Goals, Visions, and Promises:
For years I have dreamed of designing a course dedicated solely to developing each student's personal creativity - not just by teaching "creative writing," but by building a course which could strengthen the deep roots of creativity itself in every aspect of our lives - in all the arts, in all the sciences, in all our relationships and works and days and dreams. This seminar is that "dream course" come to life at last. Welcome.

Assignments will be based entirely on the creative techniques described in Julia Cameron’s classic book, The Artist's Way (currently the best-selling creativity book of all time). By joining this seminar, you will in effect be joining what Cameron calls a "Sacred Circle" - a group whose sole purpose is to encourage others (and yourself) to strengthen and recover their own personal creativity. True to Cameron’s principles, I will not so much "teach" this course as take it with you: coordinating tasks, keeping records, and doing every single assignment myself, for my own private benefit and enjoyment.

There must inevitably still be grades - and a fair method of determining them. The Good News: any student who wants an "A" in this class can earn one - unconditionally guaranteed! - just by faithfully following the steps Cameron describes for the next 12 weeks. Unlike most classes, your grade will not depend on the quality of your work, but rather on the quantity and consistency of your effort during the twelve-week quarter.

The bad news is that the favorite strategy of stressed out, overloaded Honors Institute students won’t work here at all. Warning: there is simply no way to pass this course based on one or two bursts of desperate all-night effort sandwiched precariously between midterms and finals. If you simply can’t (or won’t) spend a few hours a week - every week! - doing the fun and easy work for this one-unit seminar, you should drop the course immediately. I’m serious. No kidding.

What do you actually have to do to earn an "A"? Here’s a list of the weekly tasks (and an estimate of how long they’ll take you). Note that, except for the Class Blogs, each task is fully described in Cameron’s The Artist’s Way in full detail. I’ll describe the blogs in a separate handout elsewhere.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Hours/Week</th>
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<tr>
<td>Morning Journal Pages</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Artist’s Walks</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Artist’s Date</td>
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<td>Assigned Reading</td>
<td>.5</td>
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<td>Class Blog Contributions</td>
<td>.5</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
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The format of our weekly in-class activities will be equally simple:

1:30 - 1:45  In Class Test on Assigned Reading
1:45 - 2:00  Progress Report (small group discussion)
2:00 - 2:20  Class Discussion (everyone)

Since one of Cameron's favorite creative concepts is synchronicity, it seems only natural that her chapters are miraculously laid out in exactly the same twelve-week sequence we use to organize our academic quarters here at Foothill College. Hence your reading assignment sequence is quite simple:

Week 1  
Read "Week One" pages 25-40  
No Quiz this week

Week 2  
Read "Week Two" pages 41-60  
in-class Quiz on "Week One" chapter

Week 3  
Read "Week Three" pages 61-78  
in-class Quiz on "Week Two" chapter

Week 4  
Read "Week Four" pages 49-91  
in-class Quiz on "Week Three" chapter

And so on....

As you read, you'll discover that each chapter contains specific mini-assignments for you to write or perform. Although I would certainly urge you to complete these tasks, they aren't "required" for participation in this class (or for a grade). Perhaps the best way to approach most of these "extras" is to use them as the basis for some of your daily morning pages. That way, you'll get grade credit for doing them too!

Since morning pages are supposed to be completely private, I'll ask you to fill out a "check in sheet" each week, reporting on how many Morning Pages you've written in the past seven days, and on how many other activities you completed. Although you should bring your morning pages journal to class, no one will read it. Instead, you'll just hold it up for your group members to glance at and have them verify how many total pages you've written. That way you get some encouragement (and honesty) every week, without endangering the sacred privacy of your Morning Pages.

To share the best writing we do more publicly, I've set up an interactive webpage (known as a Blog), where you'll be required to post at least one comment per week. The only requirement in posting is that you quote directly, in your response, from at least one other student in the seminar. That means you'll need to read other people's comments before beginning your own. The web-address of the Honors Seminar Blog is http://mindsurfing.typepad.com/E34H/.

A final note on religious freedom: As you'll soon discover, Cameron uses the word "God" with great frequency, and places religious/spiritual experiences at the center of the creative life she describes. When I first picked up her book ten years ago, all this "god talk" initially made me quite suspicious. As a gay atheist/Buddhist with a PhD in Modern Thought and Literature from Stanford, I'm naturally skeptical about the place of such overtly religious language in a secular, state-funded college classrooms such as our own. However, just as Cameron predicted, I soon found a suitable substitute for the word "God" in my own creative practice (as a passionate ecologist, the word "Earth" works for me). So whatever your own private religious/spiritual orientation, please be assured that this course involves no religious indoctrination, no required religious practices of any kind, and certainly no specific institutionalized form of belief or worship whatsoever. May the Earth bless you and keep you. And may your newfound creativity bring forth a thousand flowers.