

TEACHING COSPLAY:
A THEORETICAL CURRICULUM
USING CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AND VISUAL CULTURE ART EDUCATION

BY

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THESIS

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Abstract

During my time as an MFA student, my cosplay-based art was often met with misunderstanding or criticism. I found that many of my peers and professors did not understand cosplay to be a form of artistic practice nor did they see it as a meaningful form of identity expression. While cosplay can be defined as the act of dressing up as a popular culture character, this definition fails to convey the criticality, identity exploration, and craft that are involved in its creation. Therefore, this thesis used critical pedagogy and visual culture art education (VCAE) to create a college-level cosplay curriculum. The intention of this curriculum is to promote students to think critically about their interaction with popular culture and fandom, to explore the construction of identity, and to use cosplay as a form of artistic practice.

I developed curriculum documents consisting of a class syllabus and four project documents using theories of cosplay identity, critical pedagogy, and VCAE. I then present these documents and justify their content and classroom practice using critical pedagogy and VCAE. The results indicate that cosplay, when taught in a critical manner, can foster student engagement in identity construction and critical thinking. As the curriculum is theoretical, further research is necessary to determine the curriculum's effectiveness and practicality.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

“It just sounds like a pre-teen lusting after posters of Luke Skywalker in her bedroom.” Heat rose in my cheeks at this comment and I frantically looked around for support among the crowd of my peers and professors in attendance at my critique. It wasn’t going well even before this particular comment. At this time, I was in my fourth semester of an MFA program in Metals and my work consisted of necklaces that were intended to be artifacts from a world I was creating as an expression of my interest in fantasy and science fiction fandoms. The narrative I presented during the critique was a narrative in progress, not yet fully formed. At one point during the critique, I attempted to describe this world as having a “*Star Wars* vibe,” meaning, futuristic, yet old Western. Rather than adding clarity, my off-hand comment resulted in my work and narrative being relegated to the stereotypical conception of the over-sexualized, obsessed, fan girl making out with posters of Luke Skywalker. Embarrassed and disheartened, I abandoned this particular narrative not long after.

Up until this point, I had always kept my love of fandom, and what I thought of as my profession or academic art, separate. Although I would not say that I was an avid cosplayer, which is a term used to describe the act of dressing as a character from popular culture, I had been sewing dresses to wear to the Renaissance festival with my grandmother since I was eight and had created or purchased several cosplay costumes in high school and undergrad. I loved the act of sewing and creating almost as much as I loved the act of having the excuse to put on a gorgeous costume and strut around pretending to be someone else. For example, I recently crafted a cosplay of the character San from Hayao Miyazaki’s *Princess Mononoke*. I loved the process of carefully researching images of the characters, trying to determine what types of fabrics would be most appropriate for her character, and figuring out the best way to make props

that would be easy to wear, yet look authentic. The process appealed to my love of making and attention to detail. When I wore the costume, I felt that I expressed my love of the character and that it gave me permission to embody San in my interactions with others.

These garments seemed to hold pieces of myself in them. The Renaissance festival dresses were representative of my relationship with my grandmother and the summers spent crafting these dresses so that I could wear them even if only for a single day. Similarly, my cosplays represented characters I connected with as I imagined myself in their place, creating my own fantastical narrative to suit my identity. They may not have been the most elaborate costumes, but they helped represent my sense of self during my formative years.

In contrast, my academic art stayed confined to traditional metalsmithing and jewelry. In my undergraduate years, I made necklaces, rings, and brooches that were inspired by everything from architecture to nature. I enjoyed the process of making them but found that they lacked the meaningful purpose I had found in my cosplays. They always seemed to lack that personal identity my cosplays were imbued with. During my first semester of my MFA program, I struggled to find a meaning and purpose that would allow me to feel that my art was worthwhile rather than generic and banal. I realized that dismissing my love of fandom and cosplay as merely a pleasurable hobby that I no longer had time for might have been a mistake. Rather, I needed to bring my love of fandom and the personal connection I had found through cosplay into my academic art in order for it to also become a reflection of myself.

Despite this personal revelation of needing to embrace fandom in my artwork, as my aforementioned experience during the critique showed, not all of my peers and professors agreed with me. The experience I described would not be the last time I encountered resistance to my fan-based art among my professors and peers. In the following semester, I continued to explore

the concept of fandom and cosplay through the creation of masks and hoods that combined my identity and popular culture characters I identified with. I was often told by my professors and peers that these pieces were more interesting when I didn't talk about the fandom influence integral to my work. I felt frustrated and alienated but persisted in my insistence that the fandom aspect of my work was as important as the formal qualities. My experiences brought to light a lack of acknowledgement of fan art and cosplay within the academic art world. I often felt that fan art was viewed as juvenile, boring, and derivative.

Statement of the Problem

Generally, popular or mass culture, of which fandom is a part, has been regarded as a form of low culture that the middle class engages in because of a lack of sophisticated aesthetics and taste. Conversely, fine arts, has been viewed as a form of high culture that the upper class engages in because of its perceived originality or uniqueness and cultural value (Sturken & Cartwright, 2018). However, the line between high culture and low culture in Western art has often been challenged. Within fine art, artists such as Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, and Jeff Koons have used comics, images of celebrities, and even kitsch to redefine and challenge the aesthetics and taste of high culture. Relatedly, within the discipline of art education, scholars have championed Visual Culture Art Education (VCAE) which focuses on including aspects of visual and popular culture in the arts classroom. In these cases, popular culture is accepted as a meaningful form of artists' expression.

Despite the tentative acceptance of visual culture within art and art education, forms of popular culture such as fan art and cosplay are relatively unexplored within academic studio art. Even when fan art is explored as a form of engagement with students in the arts classroom it is often in the context of elementary or high school students rather than higher education (Chen,

2007; Hetrick, 2018; Manifold, 2009). As my experience during an art critique shows, there are still misconceptions and dismissal of fan culture within fine art studio in higher education.

Relating my work and my fan identity to the stereotypical fangirl, so obsessed with a character that she makes out with poster of them in a locked bedroom, pointed to the conception of fandom as a tasteless pursuit.

The idea of fandom as lacking in taste and aesthetic merit is a common perception. The concept of taste is linked to cultural values, education, and social class. “Good” taste is often based on elite cultural notions of aesthetics, meaning the perceived beauty or pleasure that an art work has “is informed by one’s class, cultural background, education, national framework, and other aspects of identity and social experience” (Sturken & Cartwright, 2018, p. 60). For example, enjoying the works of Shakespeare is considered to be good taste because they are considered intellectually and aesthetically-pleasing in Western society. Therefore enjoying Shakespeare is considered a high class pursuit in the dominant cultural hierarchy. Participants in fan culture, on the other hand, are often seen as “a group insistent on making meaning from materials others have characterized as trivial and worthless” (Jenkins, 1992, p. 3). As popular culture is culture for the masses, rather than for the elite, it is often considered to be lacking in aesthetic value. Therefore, it is “bad” taste and unworthy of academic consideration.

While dismissal of fandom is still prevalent in academic art, fan culture—and the study of it—is a growing field within higher education that has “emerged from cultural studies in the last two decades” (Duffett, 2018, p. 2). Furthermore, the study of fans and fandoms is important as it provides insight into the human condition. Studying fandoms, and the relationships and communities forming from them “is a way of studying ourselves” (Booth, 2017, p. 21). By studying our fandoms and how we interact with others based on those fandoms, we develop a

better understanding of how we form relationships, build communities, and interact with each other on a social level.

The limited, yet growing, academic discourse on fan art and cosplay within the field of art and art education becomes problematic when taking into consideration previous acceptance¹ of popular culture and the growing field of fan studies as a legitimate academic field of research. Furthermore, for some to ignore or even dismiss cosplay and fan art as forms of artistic expression creates a limitation on student growth and conscious understanding of *why* they find enjoyment and purpose in popular culture.

Main Research Question and Sub-Questions

In order to address these problems, the purpose of this thesis is to explore the potential of cosplay as a means of student engagement in the college level arts classroom through critical pedagogy and VCAE. Using critical pedagogy and VCAE as a foundation, this curriculum will theoretically allow students to critically explore their own experiences with popular culture and how it may have [re]shaped their identities. As such, this thesis will focus on the following research questions:

Main Research Question

How can critical pedagogy and visual culture-based art education be used to create a college studio art course utilizing cosplay to explore identity construction?

Supporting Question

How can cosplay be utilized to teach artistic skills and techniques?

¹ It should be noted that not all art educators agree with VCAE or the exploration of popular culture in the arts classroom.

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this thesis is to create a theoretical college level classroom curriculum centered on teaching students:

- a. Practical techniques for crafting their own cosplay
- b. To critically consider their identity in relationship to their chosen character

The intention is for the curriculum to guide students to analyze popular culture not only as a form of pleasure but also as a tool that can be used in the exploration of their identities. As such this research will also investigate one pedagogical structure for teaching students critical thinking.

