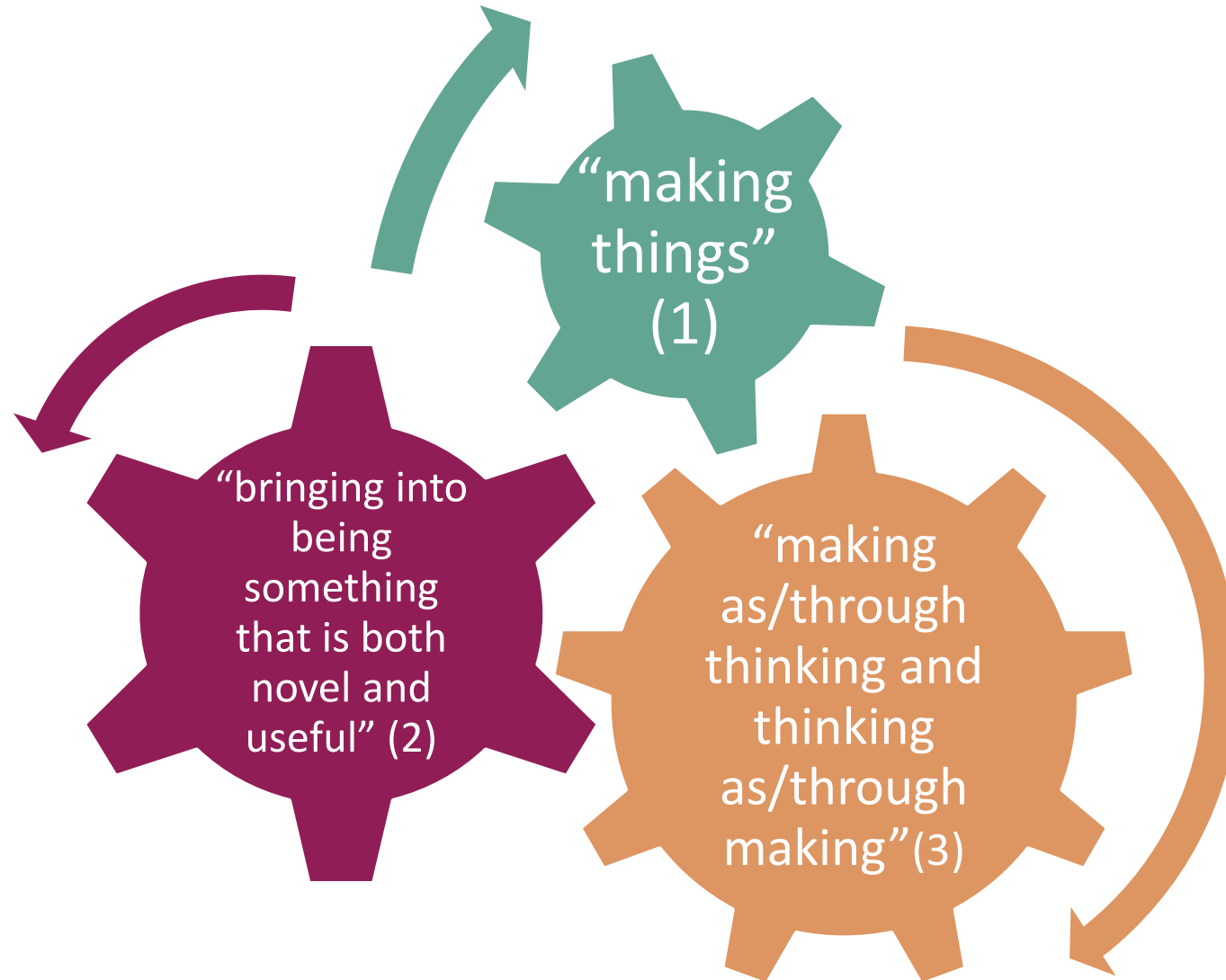


*Creative learning activities in
interdisciplinary bachelor education*

Anastasia Hacopian, PhD

Assistant Professor, School of Liberal Arts

Creativity in research and education



- (1) Gauntlett 2011 in Kara et al. 2021, 4
- (2) Leung et al. 2008, 170
- (3) Van der Tuin and Verhoeff 2022, 2

