms of dialogue and collaboration for students, as well as integrating different approaches to learning into the module. Careful thinking about the timing of creative elements and their impact on the module is essential, though, as is communicating expectations to students throughout the process. Be prepared to devote more time to supporting them as individual learners and encouraging them to take risks. I found that the time invested paid dividends not only for the students but for my understanding of the connections between innovative teaching and my own creative and intellectual development.

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Victoria Durrer, is co-founder and director of the interdisciplinary, industry and policy-engaged, network Cultural Policy Observatory Ireland. Her research considers the conditions and value of artistic and creative practice as social, cultural, and professional endeavours, with focus on their spatial, temporal, and relational dynamics. She holds expertise in engaged and policy-informing research, with projects often involving collaborative research designs, data collection and analysis with research participants and policymakers. She has previously published on teaching practice and student experience and aims to support her students to engage self-reflexively with real-world policymaking processes. Her research has received support from the Higher Education Authority, the Irish Research Council, Creative Ireland, the Royal Society of Edinburgh (UK), and the Arts and Humanities Research Council (UK) and local authority partnerships.

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Dónal Fullam's research deals with music and art in contemporary algorithmic culture, focusing on the philosophical and technical foundations of algorithmic music composition, human-computer creative relationships and the intersections between art and technology in general. His video games have received wide critical and public acclaim and he has substantial experience as a performer, in two different musical worlds. He is a founding member of the National Concert Hall Gamelan Orchestra, the premiere performing ensemble for traditional Javanese music in Ireland, and he is a regular performer with various underground bands which have toured throughout Ireland, Europe, and Australia. He is a founding member and organiser of the Karate Club, a non-profit music rehearsal and arts space in Dublin city that has been running for over fifteen years.

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Mark O'Halloran is a playwright, screenwriter and actor. Film work includes Adam & Paul, Garage, Viva, Rialto. TV work includes Prosperity, Conversations With Friends. Theatre work includes TRADE, Conversations After Sex, The Silence, Lippy, Beckett's Room. As an actor he has worked in theatre, film and television. Credits include Adam & Paul, The Virtues, The Miracle Club, Mary & George etc.

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Nicolas Pillai is UCD's academic lead for Creative Futures Academy project. Between 2017 and 2019, he held an Early Career Research Leadership Fellowship for an AHRC-funded project which produced the award-winning BBC Four programme Jazz 625 Live. In 2023-2024, he won the UCD Teaching Excellence Award at College and University levels. Current work includes an edited collection on Miles Davis for Oxford University Press and a monograph for Bloomsbury's prestigious BFI Film Classics series.

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