To do so, this research focuses on creating a curriculum using the pedagogical structures of critical pedagogy and VCAE. Critical pedagogy emphasizes that all knowledge is political and that students should be encouraged to think critically about their own experiences in everyday life (Freire, 1970/2017; Giroux, 2011; Jacobs, 1997; Monchinski, 2008). Thus, the pedagogical structure of the curriculum is intended to encourage students to critically analyze their own relationship with popular culture in order to manipulate popular culture for their own creative needs through the creation of cosplay. Important aspects of both critical pedagogy and VCAE are encouraging students to be independent, to critically consider information, and to actively engage in dialogue in order to facilitate critical thought. As such, this curriculum incorporates art making, reading, writing, and techniques for facilitating active discussions.

The curriculum produced in this research consists of a syllabus, course calendar, and four project handouts with grading rubrics. Within the course calendar are additional details such as assigned readings and writings. The class is set up to be taught over a sixteen-week semester with two, two hour and forty-minute class periods per week. However, there is some flexibility

as the class could be taught without the additional reading and writing projects (see CH 5: Conclusion). The role of the educator working with this curriculum is to provide demonstrations of artistic techniques, to encourage dialogue between students with regard to cosplay and popular culture, and to pose questions for discussions in order to encourage critical thinking.

Significance

The research presented in this thesis is significant as it addresses several gaps in literature and research. First, there is a limited amount of art education research that addresses fan art as a legitimate form of student engagement in the arts classroom. Art education scholars that do explore the potential of fan art are often limited to K-12 classes and rarely refer to cosplay specifically. As such, this research provides a practical framework for art educators to use in the college level classroom that incorporates cosplay as an artistic practice. In doing so, this research will contribute to art education research through the discussion of teaching meaningful art making through cosplay.

Second, cosplay is rarely explored in the fine arts as a legitimate form of artistic practice. Similarly, scholarly research in fan studies has rarely considered cosplay in terms of artistic practice. On the one hand, it requires technical skills and specialized materials, on the other, most who engage in cosplay have been socialized to consider it a hobby (Winge, 2019). Cosplay, then, seems to exist in the space between legitimate artistic practice and amateur hobby. This research is not intended to bring cosplay into one space or the other, but rather to bring attention to the potential of art that exists in this liminal space.

Researcher Bias and Limitations

As with most academic studies there is an issue of researcher bias that must be addressed. In this case, I identify as a fan and cosplayer which positions me as an insider researcher with the

potential for researcher bias. However, scholars of fans are often fans, themselves. Jenkins (1992), for example, stated “when I write about fan culture, then, I write *both* as an academic . . . and as fan” (p. 5). Similarly, the introduction to Busse’s (2017) text *Framing Fan Fiction* describes her experience as part of the fan community. Winge (2019) and Lamerichs (2011) both identify and have participated in cosplay related activities. Thus, it is not uncommon for fans to actively research and publish academic texts related to the study of fans. Jenkins (1992) has “found that approaching popular culture as a fan gives me new insights into the media by releasing me from the narrowly circumscribed categories and assumptions of academic criticism” (p. 5). Similarly, as fan and cosplayer, I am able to move past potential preconception of cosplay in academia, but as an academic, I do so with the knowledge of theories of popular culture, fandom, identity, and pedagogy in mind. This is not to say that my researcher bias should be dismissed, but rather that I embrace and acknowledge that my position as an insider researcher affects my perspective.

Along with potential researcher bias, the scope and time frame for this research has not included the opportunity to apply this curriculum in a real classroom. This limits the reliability of predicting how this curriculum will function in a practical setting. As with most curricula, adjustments will likely be required depending on the university, class size, student level and interest (Davis, 2009). Furthermore, as this curriculum is limited to the college level, the structure, workload, and skill level recommended would require further adjustment in order to be used in an elementary or secondary classroom (see CH 5: Conclusion).

Lastly, my use of critical pedagogy and VCAE may be considered questionable given that the theories surrounding these pedagogies were developed over twenty years ago and have since fallen out of popularity. As such, the relevancy of these pedagogies could be considered

dated. However, critical pedagogy and VCAE are uniquely suited to fandom as they leave room for the pleasure derived from popular culture yet still ask for the student to critically consider the political and biased nature of popular culture. While critical pedagogy and VCAE have been used in conjunction with popular culture it has rarely been from a fandom perspective, particularly in curriculum developed for the college level. Therefore, I believe there is merit in using critical pedagogy and VCAE.

Research Design

The content and research for this thesis developed from my frustration of the lack of acknowledgement of the validity of fan art and cosplay during my MFA studies. Upon entering into an MA program for Art Education, I further noticed a gap in literature in regard to cosplay as a form of student engagement in the arts classroom, particularly at the college level. As such, I began researching critical pedagogy and VCAE as I believed they were the most suitable pedagogies to structure a cosplay class. As such, I began with a literature review of relevant critical pedagogy and VCAE with a focus on their application in popular culture and fandom. I then focused on creating documents that would be used during the proposed cosplay class in order to structure the course content and projects. During this process I used the theories of critical pedagogy and VCAE to develop questions that would encourage student thought and build critical thinking. Next, I analyzed the documents in order to explain their intended function, to explore classroom procedures, and highlight facilitation of student engagement. Finally, I reviewed my analysis in order to determine potential areas of alteration for an online course or elementary or secondary level class.

Summary of Content

Chapter 1 serves as the introduction to the research and describes the background and relevant context of the thesis. I address the experiences that led me to note the gap in literature with regard to cosplay as curriculum. This chapter also addresses issues of researcher bias and limitations with regards to this research. Chapter 2 explores four areas of relevant literature, including: cosplay, identity, critical pedagogy, and VCAE. Chapter 3 outlines my process for creating the curriculum. Chapter 4 is the presentation of the curriculum documents including the syllabus, Project 1, Project 2, Project 3, and Character Binder. This chapter will discuss the intended use of these documents in conjunction with classroom practice and relate these pedagogical choices back to the literature. Finally, Chapter 5 will serve as the conclusion to this thesis and discuss other potential avenues of research as well as summarize the possible amendments that can be made to the curriculum to make it useable in elementary or secondary art classrooms.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Chapter 2 will discuss literature relevant to cosplay, identity, critical pedagogy, and VCAE. To begin, the chapter will examine cosplay both as a fan practice and as a studio art practice in order to create context for cosplay's use in a studio arts classroom. This will lead into the next section in which I discuss theories of identity in relationship to cosplay. Both of these sections will provide insight into the content of the curriculum. The following sections, critical pedagogy and VCAE, are indented to review the pedagogical bases of the curriculum. This will provide a context for the structure created in the curriculum documents.

Fans, Fandom, and Cosplay

The study of fans and fandoms is important as it provides insight into the human condition. As Booth (2017) explains, “we are all fans of something, and we all become emotionally involved” (p. 21) in popular culture. Fandoms are communities that fans form through a mutual love of particular fan objects, which are defined as the pieces of culture that a fan's emotions and activity center around (Fraade-Blanar & Glazer, 2017). Fans that may have nothing else in common (e.g., race, geographical location, gender) form relationships based on an interest in a common fandom. While the concept of fan studies began in the 1930s, humans have been engaging as fans for much longer². Fans create social interactions that are inclusive to those within the fandom, yet exclusive to those outside of the fandom. This in turn promotes fan participation in the form of cosplay, fan fiction, and fan art. The unique social interactions of fans often lead to the development of communities that exist on social media. In real life, these communities take the form of conventions (e.g., Comic-Con) and social gatherings.

² For an overview of the history of fan studies see the Introduction to *Framing Fan Fiction* by Kristina Busse.

The term *fan* is often used to refer to “someone with excessive enthusiasm” (Hetrick, 2018, p. 57). In general, a fan is thought of as someone with an unhealthy obsession with a celebrity, TV show, music band, etc. The word fan “first appeared in late seventeenth-century England, where it was a common abbreviation for ‘fanatic’ (a religious zealot)” (Duffett, 2013, p. 5). Although recent scholarships of fans, known as fan studies, have worked to dispel notions of crazed and dangerous fans, there are still negative connotations and stereotypes attached to fandom. Like Booth (2017) said, most people are, to some degree, a fan of something. Given the broad definition of the term fan, it can be applied to people who watch TV shows, keep up with sports, enjoy a particular author’s books, or follow a celebrity on Instagram. The distinction between a fan and non-fan becomes how a person expresses their pleasure in interacting with a fandom[s].

A group of fans that come together form what is known as a *fandom*, a unique word derived from the combination of *fan* as in fanatic and the suffix *dom* as in kingdom (Hetrick, 2018)³. Fandom is a term used for the rituals and behaviors fans engage in both as a community and as individuals. For example, fans of *Supernatural* are members of the *Supernatural* fandom. The behaviors and rituals of fan behaviors vary between different fandoms but there are unifying practices. Most fandom communities engage in fan fiction, fan art, and cosplay. While all three practices can be argued as examples of creativity and ingenuity within fandoms, for the purpose of this thesis, I will focus on cosplay.