@graplas on Instagram

creative meme-making by
Liberal Arts and Sciences
(LAS) students

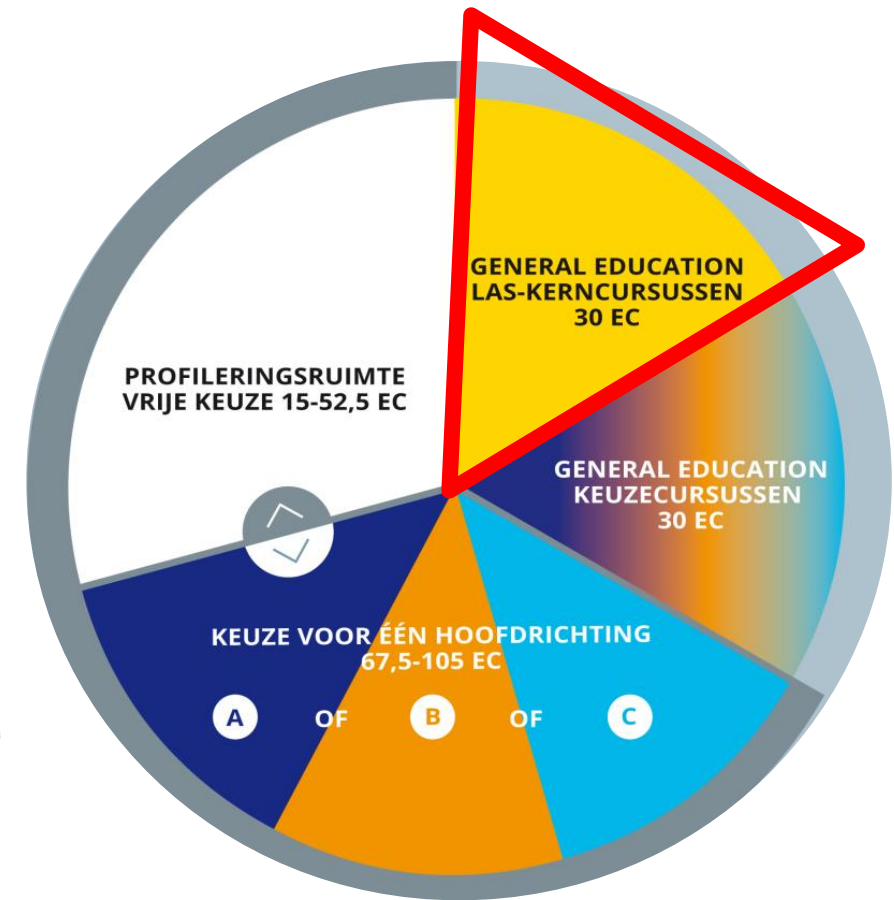


Academic nomads: Liberal Arts & Sciences (LAS) at Utrecht University

Our students are enrolled in four core courses at with other LAS students.

Students take 20+ external courses belonging to a major, as well as required coursework in disciplines outside the major.

This 'nomadic' curriculum is unique within the Dutch context.



Creativity is endemic to interdisciplinary education *because interdisciplinary students are cultural nomads*

“Individuals with more extensive multicultural experience will...spontaneously engage in the cognitive processes implicated in creative thinking...”

