

The Free Minds Project
a course in the humanities

2013-14 Class Policies Statement

Course Goals

The Free Minds Project is an inter-disciplinary, college-level course in the humanities. Over the two-semester, nine-month class, students will study literature, philosophy, anthropology, creative writing, and analytical writing, as well as theater and art in interactive, discussion-based classroom sessions. Each individual subject has goals of its own, but there are some overall goals that apply to the course as a whole.

The Free Minds Project intends to create a learning community that will encourage students to:

- Broaden their knowledge of and engagement with texts and ideas that have made profound contributions to our cultural traditions;
- Increase their confidence in themselves as citizens, thinkers, self-advocates, and advocates for their communities;
- Improve their analytical and communication skills, both written and spoken;
- Experience the power and pleasure of reflection, and appreciate the value of intellectual community;
- Become comfortable with, and meet, the expectations of college-level academic work;
- Understand the process of applying to college and become familiar with the paths to higher education available in Austin.

Attendance Policy

You are expected to attend all classes, to arrive on time, to complete any assigned reading and writing before arriving to class, and to participate in all in-class activities and discussion sessions. The core of the Free Minds Project is the classroom discussion that occurs at each class session. When you miss class, you miss important information central to your understanding of the course material and therefore to your success in the course, and you also deny other students, and your professors, the benefit of your insight and experience. For these reasons, the Free Minds Project adheres to a strict attendance policy.

Students in the Free Minds Project are allowed a total of ***eight absences*** for the entire year. **Missing more than eight classes will prevent you from earning credit in the class, and may result in your early dismissal from the program.** Save any absences to use when you are sick, or when you have an emergency. If you know in advance that you will have to miss class, please notify the Free Minds office before the start of class on the day you will be absent so that you can make arrangements to make up material you have missed, and to turn in any assignments due on that day. **You are responsible for turning in assignments on time, even if you are absent.** If you find that an unavoidable problem consistently prevents you from attending class, please discuss the problem with the staff as soon as possible.

If you know you will miss class or be unable to complete an assignment on time due to the observance of a religious holy day, please inform us as far in advance of the absence as possible, so that arrangements can be made to complete an assignment within a reasonable time after the absence.

If you encounter major obstacles to completing the course, please consult with your teachers and with the project director before making a final decision to withdraw. We may be able to provide assistance to help you complete the program. Should it be necessary to leave the program, you will be asked to return all books.

Class Hours

The Free Minds Project meets from 6:00 pm to 8:30 pm each Monday and Thursday. Please plan to have your children settled into child care or Camp Fire USA and be present in the classroom at 6:00. Between 6:00 and 6:30, a light dinner will be available for students and their children, as well as professors.

If you arrive after 6:30 pm, you will be considered late for class. Being late to class is not only disruptive but also tends to hurt your own performance, since you miss important announcements that are often made at the start of class. **Three late arrivals will be equal to one class absence.**

We ask that you finish your meal and clear your plates by 6:30 to enable the Free Minds faculty to start their sessions on time. Class will wrap up each night at 8:30.

Assignments

There is a reading assignment due every class session. Readings are due on the day they are listed on the assignment sheet. Be sure to consult the specific subject syllabus as well so that you do not miss any reading or analysis questions your professors have provided.

You will turn in a written response to each class reading unless notified otherwise. These daily writing assignments are designed to prepare you for the class discussion and are a key part of your overall grade for this class.

You will also be asked to turn in more formal writing assignments. Details about the formal writing will be distributed separately.

In the spring semester, you will turn in a portfolio project in which you will be asked to reflect on the writing and thinking you have done over the course of the year.

All of the writing you do for this class, both formal and informal, will be read by your professors and/or by the writing consultant. Together, all this writing will become your "portfolio," a record of the writing and thinking you have done in the class throughout the year and of your intellectual development. Your portfolio will also be the basis for some of the formal writing assignments, where you may be asked to develop some of the ideas you first expressed in your daily reading journals, response papers, or in-class writing. Please be sure not to throw away any of your writing from the class until you have completed the program.

Late Papers

Formal papers are due at the start of class on the day listed on the class syllabus. You are responsible for turning in work on time, even if you cannot attend class on the date an assignment is due. Points will be deducted from your assignment grade if it is turned in late. See the writing syllabus for details. If you know in advance that it will be impossible for you to meet a deadline, please consult the writing consultant as soon as possible.