Cosplay as Artistic Practice

Cosplay is a combination of the words *costume* and *play* and was coined in 1983 by Nobuyuki Takahashi (Crawford & Hancock, 2019; Winge, 2019) after he attended a fan

³ Hetrick mentioned that *dom* could also stand for *domain* (Hetrick, 2021, personal communication). Therefore either or both, kingdom and domain would be correct in defining the portmanteau of fandom.

convention in Los Angeles, California. In simplest terms, cosplay can be defined as the act of dressing up as a character from popular culture. However, “defining what cosplay is, who cosplayers are, and understanding its history and contemporary context is far from straightforward” (Crawford & Hancock, 2019, p. 17). Cosplay is a complex fan practice that combines the act of making and performing in a manner that is unique to each cosplayer. For most cosplayers, the act of cosplay does not begin when they first don their costume and enter the convention space. Rather, cosplay often entails first choosing and researching a character. Then the cosplayer engages in the time-consuming act of crafting the costume which can involve learning new skills and working with new materials in order to fully realize a costume. During the act of wearing the costume, the cosplayer negotiates and combines their identity with their interpretation of the character’s identity (Winge, 2019).

Studio Art and Cosplay

Cosplay has two distinct aspects that are affiliated with the history of art and art making—the act of making and the act of performing. Uniquely, the two are not mutually exclusive in cosplay participation. Cosplayers spend countless hours choosing characters, crafting costumes, obsessing over details, and attending conventions. The result is a practice that is as dedicated, time consuming, and as expensive as any studio art practice. While some cosplayers purchase character costumes, many go to great length to portray the character. Others wear a costume they have carefully hand crafted, without attempting to emulate that character’s personality. Some cosplay players do both. In all cases, cosplay is tied to the art world through craft practice, costume making, theater, and performance art.

In order to develop a studio art curriculum that centers on the craft and performance of cosplay it is useful to describe cosplay in terms of studio art practice. Cosplay is undertheorized

as a form of studio art in both fan studies and art history. Crawford and Hancock's (2019) recently published book *Cosplay and the Art of Play* comes the closest to discussing cosplay in terms of artistic practice by relating the act of cosplay to the act of painting. Cosplay is described as being similar to painting because both are "performative and slow processes; developed overtime, usually by a solitary individual, but ultimately designed to be consumed by an audience" (Crawford & Hancock, 2019, p. 72). By relating cosplay to a legitimized form of studio art practice there is a potential to begin to see *cosplay* as a form of legitimate studio practice. To do so, the act of cosplay can be related to studio art through craft practice and performance art.

Constructing costumes and props for cosplay are labor-intensive acts of creation and craft that are as technical and time consuming as the creation of a professional theatre costume (Hansen, 2018). Furthermore, the process for creating a performance costume is similar to that of creating a cosplay. Hansen (2018) states both engage in "research, swatch, choose materials, pattern, build a mockup, and do fittings" (p. 38). After determining the character to be portrayed, the cosplayer designs a costume that mimics the character's appearance: this includes clothing, hair and props like weapons, wings, or other objects. Once the costume is designed, the cosplayer selects the materials best suited to realizing the costume. This is usually determined by the type of costume (e.g., armor, style of dress, types of props) and the budget of the cosplayer. Cosplayers use a variety of innovative materials such as EVA foam, leather, a variety of fabrics, spray foam, and silicone to craft costumes that are highly detailed. In order to create costumes, cosplayers learn skills like sewing, prop making, leather working, and design. In the same way a jeweler, sculptor, or painter learns the skills of their trade, cosplayers devote time to learning different skills to suit their needs. Cosplayers create their costumes out of a "love for sewing as

an activity and their passion for learning new skills” (Lamerichs, 2015, p. 111). Passion for the act of making is integral for most professional artists, one rarely chooses an arts-based career unless they have a desire for making and creation. Similarly, “a Cosplayer demonstrates creativity when she selects a character, designs the costume,” and “problem solves to construct the costume,” (Winge, 2019, p. 85). The labor, materials, and time necessary for crafting a single costume can be as intense as a studio artist creating a painting, sculpture, or media work.

Along with the artistic act of crafting, cosplay can also be seen as “a performance art in which the participant masquerades as a character” (Gn, 2011, p. 583). The performative aspect of cosplay is intimately intertwined with the identity of the character being represented and the cosplayer. Nichols (2019) describes cosplay “as a practice in which fans interact with narratives and characters and thereby identify and reveal themselves” (para. 4). Cosplayers often choose a character because they identify with some aspect of that character. Some cosplayers even attempt to fully emulate the identity of the character by enacting the mannerisms of the character while in costume. Thus, the act of dressing up as a character becomes a performance based on the cosplayer’s unique interpretation of that character⁴.

Cosplay’s ability to engage a person in the act of making, performing, and identity exploration are paramount in my decision to use it as the focus for fan practices in a curriculum. Lamerichs (2011) notes that “through the acts of constructing and wearing a costume, the fan constructs his or her identity in relation to fictions and enacts it,” (para. 3.1). Asking students to engage in the process of cosplay through character choice, costume design and crafting, and finally performance, can enable them to explore a character in relationship to their identities. However, for most cosplayers, the negotiation of identity is a subconscious act, whereas, the

⁴ An in depth analysis of this point can be found under the subheading Cosplay as Identity.

purpose of this curriculum is to engage students in the conscious act of identity [re]construction through popular culture and fandom.

Identity

In order to discuss cosplay in terms of identity, I first establish a working definition of identity. As an academic concept, there are numerous theories and definitions of identity, many of which are contradictory. Some scholars have even “expressed serious doubts about whether identity and identification matter” (Jenkins, 2008, p. 5). Therefore, a comprehensive or even agreed upon definition of identity is unrealistic. As such, the literature reviewed in this section represents only a small portion of identity scholars and scholarship.

What is Identity?

Identity can be conceptualized as “people’s explicit or implicit response to the question: ‘who are you?’” (Vignoles et al., 2011, p. 2). However, the response to the question “who are you?” is complex. Who you are is contextual, multi-dimensional, situational, collective, and individual. Furthermore, who you are is not merely an internal process but also *external* through the process of identification. Jenkins (2008) describes identification as “the basic cognitive mechanism that humans use to sort out themselves and their fellows, individually and collectively” (p. 13). How I identify others and in turn am identified has bearing on personal and collective identity. Personal or individual identity refers to self-definition (i.e., how I conceive of myself as an individual and unique person that is distinct and different from other individuals) (Vignoles et al., 2011; Jenkins, 2008; Hetrick, 2009). Collective identity, on the other hand, refers to how I identify with others through groups and social categories (Vignoles et al., 2011). Identity is not only constructed by the internal process of who we think we are, but also the external process of interactions with others.

The idea of identity as a process or construction is not an uncommon theory in identity scholarship. Berzonky (2011) describes identity as “a process that governs and regulates the social-cognitive strategies used to construct, maintain, and/or reconstruct a sense of personal identity” (p. 55). From this perspective, identity is a process of construction and reconstruction that is used to create a sense of self, particularly while engaged in social interactions. Thus, rather than viewing identity as something that is *had* or self-generated, “identity is *done* or *made*—as *constructed* in discursive activities” (Bamberg et al., 2011, p. 178). This suggests an active engagement in the construction and reconstruction of identity over the course of our daily lives. Bamberg, et al. (2011) describe this process in terms of three dilemmatic positions: “*agency and control*,” “*difference and sameness between me and others*,” and “*constancy and change*” (p. 178).

The dilemma of agency and control is the question of “whether it is the person, the *I-as-subject*, who constructs the way the world is or whether the me-as-undergoer is constructed by the way the world is” (Bamberg et al., 2011, p. 178). In other words, is the world constructed by me or am I constructed by the world? This dilemma suggests a struggle of power between personal identity (the *I*) and the collective identity of social groups, categories, and ideologies (the world). According to Jenkins (2008) “the individual and the collective are routinely entangled with each other” (p. 37). Thus, the answer to the question of this dilemma is that as we construct the world, we are in turn constructed by it. This is perhaps best explained by Hall (1996) as:

the point of *suture* between, on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to ‘interpellate⁵’, speak to us or hail us in place as the social subjects of particular

⁵ Interpellate is the process in which we are hailed by images and sounds which enlist us in recognizing ourselves as “the subject of address by another within a system of power” (Sturken & Cartwright, 2018, p. 53).

discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be ‘spoken’. (pp. 5-6)

In essence, the choice between accepting an ideology and rejecting it becomes the point of struggle between whether our identity is constructed by the world or if we construct the world through our identity. This process can be seen through the construction of fan identity. Fan identity is constructed through the process of accepting or rejecting the ideology of a particular fandom. For example, a fan of *Star Trek* is often influenced by the ideologies of the *Star Trek* series and is thus constructed by the ideas put forth in the *Star Trek* universe. However, as evident by fan practices such as fan fiction and fan art, fans often reinterpret and reconstruct the fan object to suit their personal identity. As such, the fan’s identity is both constructed by the fandom ideology yet at the same time the fan is also constructing that ideology to suit their own needs.