- recruitment of ideas from unfamiliar cultures
- retrieval of unconventional knowledge from memory” (Leung et al. 2008)

“Comparison between cultures is critical...to impact creativity.” (Maddux et al. 2009)



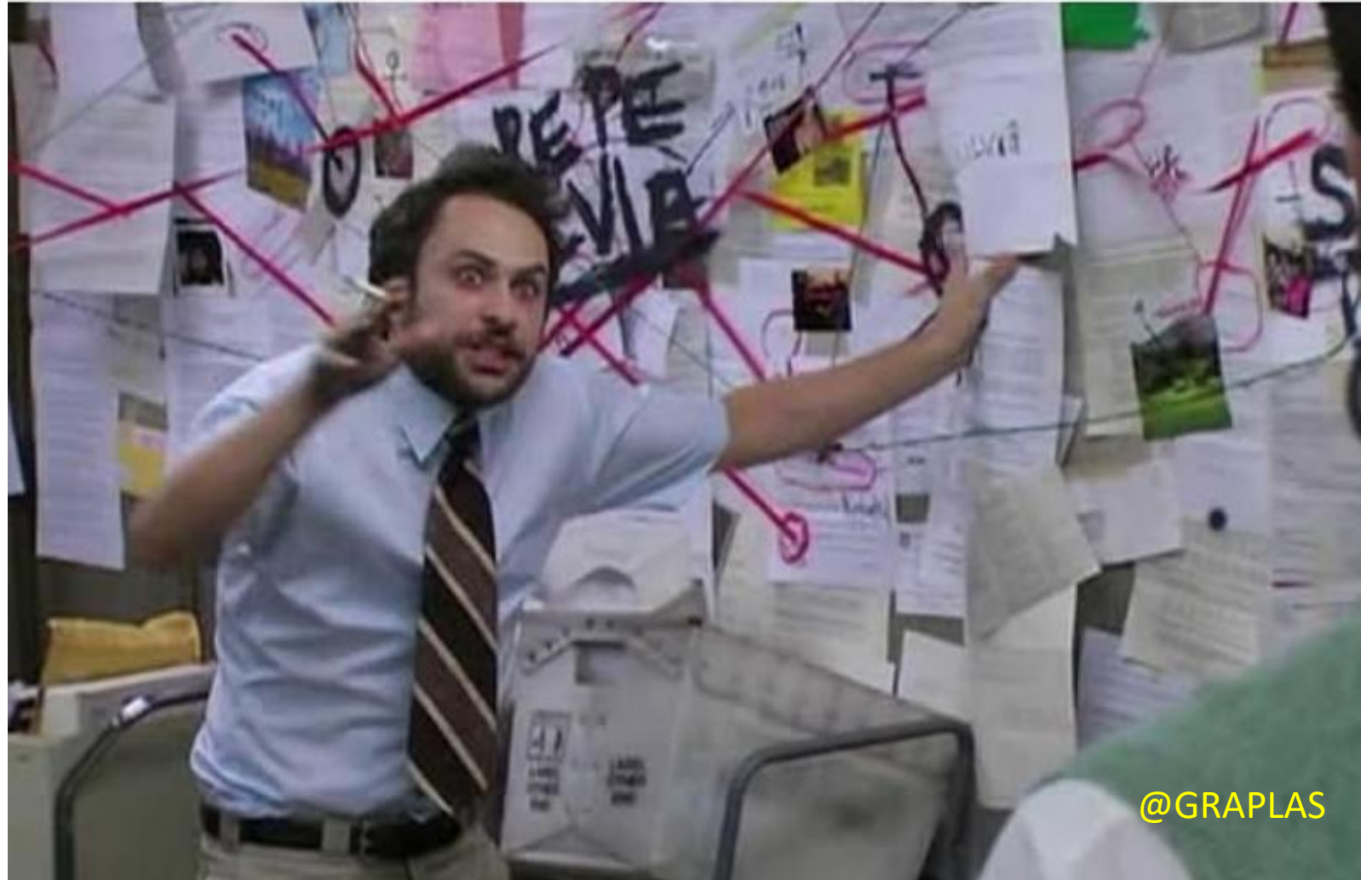
Creativity is endemic to interdisciplinary education
because integration is a creative process

Students need to “be creative” to create common ground and a more comprehensive understanding:

- take different perspectives
- make novel connections
- map them
- modify defining elements
- develop an integrative result

