

2015-2016 Millikin University Creative Arts Assessment Report
Student Learning in the Creative Arts Requirement (University Studies)

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The Creative Arts Requirement (CAR) is one of several non-sequential University Studies requirements that all Millikin University students must take to graduate. Students must earn three hours of Creative Arts credit in order to satisfy the requirement. The requirement can be taken at any time during a student's four-year experience, either as a single three-credit course or as multiple one- or two-credit courses.

This non-sequential requirement can be met with any creative arts course that blends experiential, theoretical, and reflective approaches. Examples include Art 101 and 107, Music History 100 and 101, and Theatre 103 and 107, among many others. Three combined credits of Applied Music, Music Organizations, or Dance—or a combination thereof—also satisfies this requirement.

(1) Learning Goals

In creative arts courses, students appreciate the intellectual and aesthetic contributions that the creative, visual, dramatic, and/or performing arts make to their ability to understand themselves and others and to their capacity to enjoy their own and others' creative processes and products. Students develop an understanding of themselves and the ability to reflect on and express their thoughts and feelings responsibly.

The following learning outcome goals are delivered by all courses designated as meeting the Creative Arts Requirement.

Students will:

1. Demonstrate engagement in/with the creative process.
2. Respond to and reflect on the aesthetic experience of the creative arts.
3. Make connections between aesthetic experiences and the larger cultural context of creation.

These learning goals complement the university-wide mission in the following ways. Engaging in the creative arts sharpens the diagnostic/critical thinking skills necessary for professional success. By studying the arts, including nonwestern art forms, students become better global citizens. And, of course, studying and performing art aids in the understanding of our own humanity, thereby helping to create a personal life of meaning and value.

(2) Courses Satisfying the CAR

Courses satisfying the CAR are taught by senior and junior faculty, lecturers, adjunct faculty, and visiting artists and scholars. Classes may consist of studio work, lecture, or critique, or a combination of the above. Students from all four colleges (Arts & Sciences, Fine Arts, Professional Studies, and the Tabor School of Business) take these classes, and enrollment is often mixed between non-majors taking courses to satisfy the CAR and majors taking courses as part of their specific course of study.

Millikin University students satisfy the CAR in numerous classes, as virtually any three-credit class taught within the College of Fine Arts (CFA) satisfies the learning outcomes stated above. Due to the large number of Fine Arts majors taking most CFA classes, however, the CAR is most commonly filled from within a select list of courses. Among the most popular courses satisfying the CAR are:

- AR 101: Introduction to Visual Culture
- MH 100: Understanding Classical Music
- TH 103: Acting for Non-Majors
- EN 201: Introduction to Creative Writing
- DA 160: Dance Appreciation

(3) Assessment Methods

As stated in previous reports, faculty across the College of Fine Arts—and the disciplines at large—consistently report the difficulty of finding effective assessment strategies for creative courses. By its very nature assessment asks us to quantify things, to make them measurable. The arts in general—and artists more specifically—often resist such attempts at quantification, finding much intrinsic value in the open-ended, interpretive elements of our respective disciplines. Asking a poet to reduce poetry to numbers can cause confusion, if not outright resentment, and as such we continue to struggle with our mode of assessment.

The plan for AY 2015-16 was to continue with the strategy used in past years of assessing CAR courses within one department, rather than collecting artifacts from all programs at once. This was to occur simultaneously with continued conversation about new strategies for assessing the creative arts. For more information on the methodology used, please see the 2014-15 CAR Assessment report.

(4) Assessment Data

Unfortunately, faculty members from participating departments did not submit artifacts to be assessed this year. I have no data to report.

(5) Analysis of Assessment Results

As discussed above, no artifacts were submitted for assessment in AY 2015-16, so I am unable to analyze results.

(6) Conclusions

My biggest conclusion about the state of the Creative Arts Requirement is that, while there seems to be faculty consensus on the importance of a CAR, there is little faculty consensus on best strategies for executing it, nor is there faculty buy-in for assessing it. In conversations with Provost Aper it has become clear that the language of the CAR Learning Outcomes is unclear, making success difficult to measure. The Creative Arts Requirement must undergo serious study and revision if Millikin wishes to continue making this a part of the University Studies curriculum.

(7) Plans for Future

This is my final report as CAR Coordinator. I have been asked to move into the position of Academic Affairs Coordinator for the School of Theatre & Dance, and as part of that decision the new Director of Theatre & Dance, Mary Black, and Dean Ledford of the College of Fine Arts agreed that CAR would be removed from my portfolio.

I strongly urge that whomever assumes this role be a *tenured* member of the faculty. As an untenured Assistant Professor the last four years I have been unable to pester senior faculty and administrators to cooperate with the CAR. Placing junior faculty members into these positions does not set the program up for success. Visiting outside evaluators of the University Studies program concurred with this point of view during their campus visit this spring.

I also strongly urge the revision of the Learning Outcomes within the CAR. I believe they should be both reduced and clarified. This will require a conversation with significant portions of campus, whereas previous attempts to revise this language have been conducted among a small group of people. If we want this to be successful, we must examine it, and we must bring the full university faculty along with us.