The second dilemmic position described by Bamberg, et al. (2011), *difference and sameness between me and others*, addresses the paradox of personal vs. collective identity. Lawler (2008) states, “the notion of identity hinges on an apparently paradoxical combination of sameness and difference” (p. 2). As for me, on the one hand, I see myself as a unique individual that is separate from all others. On the other hand, I also identify those around me who share similar identity aspects. For example, my identity as a white, female, *Star Trek* fan is an identity I share with many *Star Trek* fans, yet I also recognize that I am distinct from them despite these shared aspects of our identity. The negotiation between seeing myself as a unique individual yet at the same time recognizing common identities that I share with others creates a contradiction. How can I be both a part of the collective identity of a *Star Trek* fan and yet see myself as a unique individual within the *Star Trek* fandom? The contradiction is that I am simultaneously the

same as other *Star Trek* fans and also different from other *Star Trek* fans. This contradiction is negotiated through a “synthesizing of relationships of similarity and difference” (Jenkins, 2008, p. 18). I may share the collective identity of a *Star Trek* fan but how I interact with and enjoy *Star Trek* is unique to me. Perhaps I find a character that another fan loves to be annoying or I may find writing *Star Trek* fan fiction more rewarding than creating *Star Trek* fan art. These are all types of fan practices other fans may share but this combination is unique to me. I recognize the sameness in a shared interest in *Star Trek*, yet I also see difference in how I am a fan of *Star Trek*. Furthermore, similarity and difference in terms of identity and identification are not necessarily fixed⁶. To return to the example of fandom, if I lose interest in a fandom, I may no longer identify with it. Thus, a fandom that I once recognized as similar to me becomes a fandom that I now see as different from myself.

The last dilemmic position, *constancy and change* addresses the issue of “how we can claim to be the same in the face of constant change and how we can claim to have changed in the face of still being the same” (Bamberg et al., 2011, p. 178). Crawford and Hancock (2019) describe how “most of us would like to hold on to the idea that there is a *real* and *true* us, which is fairly constant and consistent” (p. 124) in terms of our individual identity. However, there is also the acknowledgement that this true self can be improved, as evident by industries that promise to help us change and improve ourselves through various means such as makeovers, self-help books, exercise, and dietary plans (Crawford & Hancock, 2019). As such there is a question of whether our identity is something that is consistent and constant from birth to death or if it is something that changes. Jenkins (2008) points out, “who we are is always multi-dimensional, singular, and plural, is never a final or settled matter” (p. 17). Who we are changes

⁶ Some aspects of identity such as race or country of origin are more fixed than others such as gender, sexuality or religion.

and develops throughout the narrative discourses of our lives. Upbringing, life events (meeting goals, trauma, important milestones such as graduating, marriage, etc.), geographic location, and even biological factors affect our identity. In the context of fandom, the fluidity of identity is perhaps more apparent. Fans rarely remain fixed in their fandoms and often actively search for new fandoms while at the same time lose interest in others.

Cosplay as Identity

The majority of scholarship surrounding identity and cosplay focuses on the performance of identity through theories set forth by Butler (1990) in her book, *Gender Trouble*. Butler's work specifically looks at identity in terms of gender and sex through a feminist lens. According to Crawford and Hancock (2019), Butler describes gender as a "politically enforced performativity" (p. 146) and advocates for "the transgressive, the disruptive, and those acts that cause (as the title of her book suggest) gender trouble" (Crawford & Hancock, 2019, p. 145). In particular, Butler uses drag as an example of her performative theory, suggesting that drag "*implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself*" (Butler, 1990, p. 137). However, it is also important to note that Butler's theory of gender identity is that it's performative *and* involuntary (Crawford & Hancock, 2019; Lamerichs, 2011). As explained by Lamerichs (2011), Butler ultimately finds drag to be a parody of femininity rather than being empowering. Thus, she believes that although drag exposes the construct of heterosexuality, it also reconfirms it, rather than subverts it. Even so, Butler's use of words such as *performative* and *performativity* to describe identity is useful when considering identity in terms of cosplay.

The concept of a performative gendered identity that is subverted by acts that transgress socially accepted gender norms is uniquely suited to the act of cosplay. Scholars such as Lamerichs (2011), Bainbridge and Norris (2009), and Gn (2011) use Butler's theories of

performativity to describe how identity and identification function when cosplaying. For example, Lamerichs (2011) stated, “Butler’s interpretation of drag as an embodied, theatrical practice is applicable to cosplay as well” (para. 4.1). According to Lamerichs (2011), cosplay has a transformative potential that is based in the cosplayer’s performative interpretation of the character’s narrative. As such, the narrative of the character becomes a statement about the cosplayer’s identity (Lamerichs, 2011). By dressing as a character, the cosplayer often reveals not only what fandom they are a part of but also the character and narrative that they find the most enjoyment and connection to. Even in instances where the cosplayer is dressing as a character in order to fill a gap in a cosplaying group or for the challenge of a particular costume, there is often still a correlation between the cosplayer and the character. Lamerichs describes how, despite cosplaying Aerith from *Final Fantasy VII* in order to fill a role in a *Final Fantasy* cosplay group, she could relate to the character because they both had long brown hair. Through this connection, Lamerichs felt she could embody the character’s physical appearance. As such, character choice for a cosplay is not necessarily based on an intimate connection with the character’s narrative; it can also be based on a connection to the character’s aesthetics. Whether the character to be cosplayed is embodied for aesthetics or for love of the character, in either case the enactment of a fictional character’s narrative creates a “space between reality and fiction, and among these pluralities of meaning attached to a text, that subjects experiment with who they can be” (Lamerichs, 2011, para. 5.6). Thus, through the act of cosplay, cosplayers are able to subvert their own identities by enacting the character’s identity.

While Lamerichs (2011) considers cosplay to be subversive through appropriation of narrative, Bainbridge and Norris (2009) see it as a disruptive rather than subversive practice. They argue that cosplay is “not merely an act of becoming a particular character, or marking out

a particular alignment but of *disruption*” (Bainbridge & Norris, 2009, para. 9). This disruption occurs when a cosplayer plays with their gendered identity by cosplaying as a character of a different gender. By assuming a different gender or exaggerating their own gender through the identity of the character, cosplayers disrupt the illusion of gender as a “natural” (rather than socially constructed) identity. According to Bainbridge and Norris (2009), “the cosplay character creates a critical distance, a point of disruption, a vantage point from which the gender of the wearer can be critiqued, negotiated and explored,” (para. 11). Thus, by cosplaying a character whose gendered identity does not reflect the cosplayer’s gendered identity, the cosplayer can begin to question their culturally constructed ideas of gender. While this is a point of disruption, Bainbridge and Norris do not account for other points of disruption beyond gender. Indeed, not all cosplayers choose characters whose gender is in opposition to their own. As such, it is important to consider other avenues of disruption within cosplay. For example, the act of performing a character is a disruption to the identity of the character and cosplayer. As the cosplayer endeavors to embody the identity of the character inevitably there will be moments when their own identity becomes apparent, thus disrupting the illusion. Moments when the cosplayer interacts with vendors, asking other cosplayers for permission to take photos, or attending a lecture disrupts the performance of the character’s identity.

Gn (2011) also uses Butler’s theories but is critical of Bainbridge and Norris’s (2009) use of Butler’s work. Gn (2011) argues that Bainbridge and Norris “presume a reductionist strategy that overlooks critical aesthetic positions, or stylistic devices within the object of the animated body” (p. 586). Instead, Gn postulates that because animated characters technically lack human anatomy, they are ambiguous in terms of gender. Furthermore, Gn (2011) states “to conclude that cosplayers are only subverting established gender roles is to reduce representation to

psychoanalytical discourse and negate the affective qualities of the image that are being embodied by the performer” (p. 586). Rather than reduce cosplay to an act of purposeful gender subversion, Gn believes the primary motivation for cosplayers is attraction to the character. As such, when a cosplayer performs or *mimics*, as Gn (2011) terms it, an animated or non-human character it should be “understood as an expression of emotional attachment to the animated body” (p. 589), rather than a desire to subvert a particular gendered identity. Thus, according to Gn, the act of cosplay should be understood as expressive of a cosplayer’s enjoyment or love for a particular character. Ironically, just as he critiques Bainbridge and Norris for reducing cosplay to a subversion of gendered roles, Gn reduces cosplay to an expression of pleasure and emotional attachment to a character. To simplify cosplay down to either of these discounts the complex and varied reasons cosplayers engage in the act of cosplay. There is no single, unifying, motivation for cosplay. Many cosplayers have multiple conscious and subconscious motivations that drive them to the creation of a costume and performance of a character.