(Repko & Szostak 2021, 328-9)

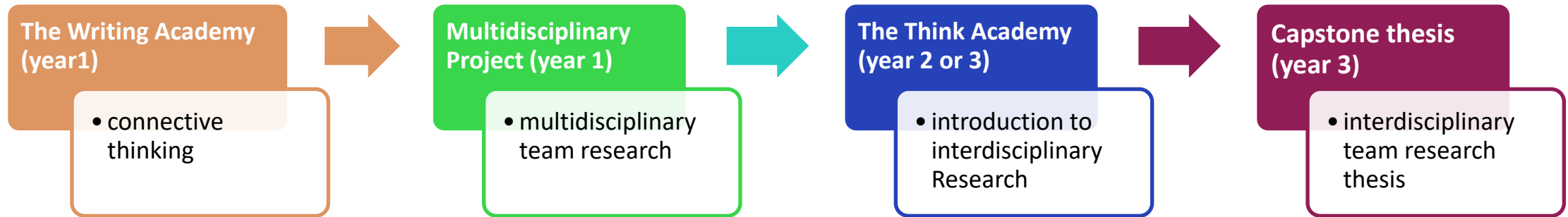
Wanneer je bij de Denkacademie alle disciplines met elkaar moet verbinden



@GRAPLAS

Educating the 'disciplined interdisciplinarian'

four core courses with creative learning activities



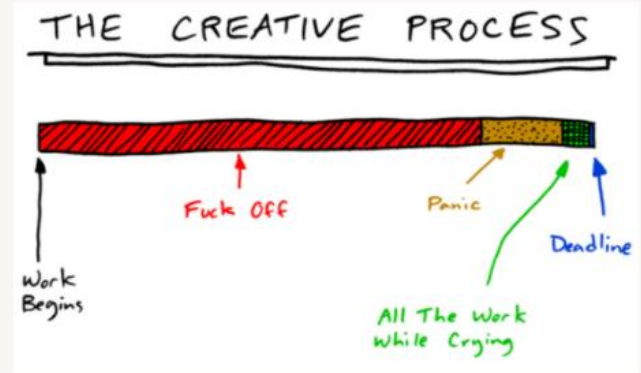
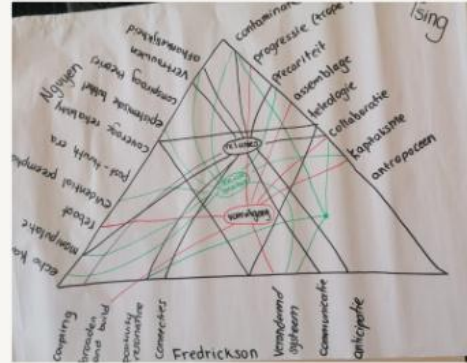
Creative reading and writing

The Writing Academy

The New Humanities Reader

Richard E. Miller
Kurt Spellmeyer

"When you read with a prospective view, you are actually creating a text that exists only after you have done the work" (NHR, p.xxvii)



1 Creative reading

Reading is more than just passively internalizing words on a page. Like a conversation, reading requires us to **engage** in an active **back-and-forth** from textual details to a sense of the larger whole. Just as you never know where a conversation is going, so reading transports us to a place we can never entirely predict. As we read, we need to take a **prospective view**: a guess at the argument that lies ahead. Students need to read three texts from the New Humanities Reader on a wide range of topics.