Computer Access and Assistance

As registered ACC students, you will have access to ACC computer labs. More information about this will be provided by Christina Chapa, ACC advisor. You also have access to the computer lab at M Station.

If you need or would like assistance with any aspect of using a computer or word processing program, or if you think that completing your formal writing assignments on a computer will be difficult for you, please consult with program staff as soon as possible.

Scholastic Honesty

One purpose of the Free Minds Project is to provide you with an opportunity to explore your own responses to and opinions about important books and ideas. Turning in work that is not your own, and passing it off as yours, is called “plagiarism” and is a major scholastic offense. Plagiarism will result in a major course penalty, possibly preventing you from receiving credit for the course, and perhaps even resulting in dismissal from the program. We will discuss plagiarism thoroughly in class, and we’ll explain how to avoid it by giving proper credit to the words and ideas of others.

Academic Freedom

Institutions of higher education are conducted for the common good. The common good depends upon a search for truth and upon free expression. In this course the professors and students shall strive to protect free inquiry and the open exchange of facts, ideas, and opinions. Students are free to take exception to views offered in this course and to reserve judgment about debatable issues. Grades will not be affected by personal views. With this freedom comes the responsibility of civility and a respect for a diversity of ideas and opinions. This means that students must take turns speaking, listen to others speak without interruption, and refrain from name-calling or other personal attacks.

Assessment and Credit

All students who complete the Free Minds Project with a grade of C or above will earn six Austin Community College credits—three in the humanities and three in creative writing. To earn this credit, you must complete **both semesters** of the class; credit will not be granted for the completion of one semester only. In assessing your performance in the course, your professors will be considering your overall commitment to and progress in the class, as well as your work on individual assignments. You will receive feedback about your performance in the course in written comments on your assignments.

Your grade for Free Minds will be determined based on the following components:

- Fall Paper – 15%
- Reading Journals – 20% (Fall—10%, Spring—10%)
- Spring Paper -- 15%
- Portfolio -- 15%
- Creative Writing -- 15%
- Participation -- 20%

If you are unsure of your standing in the class at any point, you are encouraged to consult with a faculty member or with Ms. Griffith. You may also request a conference at any time to discuss your progress in the class and any needs or concerns you have.

Withdrawal

If you encounter major obstacles to completing the course, please consult with your teachers and with the project director before making a final decision to withdraw. Should it be necessary to leave the program, you will be asked to return all books.

Please remember that you are a registered ACC student while enrolled in Free Minds, so early withdrawal will affect your academic record with ACC and may result in receiving an F for the course. Consider very carefully the long-term consequences of withdrawing before doing so.

Academic Support

Free Minds is a rigorous, college-level course and can be challenging for students. Our goal is for you to succeed. As such, academic support is available in several ways. You are encouraged to contact your professors directly in order to ask any questions you may have about the readings, the assignments, or anything else that has come up in class discussion. You can do this by raising questions in class, by using any informal class time before the session begins at 6:30 pm to talk individually with a professor, or by contacting a professor outside of class to ask questions or to discuss the material further.

For assistance with any aspect of your writing, you are also encouraged to consult with the writing consultant. S/he will attend most class sessions and is available to help with you with all aspects of the writing process.

You are also welcome to consult with the Free Minds staff. Project Director, Vivé Griffith, can assist with any aspect of your Free Minds experience. Contact her when you have questions about the reading, are working on a writing assignment, or are having trouble getting in touch with a faculty member you have not yet been able to reach. You are also encouraged to consult her if you are having problems completing the assignments or arriving to class on time, or are encountering major obstacles to completing the program. Program Coordinator Amelia Pace-Borah is also interested in helping you succeed in the program.

Student Support

We recognize that you may face obstacles to completing the course that are unrelated to the academic work itself. Tera Bock, Case Manager at Foundation Communities' M Station, is

available to provide social work and other support services to Free Minds students. Ms. Bock will hold office hours before class on occasion and is available to consult with you outside of class by appointment. She can link students to resources in the Austin community and provide one-on-one assistance.

College Advising

One goal of the Free Minds Project is to help students who want to continue their education transition into college. Christina Chapa, an Austin Community College Advisor, will be available to help you with this process. Ms. Chapa will visit our class periodically to give workshops on the college application and admission process, as well as on specific academic and career pathways of interest to students in the class. You are also welcome to contact Ms. Chapa in order to schedule individual consultations outside of class time.

Our hope is that each of you has an inspiring and rewarding experience as a Free Minds student. Please let us know what we can do to support you this year.