Lamerich (2011), Bainbridge and Norris (2009), and Gn (2011) all use Butler’s theories to ground their research in cosplay and identity. Although each has a slightly different perspective, the general thread running through their arguments is that cosplay can be expressive and even subversive of gendered identity. While gender is an important aspect of identity, it is not the only way identity is performed when cosplaying. Crawford and Hancock (2019) write:

Cosplay is not a performance of identity that sits on top of a deeper, more real identity; these performances are part-and-parcel of *who we are*, and they are *part* of our identity. This is not to deny that through cosplay the performer can *become someone else*; as through all performances our identity and sense of self are always evolving and changing. (p. 146)

Cosplay is more than a performance of a character, as with identity, it is an active engagement with the character. During the process of becoming a character the cosplayer becomes a site of struggle between what they perceive as their *own* identity and what they perceive is the *character's* identity.

Some cosplayers attempt to fully emulate the identity of the character. As such, the identity of the cosplayer becomes secondary to the character being played. In reality, the character's identity is a construct created by an author and it is nearly impossible for the cosplayer to accurately replicate exactly as the author may have envisioned. Others attempt to actively subvert or transform the character through subgenres of cosplay, such as crossplay (cosplaying a character who's established gender is not the same as the cosplayer), genderbending (changing the character's established gender), or mash-up (combining two or more characters into a single cosplay). No matter how precisely a cosplayer mimics a character their identity remains present and transformative of the fictional character.

On the other hand, since the identity of the character is not only artificial but also constructed by someone else, the cosplayer infers aspects of the character's identity by supplementing it with their own. Winge (2019) notes, "the character's identity is fantastic and ephemeral, which is intimately enmeshed with the Cosplayer's identity," (p. 56). Therefore, the character becomes a blend of known personality traits and inferences combined with the cosplayer's identity. Instead of hiding their identity, the cosplayer's identity, combined with the character's identity, creates a unique, one-of-a-kind character. This is why several cosplayers' renditions of the same character can be wildly different both in costume and characterization. Cosplay allows cosplayers to hide their identity behind the artificial identity of a constructed character, and at the same time, their character choice says a lot about their identity. The choice

of character is often aligned with an aspect of the cosplayer's identity that they either see in themselves or want to see. The characters they create are chosen because they identify with the character on some level, even if purely based on aesthetics.

As an example of the different ways identity can work in a single cosplay, Batman is a popular cosplay character that can be seen in varying forms based on the cosplayer's identity. Prior to settling on a particular costume to replicate, the serious cosplayer will spend hours researching Batman costumes since the 1939 release of the comic. On the other hand, the casual cosplayer may settle upon a store-bought costume or even a simple t-shirt with the Batman logo on it. The dedication and time put into the creation of the cosplay may affect how the cosplayer acts when wearing the costume. The serious cosplayer may attempt to adopt a persona similar to Batman's; they may act somber and take to standing on the edge of tall structures (e.g., balconies, window ledges, and stair wells) at the convention center. For the casual cosplayer, Batman's perceived personality will be less of an influence, and as such, the identity of the cosplayer becomes the identity of *their* particular Batman.

For cosplayers, the idea of identifying with a character from popular culture is familiar and expected. After all, cosplayers already identified as fans and participate in a very noticeable form of fan participation. But the same cannot be said or expected of a student enrolled in a cosplay making course. As such, the flow of identity and identification between the student, character, and popular culture may not come as easily as it does to a cosplayer. In order to facilitate student understanding of identity through cosplay, I have developed this curriculum around the theories and principles of critical pedagogy and VCAE as a means of fostering critical thought and dialogue with regards to popular culture and its influence on identity construction.

Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy has been written about by a number of philosophers, educators, and scholars, making an exhaustive account of all text, forms, and practical applications of critical pedagogy difficult, if not impossible. Similarly, reducing critical pedagogy to a single definition is equally challenging but there are key aspects that unify each iteration of the pedagogy:

1. Recognizes that knowledge is political (Freire, 1970/2017; Giroux, 2011; Jacobs, 1997; Monchinski, 2008)
2. Uses a democratic structure (Giroux, 2011; Monchinski, 2008; Tavin, 2003a)
3. Seeks to implement change and social justice (Freire, 1970/2017; Monchinski, 2008; Tavin, 2003a)
4. Recognizes lived experiences as a focal point of education (Giroux 2011; Monchinski, 2008; Tavin, 2003a)

As such, critical pedagogy is “rooted in a democratic ethos that attends to the practice of teaching and learning and focuses on lived experiences with the intention to disrupt, contest and transform systems of oppression” (Tavin, 2003b, p. 198). In context of this thesis, lived experiences refer to student interactions with popular culture, and exploring this through fan practices, specifically, cosplay. Furthermore, this curriculum seeks to challenge students to consider the political and social justice implications of popular culture through democratically structured critical discussions (see CH 4: Presentation of Curriculum).

Freire’s (1970/2017) book, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, is a logical starting point for a discussion of important texts in the formation of a critical pedagogy framework. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970/2017) outlines a model for what he terms “problem-posing education” (p. 52). Problem-posing education disrupts the hierarchy of education that consists of

the teacher as the head or leader of the classroom whose purpose is to impart their knowledge and wisdom into their students. In the *teacher as the head of the classroom* model, the students are passive receivers of the teacher's knowledge, often with no voice of their own. Freire (1970/2017) describes this type of education as the "banking" saying, "instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits . . . student then receives and memorizes" (p. 45). As a result, the classroom becomes a dictatorship rather than a democracy. In contrast, problem-posing education places the teacher on equal terms with their students. The teacher and students become both imparters of knowledge and receivers. Freire (1970/2017) describes, "the teacher-of-the-student and the student-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges; teacher-student with student-teacher" (p. 53).

Through this model, the teacher and students communicate as equals and take part in critical dialogue. However, as Jacobs (1997) notes in his thesis:

Freire stresses that educators should not attempt to solve students' problems for them, but rather by beginning with students' specific contexts, educators can engage students in dialogue about problems within their own worlds and help students to come up with their own solutions. (p. 6)

Although teachers should avoid ownership of knowledge, they also should not simply provide students with the answer. Rather, problem-posing education suggests that teachers "pose problems that arise from students' realities so that students can come to be more critical thinkers about their own situation" (Jacobs, 1997, p. 7). Students become critical thinkers who do not passively absorb information but instead consider it carefully and skeptically.

Like Freire, Giroux is focused on the use of dialogue, but he shifts the focus to the dialogue of critique rather than objectivity. Giroux (2011) writes, "the principles guiding my

work on critical pedagogy are grounded in critique as a mode of analysis that interrogates texts, institutions, social relationships, and ideologies as part of the script of official power” (p. 4). Instead of considering one’s position in society from an objective position, Giroux asks that students critique their position within society and then actively transform their position through knowledge.

Giroux has used Freire’s problem-posing education model to explore popular culture. In Giroux’s (1994) book, *Disturbing Pleasures*, he attempted to apply critical theory to popular culture in the classroom. Giroux (1994) suggests that teachers ask students to critique cultural texts such as the United Colors of Benetton ads, Disney, popular films such as *Grand Canyon*, and photographs. However, Giroux (1994) characterizes popular culture as a site “where struggle over knowledge, power, and authority translate into a broader battle over the meaning of pleasure, self-formation, and national identity” (p. x), and he often portrays popular culture in a cynical manner. For example, Giroux (2016) describes Disney as a “corporate assault on kids” (p. 236) that is “eager and ready to transform them into full-fledged members of consumer society” (p. 234). His portrayal of popular culture is problematic because it fails to recognize that students are not only consumers of popular culture but also producers, capable of transforming and recontextualizing popular culture to suit their creative needs.

Critical Pedagogy and Fandom

Fans are the opposite of the passive learners Freire describes in banking education. Busse (2017) in her book, *Framing Fanfiction*, indicates that “rather than being passive consumers, these television viewers engage critically and creatively” (p. 7). Through fan practices such as fan art and fan fiction they “not only critically analyze the texts but also actively write back, creating their own narratives to fill in the plots, characters, and emotions they find lacking in the

source text” (Busse, 2017, p. 7). While this engagement is born out of the pleasure derived from the fan object and is therefore often positive in nature, fans are not uncritical of their fandoms. Fan discourse often critically analyzes the motives, actions, and the believability of characters and plotlines. This is shown through blog posts, fan fiction, and fan art that are created to reflect the fans’ interpretations of the fan object.