Prospective view

Creative reading

Creative Thinking & Writing

2 Concept matrix

The **meaning** then, depends on the **connections** we make within the text or between one text and another. With **smart notes**, we ask students to isolate one part of the text - even if it's only one sentence - and use it as a frame through which they can take a second look at the text with a **retrospective view**. After making smart notes for three texts, students are encouraged to link one part of a text to other parts of the other two texts in a **concept matrix**.

retrospective view

concept matrix

3 Creative writing

Students need to create **shared horizons** between texts; they need to think *across* texts and start **connective thinking**. Students need to rethink and reread the texts several times: new connections and especially new, overarching points don't arise right away but unroll a few inches at a time. After these shared horizons have been identified, students need to **write** an essay -the topic is their choice- that contains **creative connections** between the texts and includes the perspectives of the authors of all three texts.

connective thinking

revision cycles

Reading → Thinking → Writing

Multidisciplinary magazine and portrait of a scientist

Multidisciplinary Project



Writing a multidisciplinary magazine

- Students take on different disciplinary perspectives
- Write about a shared theme
- Need to think about **creative connections** between the chosen disciplines regarding the theme
- Need to write a **multidisciplinary introduction** with **shared horizons** concerning the **theme and subthemes** and the **core elements** of the chosen disciplines
- Need to write a **disciplinary chapter** about the theme and need to connect the chapter to the magazine

Portrait of a young scientist

- The magazine includes a portrait of a young scientist with expertise in the magazine's subject
- About his or her (inter)disciplinary career
- Students are challenged to use their **creativity** in analyzing the interview and presenting the researcher's (interdisciplinary) background through both **text and images**

The Thinking Academy

students work in interdisciplinary teams to practice using integration

integration of conflicting disciplinary perspectives

poster fair at the end of the course: "visually appealing" with 3-minute pitch

de Positie van sekswerkers in de samenleving
Felix Zwart, Diede Mulder, Lennart Macville & Aylin Uzun
LAS Denkakademie 2025

Hoofdvraag: "Hoe beïnvloeden maatschappelijke en institutionele factoren de positie van sekswerkers in een samenleving?"

Deelvragen

- Culturele Antropologie: "Hoe beïnvloedt de modernisering van sekswerk de emancipatie van sekswerkers in de maatschappij?"
- Duurzame Ontwikkeling: "Op welke manier hebben verschillende beleidsregelingen invloed op het verduurzamen van werk- en leefomstandigheden van sekswerkers?"
- Antieke Cultuur: "Wat voor rol speelde juridische en sociale uitsluiting in de maatschappelijke behandeling van sekswerkers in het Romeinse Rijk (1e eeuw voor Chr. – 1e eeuw na Chr.)?"
- Sociale Psychologie: "In welke mate wordt het zelfbeeld van sekswerkers beïnvloedt door institutionele factoren?"

Uitsluiting

- Externe factoren
- (Geïnternaliseerde) Stigma's
- Materiële omstandigheden
- Subjectieve ervaringen
- Historisch proces met materiële gevolgen
- Moraliserende functie

Afhankelijkheid
Exploitatie
Uitbuiting
Precarity
Uitsluiting

Onafhankelijkheid
Destigmatisering
Decriminalisering

Zelfbeeld
Ondernemerschap

Emancipatie

- Bewustwording van sociale ongelijkheid
- Gevoel van gelijkheid
- Gelijkwaardige kansen
- Verduurzamen van mensenlevens
- Verwerven van autonomie

Uitbuiting

- Ongelijke sociale relatie
- Machtstructuur
- Gevaarlijke werkomstandigheden
- Toe-eigenen van lichamen en arbeid

Conclusie

- Culturele- en Maatschappelijke normen.
- Beleidskeuzes.
- Veiligheid en rechten beperkt door institutionele uitsluiting en stigmatisering.
- Inclusief beleid & maatschappelijke erkenning kunnen bijdragen aan emancipatie en sociale gelijkwaardigheid.

The Interdisciplinary Capstone Thesis

students work in interdisciplinary teams to conduct capstone research using integration

teams demonstrate and explain an integration technique to 'solve' a disciplinary conflict:

medium is a creative format of their choice



Creative learning activities are effective because

- students communicate and articulate interdisciplinary principles through *other* media
- creative formats are accessible and inclusive: visual, performative, narrative (Kara 2020, 30)
- creative media help students exchange, translate, and test ideas



Puppet show in LAS Capstone course, 2025

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Made possible with the contribution of Dr. Jessica Oudenampsen
