“The Five Senses Through the Eyes of Autism”

Instructors: Mrs. Byrne and Mrs. Catania
Location: Community Room
Hours: 3a,c (lunch 3b)
Dates: Sept. 3-September 30

Seminar Description:
Experts estimate that 1 out of 88 children age 8 will have an Autism Spectrum Disorder diagnosis. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, March 30, 2012). Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Autism are both general terms for a group of complex disorders of brain development. Most people diagnosed with some type of ASD have a different sensory experience from others. In this seminar we will explore the world of the senses and the varying degree that people can experience the same sounds, taste, imagery, touch and smell.

We will also read a book to obtain credit in English. You have the choice of two books depending upon availability: Nobody Nowhere and Somebody Somewhere. Both are autobiographies written by Donna Williams, about her journey through life having autism.

Possible credit earned includes: Any level of English, Advanced Topics in Social Studies, Advanced Topics in Social Science, and AIA.

If you are interested in art therapy, psychology, music therapy, design, education or anything related to these topics this would be the seminar for you!

Possible credit earned:
US History, Government, Science and additional English credit is available through optional academic projects depending on the direction you choose. Your project could also be designed to incorporate Foundations in Art and Design or Foundations in Music. Please work with your mentor to figure out your foundations credit or arts credit for this seminar.

English
- Expository English: Student will read and analyze non-fiction essays
- Expository English: Reflection Paper
- Expository English: Independent Book Study - Report

- Any English-Research targets
- Advanced Topics in Literature: Non-fiction Analysis
Resources:
- *Nobody Nowhere* by Donna Williams
- *Somebody Somewhere* by Donna Williams
- *Introduction to Psychology* (Plotkin 2002) Textbook
- *Thinking in Pictures* movie and chapters from the book
- Excerpts from *Rainman* movie
- Chapters from *Art of Innovations* By David Kelly

Daily Calendar
- **W Sept 3:**
  - 3A- Intro and overview of syllabus, get books and introduction to sensory issues
    - **Intro to Psychology:** What is it? What do psychologists do? How & why do psychologists do what they do? Goals of Psych and behavior vs. mental processes
  - 3C- What is Autism?
  - **Assignment:** Read Psych Textbook pg 3-11. What are the 6 modern approaches? Which do you “agree” with most? Come prepared Thurs. with examples for 3 of the 6.
- **Th Sept 4:**
  - 3A- Intro to experiential audio visual art
  - 3C- Autism 101 continued
- **F Sept. 5:** 3A: Finish topics from Wednesday
  - Modern & Historical approaches/philosophies of Psych
  - Psych study Methods
  - 3C: Get Donna Williams book from bookroom and begin reading
  - **Assignment:** Read first 25 pages of Williams book for Monday.
- **M Sept. 8:**
  - 3A: Brainstorm Sensory experiences people with ASD may have and how this may affect them.
    - **Assignment:** Read Psych Textbook pg 388-390. What are Piaget’s 4 stages? Does this make sense to you?
  - 3C: Discussion on 10 things handout
  - Lit Circle on first 25 pages.
  - Apply approaches & goals of psych to excerpts from *Rainman*
    - **Assignment:** Read 25-75 in Williams book for Thursday.
- **T Sept. 9:**
  - 3A: Intro to Sensory Experience Projects
  - 3C: Sensory experiences in the autistic brain
  - **Read Chapter 5 in Art of Innovation for Thursday Sept11 (link on MYLC)**
- **Th Sept. 11:**
  - 3A: Sensory Experience teams and Hot Teams
  - 3C: Lit Circle Williams pages 25-75
    - **Assignment:** Read 75-125 Williams for Monday
    - Lit Circle Questions P.1-50 Due Tuesday
- Read Chapter 4 from Art of Innovation
- Brainstorm ideas for sensory experience/experiential art installation

**F Sept. 12:** 3A: Team Brainstorm for sensory experience
- 3C: Famous people with Autism—an overview of their creative work

**M Sept. 15:** 3A: Guest Speaker and Finalize ideas for sensory experiences
- 3C: Lit Circle on 25-75 Williams Book

- **Assignment: Read 75-125 for Thursday**

**T Sept. 16:** 3A and C: Temple Grandin Video
- **Assignment: Read handout on Temple Grandin**

**Th. Sept. 18:**
- 3A: Discussion of Temple Grandin Video
- 3C: Finish Williams book by Thurs.
  - Create 3-4 lit circle questions for Monday (beyond P.50)