The active and critical participation of fans are related to the basic tenets of critical pedagogy. First, just as critical pedagogy recognizes knowledge as political, fan practices are also political. For example, slash fan fiction (fan writings that involve the romantic pairing of two same sexed characters and denoted by the / [slash] between their names) can be seen through numerous political lenses such as masculinity, misogyny, and sexuality (Green, Jenkins, & Jenkins, 1998). Second, democracy in fandoms is a complex topic. On the surface, fandoms can appear as sites of “equality, tolerance, and community” (MacDonald, 1998, p. 136) but in actuality they operate within a complex hierarchical structure. The positions within this hierarchy are “constantly contested and never fixed” (Chin, 2018, p. 249), thus leading to democratic debate, dissemination of new ideas, and the production of fan texts. Finally, fandom can seek to implement social justice and change. Some fandoms such as those for *Harry Potter* promote progressive ideologies such as tolerance and equality. In particular, *The Harry Potter Alliance* is a nonprofit charity organization run by Harry Potter fans who “use the power of story and popular culture to make activism accessible and sustainable” (Harry Potter Alliance, n.d., under “What We Do”). Each of these examples demonstrates fandom as a critical pedagogy.

The use of critical thinking has been used by fan scholars and educators such as Booth. In “Waves of Fandom in the Fan Studies Classroom,” Booth (2018) states “it’s important for them [students] to recognize the place of fandom in the media environment and the way fandom has

become more visible and more mainstream today” (p. 114). He suggests that even students who do not identify as fans are participating in fan activities when they “post GIFs, and memes on Tumblr” and “talk about and critique the media texts they love” (Booth, 2018, p. 113). In order to encourage students to actively and critically consider their fan identities in relationship to their everyday lives, Booth asks his students to engage in fan practices such as writing fan fiction and creating fan vids. It is important to note that Booth is asking his students to engage critically with media texts that students have a connection with. Keefe (2018), a student who participated in Booth’s class, notes “this was taking a critical eye and playing with a media text that was near and dear to me” which pushed her to have a greater engagement with fan activities and created an enjoyable experience. Booth shows that it is not enough to simply ask students to critically engage with a fan practice. In order to create a connection between fandom and their daily lives, educators may find it more effective to ask students to choose their own texts to engage with.

Visual Culture Art Education

As shown, critical pedagogy is a useful teaching method for encouraging students to analyze their lived experiences in relationship to fandom. However, the majority of the scholars thus far do not use critical pedagogy in combination with art education. Furthermore, fandom itself is traditionally studied within the context of media and cultural studies rather than art. However, fans are producers and consumers of art and as such, art education should explore fan art as a means of engagement with students. Hetrick (2018), in “Reading Fan Art as Complex Texts,” writes that “the value in this type of artwork is not necessarily about technical skills . . . rather it is more about the cleverness of intertextuality, appropriation, juxtaposition, and recontextualizing” (p. 61). One way to approach fan art in art education is through a critical pedagogy lens. A critical pedagogy informed art curriculum allows educators to engage students

in discourse outside of the fine art canon and thus acknowledge students' lived experiences. For example, many students have some experience with popular culture. Therefore, incorporating aspects of popular culture into art education, instructors make art "accessible and compelling to students" (McKenna, 1999, p. 79).

The exploration of popular culture within art education has been implemented by several art educators such as Duncum, Tavin, Hetrick, Chen, and Manifold. Duncum's work over the last two decades focused on VCAE. VCAE focuses on "critical understanding and empowerment" (Duncum, 2002a, p. 6) through the exploration of popular culture. Similarly, Tavin (2003a) concentrated on critical pedagogy in relationship to popular culture within the fine arts. Both of these educators provided a framework for the analysis and inclusion of popular culture within art education. Hetrick, Chen, and Manifold on the other hand, transition to a specific part of popular culture, fandom, as a means of student engagement. While popular culture and fandom are related, they should not be used interchangeably. Popular culture is a complicated and multifaceted word that has been defined in a multitude of ways but in this case, I use the definition put forth by Duffett (2013): "popular culture . . . tends to be seen as the fraction of commercial culture that the audience takes to their hearts, usually because it contains aspects that resonate with their own world or attitude" (p. 62). In other words, popular culture is what audiences form a connection with. Fandom, on the other hand, relates to the rituals and behaviors that audiences engage in to express that connection they feel with a particular segment of popular culture.

Critical pedagogy within art education is often used for student engagement with popular culture through art. Critical pedagogy within art education should not focus solely on teaching technical skills to students. Instead, a critical pedagogy approach to art education "recognizes the

critical and political power of visual imagery and then channels that power to reveal worlds and ideas that are sometimes hidden from view” (Yokley, 1999, p. 20). A critical pedagogy-based art education recognizes the inherently political position art inhabits. VCAE does this through critical examination of imagery. Duncum (2001) explains the term visual culture as “an interest in the social conditions in which the artifacts (visual imagery) have their being, including their production, distribution and use” (pp. 106-107). Visual culture, then, is a critical examination of the visual objects produced by culture. This broad and overarching definition allows for VCAE to be inclusive of both fine arts or elite culture and popular culture within an art curriculum. VCAE focuses on the “social worlds of visual imagery as they are constitutive of attitudes, beliefs, and values” (Duncum, 2001a, p. 107). Through VCAE, popular culture is critically examined and engaged with by students. By allowing popular culture to exist in the same space as fine arts, Duncum (2003) believes that VCAE will help “students to ground studio activities in an understanding of a wider context” (p. 24).

Similarly, Tavin also examines using critical pedagogy through a VCAE lens to bring popular culture into the arts classroom. In Tavin’s (2003a) dissertation, *A Critical Pedagogy of Visual Culture as Art Education: Toward a Performative Inter/Hypertextual Practice*, his research “reveals that critical pedagogy, visual culture, and hypertextuality enabled both students in the study to change their perceptions about art, art education, and the pedagogical power of popular culture” (p. iii). Pushing further than Duncum, Tavin (2003a) indicates that popular culture should be explored for both its critical place in mass culture and its role in the construction of student identities.

When art educators focus solely on art from the museum realm they ignore these profound changes in culture and discount the pedagogical power of popular

images. They continue to rely on high cultural artifacts to teach from while their students are constructing their very identities and subjectivities through visual culture. When art educators place high art at the center of their curriculum they act as if their students are unified beings, unaffected by visual culture, living in a modernist sanctuary. (pp. 40-41)

By acknowledging the role of popular culture in the creation of student identity, Tavin acknowledges each student's voice and lived experiences. The complexities of meaning and pleasure created by popular culture affect each student's everyday life. Thus, by using critical pedagogy to examine popular culture "students are encouraged to critique popular culture texts in order to re-construct meaning and develop agency," (Tavin, 2003a, p. 71). As such, the use of VCAE allows students to develop their own agency and identities utilizing aspects of popular culture.

VCAE and Fan Art

Chen (2007) conducted early research into fan culture with a specific focus on anime/manga fan art and cosplay in Taiwan. The resulting article, "A Study of Fan Culture: Adolescent Experiences with Animé/manga Doujinshi and Cosplay in Taiwan," details Chen's research methods and results. Chen interviewed six female cosplayers and fan artist attendees at Taiwan's ComicWorld conventions. After interviewing the participants and performing a content analysis, Chen (2007) found that most fan artists are "active cultural producers who are engaged in the reproduction of the materials they consume and in the manipulation of ideas, meanings, and cultural references that they can perceive" (p. 21). Fan artists often seek out new techniques to further the development of their artistic practice. According to Chen (2007), if art educators can engage students using fandom as a means of focus within visual culture, students would be

enabled to “find their [students’] sociocultural meanings and values” (p. 22). Chen recommends using fan art as a lens for studying specific artistic techniques of expression and for exploring the meaning of the texts from which students are consuming and producing.

Chen’s study provides groundwork for critical use of fan art within art education, but the study lacks diversity because of its small number of participants, all of whom are female and Taiwanese. A later study, conducted by Manifold (2009), has a larger participant pool of 69 subjects, although the majority was also female. In the resulting article, “Fanart as Craft and the Creation of Culture,” Manifold found that most fan artists began their artistic practice out of a desire to connect to a specific character. Furthermore, most learned to draw by “incessantly copying the commercially-made models of their favorite characters,” (Manifold, 2009, p. 10), rather than through techniques learned in an art class. Thus, most fan artist skills and practices are self-taught, implying that fan artists are self-motivated and engaged with their artistic practice. However, copying is only the beginning for most fan artists, once confident in their own artistic ability many fan artists develop their own unique style. Often, this style is influenced by the fan artist’s own community, history, and culture. Manifold (2009) describes this as “a trans-cultural exchange of styles – an invigorating mix of imagery and ideas” (p. 15). Manifold advocates for an art education that centers on students as cultural participants and producers. Allowing students to engage in self-motivation through fandom will “empower them to become contributors to and crafters of culture,” (Manifold, 2009, p. 19).

