



**Creativity & Innovation
at Colorado College**

JOIN US THIS BLOCK BREAK

CREATIVE CONFIDENCE PROJECT

B2 Block Break: October 19 & 20

10:00 am – 3:30 pm

Register in SUMMIT Student Life or here  Lunch and snacks provided



Restore and rejuvenate through creativity!

No experience or artistic ability required.



Join C&I for an immersive experience
to
awaken your creativity!

Lose yourself in creative exploration, deep conversation, and play. Emerge with tools that will prepare you to think and act creatively in your life and career.

The World Economic Forum identifies creativity, originality, and initiative as the top three skills in demand by employers.

Students who complete the block break immersion can participate in a pilot Blocks 3 – 8 for a stipend of **\$200**.

For more info, contact Jessica Hunter at jhunter@coloradocollege.edu.



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POSITIVE TURBULENCE



Unlocking Creativity

*A Positive Turbulence Podcast with Jane Hilberry
and Felicia Rose Chavez*

Have you ever found yourself in a rut? Do you feel like your creative spark has flickered out? Maybe you're not even sure you have that spark. In this episode, we gage with two extraordinary minds, Jane Hilberry, Professor of Creativity & Innovation at CC, and Felicia Rose Chavez, former Creativity & Innovation Scholar in Residence. They're here to shed light on the untapped creativity within each of us, even when we might not feel particularly creative.

[Click here](#) to enjoy the podcast.

Produced by AMI, the Association for Managers of Innovation.



The Attention/Creativity Connection

“My experience is what I agree to attend to. Only those items that I notice shape my mind—without selective interest, experience is an utter chaos. Interest alone gives accent and emphasis, light and shade, background and foreground—intelligible perspective, in a word.” [1]

—William James

Attention has been a hot topic recently, with many books, articles, and editorials that bemoan our diminishing ability to focus. The culprit stealing our focus seems to be speed: the rapid-fire information deluge offered by social media and the pressure to respond to texts and emails immediately fractures our ability to attend to the world around us. Living under conditions of false urgency takes a toll on our nervous systems and limits our ability to think creatively.

What do we mean when we talk about attention? Unlike concentration, attention does not have a pre-determined goal but requires us to look with curiosity. And, unlike concentration, attention can be captured by something surprising. (We never say that something “caught our concentration.”) Attention remains open to chance encounters and the sudden, delicious emergence of a question we did not know to ask. As Jenny Odell writes in *How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy*, “Through attention and curiosity, we can suspend our tendency toward instrumental understanding—seeing things or people one-dimensionally as the products of their functions—and instead sit with the unfathomable fact of their existence, which opens up toward us but can never be fully grasped or known.”[2] Attention yields its rewards when we allow ourselves to be guided neither by random chance nor the desire for specific outcomes but by a conscious and generous curiosity.

In “The Unleashed Mind,” psychologist Shelley Carson probes the relationship between attention and creativity to explore if and how highly inventive people genuinely see and interpret the world differently. By relating anecdotal stories of unconventional behavior demonstrated by creative luminaries to clinical studies, Carson argues that the ‘eccentric artist’ stereotype may have its genesis in how creative people pay attention to the world around them. She explains, “Creativity and eccentricity often go hand in hand, and researchers now believe that both traits may result from how the brain filters incoming information.”[3] Carson’s theory suggests that original thinkers may have

what she describes as ‘leaky attentional filters’ that permit more data from their senses to enter their awareness. Carson defines this condition, known as *cognitive disinhibition*, as “the failure to ignore information that is irrelevant to current goals or to survival.”³[PL1] According to the concept of *associative creativity*, when we expand the breadth or depth of perceptual inputs, we increase our options for making unusual combinations between ideas.[4]

While the relative strength or weakness of our attentional filters is beyond our control, the relationship between attention and original thinking suggests that we can purposefully replicate the creative benefits of moderate levels of cognitive disinhibition by manipulating our attention to notice more. For example, extending the time we spend looking at or listening to elements of our environments helps us take in more details, and research linking innovation to attention suggests that noticing and incorporating more subtle visual clues or background sounds supports creative thinking. As psychologist Emily Balcetis explains, “Our eyes and brains have the capacity to ... see the world through a wide bracket when it serves us well. To do this, we need to give as much weight to what lies in the periphery of our field of vision as we do to the things that fall right in the center.”[5] She later states, “A wide bracket expands our focus and encourages us to consider options that lie at the fringes of what is possible.”[6]

Because of this connection between attention and creative thinking, many of C&I’s creativity-building activities offer students ways to practice both focusing and extending their attention. Creative problem-solving and creative thinking exercises help students broaden their attention to expand the field of possibilities within a given situation and to focus it to discover the often-overlooked details that can transform and upend what they thought they knew.

For more information about C&I programs that support attention management, please contact Jessica Hunter, C&I Director (jhunter@coloradocollege.edu), or Kris Stanec, Director of the Creativity Lab (kstanec@coloradocollege.edu).

[1] William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, vol. 1 (New York: Dover, 2012), location 6014, Kindle.

[2] Odell, Jenny. *How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy*. (New York: Melville House, 2019), Location 1962, Kindle.

[3] Shelley Carson, “The Unleashed Mind,” *Scientific American Mind* 22, no. 2 (2011): 22.

[4] Marta K. Wronska, Alina Kolanczyk, and Bernard A. Nijstad, “Engaging in Creativity Broadens Attentional Scope,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 9 (September 2018): 2.

[5] Emily Balcetis, *Clearer, Closer, Better: How Successful People See the World* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2020), 149, Kindle.

[6] Balcetis, *Clearer, Closer, Better*, 204.



Creativity in the Classroom

Sophia Hartt, '26

Before taking my Block 1 class, *Syria in Revolution and War* with Dr. Sofia Fenner, I thought that creativity couldn't be effectively applied to serious topics. Collaging after talking about genocide seemed like it would be inappropriate. However, the class taught me that there isn't anything inherently "unacademic" about drawing, collage, or painting. I began to look forward to our

activities in class, where I could reflect in my notebook; I could use markers and cut-outs from magazines to express my ideas. After lengthy discussions of human rights violations in Syria, there was something particularly powerful about processing my thoughts on paper. During our time for reflection, the class went silent except for the sounds of students uncapping markers and the rustle of magazine pages. Sometimes we complimented each other, quietly exclaiming over the work of our peers. We found solidarity in creating separately, together. After taking the class, I feel more confident in expressing my ideas, and I hope to embrace creativity in my future classes at CC.

Upcoming Events, Workshops, and Dates to Remember

Block 2

- Creative Mondays, 3:00-4:30: October 16
- Student Creative Confidence Immersion: October 19 & 20

Block 3

- Creative Mondays, 3:00-4:30: October 23 & 30, and November 6 & 13
- Student workshops, 3:00-4:30:
 - Tuesday, October 24: Brainstorm Better
 - Tuesday, October 31: Concept Mapping
- Other events:
 - The Arts & Resiliency Gathering: October 26-29
 - 'We Don't Have a River' panel discussion: November 8, 5:30-7:00 at Taste in the Fine Arts Center

Block 4

- Creative Mondays, 3:00-4:30: November 27, and December 4, 11, & 18
- Student workshops, 3:00-4:30:
 - November 28: Ten Questions
- Faculty workshop, 3:00-4:30:
 - December 12: Cultivating the Creative Classroom



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