**Fri. Sept. 19:**
- 3A: Create concrete plans for sensory experience. This includes materials, time-line, technology needs...
- 3C:
  - **Monday Sept. 22:**
  - 3A and C: Work time for sensory experience
  - **Tuesday Sept. 23:**
  - 3A and C: Work time for sensory experience
  - **Thursday Sept. 25:**
  - 3A: Work time for sensory experience
  - 3C: Lit Circle on end of lit books. Submit Questions by Wed. 9pm

**Monday Sept. 29:**
- 3A and C: Artist Statement Review and Work time for sensory experience

**Tuesday Sept. 30:**
- 3A: Work time for sensory experience

**3C: Set up your sensory experience for peer critique**

**October 1st- 5:30PM Present sensory experience during open house. Your experience must be ready by 5:00 with an artist statement. This is the Final project to show your learning. Please make sure you can attend. See Mrs. Byrne or Mrs. Catania with questions or concerns.**

**Assignments/Projects**
- Read Nobody Nowhere or Somebody Somewhere by Donna Williams, annotate as you read and participate in a lit circle to discuss the book.
- Read chapters from the Psychology book as well as supplemental chapters and articles related to autism and design.
- Work with another class member to create a sensory experience for the seminar group to experience to show how people with Autism experience certain senses.
This is an excellent way to report learning design!

Key Methods and Student (and Teacher!) Learning Design- Autism Micro Credential, Terri Catania: (all of the hours listed are approximations)

1. Teacher attendance at Summer Autism Institute hosted by Kettle Moraine School District- August 12 and 13th, 2014
   ● approximately 12 hours

2. Read several books and articles including:
   Nobody Nowhere-Donna Williams
   Somebody Somewhere-Donna Williams
   Ten Things Every Child With Autism Wishes You Knew-Ellen Notbohm
   Scratched Soul-Judy Endow
   ● approximately 15 hours of reading and annotating

3. Developed lesson plans, writing prompts and Literature Circles around Nobody Nowhere and Somebody Somewhere for seminar students
   ● approximately 2 hours of preparation

4. Researched online sources including blogs and youtube videos especially geared towards understanding the sensory integration difficulties of those on the spectrum in relation to a neurotypical experience
   ● approximately two hours

5. Took students in seminar to an SWD Social Circle led by Speech and Language Specialist Kris Webster
   ● one hour

5. Continuation of work with SWD Students in a Music Therapy environment. Students in my seminar prepare lesson plans for SWD students and I coach them twice per week.
   ● Two hours per week for the school year

6. Developed a final project for students to present to neurotypical adults what it is like to have sensory overstimulation.
   ● Approximately 10 hours of class time, one hour of preparation to develop

7. Continue to provide support for students in Band and KM Perform with Autism through preparedness activities and accommodations.
   ● Daily
Here is an example of student work!

**Writing Assignment/Reflection:**

**What went well today?**

The kids seemed to really be engaged and enjoy themselves. They were nervous at first, but most of them warmed up to us like they usually do. It might have been better if we started with a less complex and more grouped activity, as opposed to a more independent soloing activity.

**What was challenging?**

Some of the kids were very nervous which made it difficult for them to open up fully and really enjoy the activity. It was also kind of difficult to keep everyone on task, a couple of the kids wanted to switch instruments multiple times and because of that, everyone got off task because they all wanted to switch instruments then.

**How would you change your plan based on certain occurrences (someone not wanting to participate, or someone that struggles with participating in the way you wish them to? Three paragraphs by Thursday please! Shared here or google docs.**

I plan on teaching my activity in partners first for practice then getting into slightly bigger groups, and continue on and then at the end, I plan on doing one big group activity. I definitely plan on working hard to keep everyone on task and making sure everyone is involved and comfortable before we get into bigger groups.
Here is a student reflection! (I bet it could be an assessment of learning too).

I must be completely honest, when I was signing up for classes, I chose them based on which classes offered the most credit. Thank goodness I did! I learned so much about a topic that deserves more attention than it receives: autism. Before this seminar, I did not have any exposure to what autism is, I don’t have any autistic family or friends and I have never truly encountered any autistic students at school. I thought that autistic people were all the same- I didn’t understand that there was a spectrum and I didn’t know how their brains were different than mine.