Like Chen and Manifold, Hetrick (2018) advocates for the use of fandom in art education. Hetrick points to the self-motivating and active participation that fan art often entails. Through personal experience, Hetrick (2018) notes that when she stopped viewing her students’ *Pokémon* drawings as distractions, “everything changed—my students were engaged, shared

their homemade artwork with me, and chatted to me about their popular interests” (p. 57). By acknowledging the students’ interests and incorporating them into the classroom curriculum, the students became more engaged with the classwork and teacher. Through this experience, Hetrick encourages art educators to investigate student fan art as complex and meaningful text which can be a site for critical thought.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have reviewed four aspects of literature relevant to the creation of a cosplay-based curriculum. First, I addressed the topic of cosplay in terms of studio art. As I illustrated in the literature review, the creation of a cosplay costume is often as time consuming and skill based as many artistic practices. Cosplayers learn new skills, experiment with materials, and are detail oriented in order to craft costumes that closely resemble their intended character.

Then I discussed cosplay in terms of identity construction and performance. Cosplay is also an act of identity performance that merges the identity of the character and the identity of the cosplayer. As the cosplayer attempts to embody the ephemeral identity of the character, they create a point of struggle between what is their own identity and what is the character. This allows for the cosplayer to engage the construction of identity as they both subvert and disrupt their identity and the character’s identity through the act of embodying that character. However, for cosplayers this is often a subconscious engagement of identity exploration, while the intention of the course is to encourage students to engage in the conscious act of identity construction. Finally, in order to engage students in conscious identity construction, I have developed this curriculum around the pedagogical theories of critical pedagogy and VCAE. Thus, I will use the ideas established in this literature review to create a college level cosplay curriculum as I will now explain in Chapters 3 and Chapter 4.

CHAPTER III: CREATING THE CURRICULUM

In this chapter, I document the process of creating the curriculum presented in Chapter 4. First, I describe the events that led to my interest in developing such a curriculum. Next, I describe the process used in creating the curriculum. Finally, I summarize the creation of the curriculum documents.

Inspiration

The development of the curriculum documents and subsequent thesis began with my interest in cosplay. During my time as a graduate student in fine arts, I crafted masks and hoods that merged my identity with that of a popular culture character. As I described in Chapter 1, I often encountered resistance among my peers and professors, not to the work itself, but to the cosplay influences the work was based on. Out of a desire to educate my peers and create a space for cosplay in the academic art world, I began to wonder what a cosplay course might look like at the college level. Upon graduating with my MFA, I entered into an MA in Art Education in order to further develop my initial concept. I felt that through Art Education I would gain foundational knowledge in terms of teaching methods and curriculum development. This would allow me to better understand teaching art so that I could develop a thoughtful and engaging curriculum based on cosplay.

Pedagogy

In order to develop a cosplay curriculum, I first had to understand pedagogy. The term *pedagogy* can be described as “teacher *philosophy-in-use*” (Žogla, 2018, p. 32). Pedagogy is the theory and practice of teaching and, as with teaching, there are countless methods, theories, and practices that one can subscribe to. To develop a curriculum my first step was to determine the pedagogical structure I would use as the curriculum’s base.

When I encountered critical pedagogy during my studies, it seemed apt for a cosplay curriculum. As noted by Daspit and Weaver (2000), “critical pedagogy addresses the potential for multiple readings of popular culture texts, the contradictory and shifting meaning of texts, and the power struggle over control of text” (p. xiv). Critical pedagogy allows for students to address popular culture from their own lived experiences but still asks for students to be mindful of popular culture’s unbiased nature. Popular culture texts are “inscribed within a history and culture that is shaped by capitalism, consumerism, choice ideologies, white supremacy sexism, and homophobia” (Daspit & Weaver, 2000, p. xxvii). Popular culture can reinforce harmful stereotypes, fail to represent minority groups in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and is often tailored to the cultural biases of the majority. Through a critical pedagogy approach, students can be made aware that although popular culture is a source of pleasure and creativity it is also, at times, problematic.

Although critical pedagogy was suited to guiding students through critical thought, it is not necessarily specifically geared towards art education. Therefore, I decided to incorporate elements of VCAE into the curriculum. Like critical pedagogy, “visual cultural challenge(s) dominant paradigms that sustain inequalities and maintain hegemonic relations” (Tavin, 2003b, p. 209). A visual culture-focused art education moves the narrative of the curriculum away from fine art and work only found in museums to art that students encounter daily, such as popular culture. The focuses of VCAE on visual imagery and the “social conditions in which the artifacts (visual imagery) have their being, including their production, distribution and use” (Duncum, 2001, p. 106-107), allows for a structure of visual analysis. I felt that VCAE allowed me to actively explore students’ relationships with popular culture (Tavin, 2003b), by engaging students with visual images of characters from their everyday life.

Developing the Curriculum

Once I had determined the pedagogical structure for my curriculum the next step was to develop the curriculum using critical pedagogy and VCAE. *Curriculum* often “describe(s) formal courses of study in the schools and universities” (Pinar, 1975, p. 19). Under this broad definition, curriculum can:

refer to the knowledge and skills students are expected to learn, which includes the learning standards or learning objectives they are expected to meet; the units and lessons that teachers teach; the assignments and projects given to students; the books, materials, videos, presentations, and readings used in a course; and the tests, assessments, and other methods used to evaluate student learning. (Great Schools Partnership, 2015, para. 1)

Given the wide range of activities and elements that a curriculum can encompass, it is useful to consider curriculum in terms of levels as described by Eisner (1965).

Eisner (1965) identifies four levels of curricula: school curriculum, academic curriculum, subject-matter curriculum, and course curriculum. School curriculum, which is the broadest level, encompasses “all the activities planned by teachers or students that are intended to move the student towards the ends for which the school is responsible” (Eisner, 1965, p. 159). This includes extracurricular activities such as athletic teams, band concerts, or clubs that do not necessarily receive academic credit such as a grade or are formalized school activities. The second level, academic curriculum, is only activities that an instructor plans for a course that are “formalized through courses, grades, transcripts, and are assigned specific value in terms of credits” (Eisner, 1965, p. 160). These are activities such as projects, essays, artworks, readings, in-class activities that the instructor will evaluate to determine each student’s level of understanding in the course. The third level, subject matter curriculum, narrows the definition

used for academic curriculum to only include “activities planned within a particular discipline or subject matter” (Eisner, 1965, p. 160), such as biology, painting, music, or history. Finally, the last level, course curriculum, is “what each of us (instructors) plan when we decide on the content, organization, and evaluation of the courses we teach” (Eisner, 1965, p. 160). Course curriculum encompasses the specific day-to-day activities that an instructor plans for a specific course. For example, the course documents, class syllabus, Project 1: Head, Project 2: Shoulders (Body), Project 3: Knees and Toes, and Character Binder, that I have developed would fall under the course curriculum level as they are used in the day-to-day activities of a specific course.

Development of the Syllabus

To start, I needed to decide how cosplay would be taught in relationship to identity. Should the students work on one cosplay over the course of the semester or create multiple, less detailed, cosplays? The first would allow students to focus on their identity in relationship to one character and on creating a detailed, cohesive costume. The second would highlight the multiplicity of identity (Jenkins, 2008; Lawler, 2008) and allow students to explore a wider variety of materials. I decided that breaking a single cosplay into three projects (Project 1: Head, Project 2: Shoulders (Body), Project 3: Knees and Toes) was a more efficient method for teaching cosplay. I felt that students could develop a deeper connection between identity and popular culture by focusing on one character rather than multiple.

Once I had determined the manner in which cosplay would be taught, I moved on to developing a course calendar. I divided the sixteen⁷ weeks of the standard college semester into thirds, giving the students five weeks to complete each segment of the cosplay. Once I had determined the timeline of the three major projects, I created a basic course calendar. I based the

⁷ I have not included spring and fall break, which are traditionally a week off, in the course calendar.

format of the calendar on previous course calendars I encountered as a student and teaching assistant. In order to create the calendar, I drafted a table in Word that was segmented into 3 columns with 30 rows. I titled the left column *wk* (short for week), the center column *Activity*, and in the right column *Assignments Due* (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Course Calendar Excerpt

	Activity	Assignments Due Bold items shall be completed before class
1 ⁸ M ⁹	Syllabus overview Introductions and sharing of fandom interest Introduction to making cosplay	In class: create a list of fandoms/characters you might be interested in exploring (5). Write a brief summary about each character to go in character binder

In each column, I entered information relevant to the course with the week number and day in the left column, the activities to be accomplished during class in the center column and assignment due in class in the right column. At this stage in my process, I did not have the entire semester fully laid out. Therefore, the calendar continued to develop and change over the course of writing this thesis.