After doing extensive research in psychology, neurology, and case studies, I now know that autism is much bigger than I previously thought it to be. I learned the most from the case studies- we read “Nobody Nowhere” by Donna Williams (an autistic woman) and watched the movie “Temple Grandin” about the life of a successful autistic woman. I was touched by both stories but the biggest takeaway from both were how different their lives were; autism is completely individualized. For example: Temple couldn’t stand sliding doors and Donna didn’t mind them. Donna had multiple personalities through “Carol” and “Willie” while Temple did not. I really appreciated the book because it provided direct insight into Donna’s head while the movie was an interpretation of Temple’s life. The coolest thing about the seminar is that I never stopped learning about this topic, both the book and the movie taught me different things about autism.

The movie was really intriguing because it was able to portray how an autistic person views daily life. The sight and sounds of the movie were purposefully enhanced to help the audience understand how Temple saw life. They did a great job! One example of this was to explain how Temple took things very literally. At one point, her aunt said something along the lines of “get a good night sleep, we get up with the roosters around here!” What she meant to say was that they get up very early but screen flashed an image of Temple and her aunt sitting on the roof with the roosters at the crack of dawn. The coolest thing about Temple was that she didn’t let her autism define her. In fact, Temple was able to use her autism to her advantage to help her solve problems by viewing situations in ways that non-autistic view them.

Donna is very different than Temple. Donna had a terrible childhood full of abuse and she didn’t have the slightest inclination of her autism until she was an adult. Donna also has different personalities and when she was younger, she didn’t refer to herself as Donna, she called herself by the name of her personalities “Carol” or “Willie”. This book was very disturbing, and I did not expect that. I was disturbed because the book discussed all aspects of Donna’s life- including what happened in her mind. Donna didn’t go into a lot of detail about the different ways that autism impacted her, she talked about how it made her feel. I didn’t understand that there was another way to see the world that I live in. She was trapped inside her mind and wasn’t capable of being very close to people. Every time someone would
try to get close to her, they would really get close to “Carol” or “Willie”. Yet, as people got close they started to see Donna’s world instead of “the world” of non-autistic people. That was terrifying to her and it was difficult for me to understand.

Though I am not an expert in autism, I am much more educated about something that I didn’t know anything about. This class gave me the opportunity to understand and even get a taste of what living with autism is like. I did get a lot of credit but I gained so much more from this experience, understanding and compassion.
Teacher Reflection! OUTSTANDING

I must be completely honest, when I choose to do this micro credential, I chose very selfishly. In May of 2014, my middle child was diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome, which is considered to be on the high functioning end of the Autism Spectrum. I had already begun the learning required to parent my child with special needs, but I was also aware of several students in my band program and up and coming into KM Perform that are on the spectrum. I felt a draw to learn as much as I could to support my own son AND become a better teacher by serving the needs of others.

KM Perform has the perfect outlet to share my knowledge and learning, and ironically in the past year I had already been involved in teaching seminars on Autism in the creation of a Sensory Room for our high school SWD population, so I had some prior knowledge to draw upon in developing seminars to further my learning and share my findings with students. Thank goodness I did! I learned so much about this topic and was also able to share this puzzle of a diagnosis with students eager to learn more. Before I taught this seminar, most of my students did not have much exposure to what autism is and how an autistic brain perceives the senses, and that there is a spectrum of abilities.

After providing lesson plans that included research in psychology, neurology, and also bringing a KM Perform student on the spectrum to speak, I feel confident that my students have a much stronger understanding of what autism. Most students felt they understood the most from reading the autobiographies of Donna Williams and how she perceives the world. I also exposed the students to multiple people that are on the spectrum and successful in their life’s work such as Temple Grandin, Judy Endow and others that have videos and blogs about their autism.

Though I am nowhere near an expert in autism, if you ever came to my home during a “Nicholas meltdown” you would agree, I feel I have a much better understanding of this puzzle and how it fits together for my child AND how others experience their autism in such different ways.

I am much more comfortable being a point person for our students when an SWD teacher is not around to help problem solve and work with a student in need.