After creating the initial course calendar, I then developed the syllabus using former class syllabi as guides. During this process, I determined the course description, course objectives, project grading, attendance policy, required readings, supply list, and any additional resources useful to students. I began with the required readings as I had decided early in the creation of the course that I wanted to include a reading and discussion component. During this process, I returned to my research on cosplay in order to determine what articles I felt most useful for

⁸ Indicates the week of the semester.

⁹ Indicates the day of the week the class is to take place on.

student discussion. Once I had settled upon the course readings, I needed to decide on the method for facilitating student engagement with the text. At first, I considered having students write a paragraph on each reading. The paragraphs would eventually be combined into a final essay to be submitted at the end of the semester. However, upon review of the course, I felt that the final essay was not a necessity. Instead, I decided to have students develop discussion questions to be used to facilitate critical dialogue.

Once I had determined the majority of the graded assignments and projects, I was able to complete the grading section of the syllabus. This meant establishing point totals for the three cosplay projects, the character binder, artist statements, critique and discussion reflections, discussion questions, and participation, effort and attendance. This section was challenging and went through more iterations than any section in the syllabus. I first decided that the overall point total would be out of 1000. Then, I divided the 1000 points among the assignments based on time required to complete the assignment and number of times the student will engage in the assignment. However, based on feedback, I decided that this was too many points for me to adequately justify in my grading and reduced the total points to 409. I, therefore, decided to lower the points for Project 1: Head, Project 2: Shoulders (Body), Project 3: Knees and Toes, and Character Binder from 100 points each to 25 points each. These points would be further divided by the project grading. I then settled on 10 points each for the three Artist Statements, 6 points each for the ten critique and discussion reflections, 5 points for the nine discussion questions, and 6 points daily for participation, effort, and attendance. Once I had completed the grading section, I continued on to the attendance portion of the syllabus. This section was influenced by attendance policies I had encountered as a student and TA. Since I had built the attendance and

participation points into the overall grading, I decided to use a points deduction rather than a percentage.

The last section, the supply list and resources, are based on supply lists included in studio courses I have taught. I felt that it was important to include a general list of materials that students could expect to purchase over the course of the semester. However, as students are not making similar projects and cosplay uses a wide variety of materials, I found it challenging to determine what materials I should list. Rather than attempt to include a comprehensive list, I decided to include general art supplies that I felt all students would use followed by a list of materials cosplayers commonly use but that students could purchase based on their individual needs. I then researched resources for purchasing supplies, viewing cosplay tutorials, writing, and fan content.

Once I had completed the sections, I then organized them beginning with instructor information followed by course description and objectives, grading, attendance, required reading, and the supplies and resources. I also included the course calendar at the end of the syllabus rather than having two separate documents. I then made stylistic choices such as fonts and images. These choices would be used in the design of the project documents.

Development of the Project Documents

After completing the syllabus, I then designed the documents for the Character Binder and three cosplay projects. The documents for Project 1: Head, Project 2: Shoulders (Body), Project 3: Knees and Toes are consistent in formatting both in the project instructions and rubric. This is to highlight the fact that although the students are creating three separate projects, the end result is a single cosplay.

For the design of Project 1: Head, Project 2: Shoulders (Body), Project 3: Knees and Toes I used similar fonts and headings as I used in the syllabus. I start with each project's objective, followed by a description of the process and end with the research requirements. During the development of the documents, I began with Project 1: Head and then worked in a chronological manner. I altered the text in the object and process sections to suit the individual project requirements. The research section remained the same for each project. After completing the three project documents, I designed the Character Binder document. Although similar in format to the Project 1: Head, Project 2: Shoulders (Body), and Project 3: Knees and Toes documents, the objective section is followed by required inclusions and organization.

The next task was to create the project rubrics. Like the grading section in the syllabus, the rubrics were challenging in terms of determining point value and criteria. I began with the visual structure of the rubrics by creating a Word table with five columns and six rows. I decided that the left-most column would be for the amount of points the student earned for each criterion and the top row would denote the criterion for grading. Each of the twenty boxes situated between the left-most column and the top row would list requirements the student must meet in order to receive the points outlined in the left column (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Rubric Excerpt

Project 1 Rubric		Student Name _____		
	Research	Craft	Design	^{10*} worth double points (10)
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has more than the minimum sketches Class notes are legible & identify all demonstrated techniques Character research has addressed & expanded on the questions in handout (3 pages or more) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows definitive understanding of techniques used to create project Object is well constructed with no obvious glue or tape All parts of the piece are intentionally finished Care and planning is evident in all aspects of the piece 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design is clearly influenced by the character Clearly incorporates elements of the student identity Piece is wearable and functional 	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has all required sketches Class notes are legible & identifies all demonstrated techniques Character research addresses questions in handouts (2-2.5 pgs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows understanding of techniques used to create project Object is mostly well constructed with some tape or glue visible Most or all parts of piece are intentionally finished Clear care and planning in most parts of the piece 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design is influenced by character Incorporates elements of the student's identity Piece is wearable but may be somewhat difficult to wear/put on 	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Missing one or two required sketches Missing details for demonstrated techniques and/or legibility of notes is not always clear Character research has minimally addressed questions (1-1.5 pgs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some understanding of techniques used to create project Object is somewhat well constructed/ large amount of glue/tape visible Some parts are intentionally finished Some care and planning is visible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design is either somewhat derivative or character influence is stretched Some elements of student identity are present Piece is somewhat wearable 	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is missing half or more sketches Missing most of demonstrated techniques or class notes are unreadable Character research addresses half or less hand out questions (>1 pg) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technique needs improvement Object is not well constructed Little to no parts of the piece is adequately finished Very little care and planning evident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design too derivative or has too little character influence Elements of student identity is difficult to see Piece is unwearable 	
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is missing most or all sketches Missing most or all class notes No character research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No effort in technique mastery present Object is unfinished No care and planning evident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design is entirely derivative No elements of student identity is present Piece is unwearable 	

Late Deduction: #days 0 x 1pts = _____ Final Grade: 23 /25

As shown in Figure 2, the instructor circles the box in the appropriate column and row to indicate the amount of points the student has earned in a particular criterion. In the example laid out in Figure 2, the student has received 5 points for research, 3 points for craft, 5 points for design, and 10 points in the student-teacher determined criteria. This means that the student receives 23 points out of the 25 possible points.

Once I was satisfied with the layout of my rubrics, I then determined the criteria for grading. I initially decided to grade the projects based on research, craft, design, and creativity. However, after reviewing these criteria, I decided to eliminate creativity and leave the last criterion blank. Instead, the students and instructor would negotiate the last criterion through discussion. As I shall explain further in Chapter 4, this enables students to participate in their

¹⁰ Last grading criterion is left blank for instructor-student collaboration (see CH 4: Presentation of Curriculum section *Assessment*).

own assessment and instructors to better understand student expectations for the project. Finally, I developed the requirements that the students must meet in the criteria of research, craft, and design. I focused on aspects of the projects that I found important such as designing a costume that combined the student and character identity, wearability, costume construction, and ability to follow instructions.

Summary

In this chapter, I have described my process for creating the curriculum. I began with how my experience in graduate school led me to the creation of this curriculum. Next, I detailed the influence my research in critical pedagogy and VCAE had in the development of this curriculum. Finally, I described the development of the syllabus and four project documents to be presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER IV: PRESENTATION OF CURRICULUM

Some scholars (Chen, 2007; Manifold, 2009; Hetrick, 2018) advocate for the use popular culture images and fan art as a site of K-12 student [re]construction of identity through critical pedagogy and VCAE. The same pedagogy can be applied to a cosplay-based college-level curriculum. To do so, I have developed a syllabus and four assignments to be used in a cosplay class. The goal of the class is for students to craft a cosplay that combines aspects of the student's identity with that of a popular culture character. This chapter will present the curriculum documents and explain their intended use in a classroom setting. The projects will require students to choose a character and then manipulate the character by exaggerating, transforming, omitting, juxtaposing, and/or adding to aspects of the character in order to highlight the parts that they see or want to see in their own identity. The purpose of these projects is to introduce students to new skills including patternmaking, sewing, leather working, foam construction, and prop making through basic cosplay construction, to critically engage with a character from popular culture in terms of identity formation and construction, and to participate in critical dialogue with other students in regard to cosplay, fandom, popular culture, and identity.

Curriculum Documents

The documents for this course consist of a syllabus, Project 1: Head, Project 2: Shoulders (Body), Project 3: Knees and Toes, and Character Binder¹¹. In the next sections I present the documents and describe classroom practice in terms of critical pedagogy and VCAE.

¹¹ See Appendix A, B, C, D, and E for syllabus, Project 1: Head, Project 2: Shoulders, Project 3: Knees and Toes, and Character Binder

Syllabus


The course syllabus is written with the idea of simplicity while still ensuring all relevant information is available to students. As suggested by Davis (2009) a syllabus should “include more rather than less material” (p. 22). Note that many universities ask that instructors include statements on academic integrity, (dis)ability accommodations, family education rights and privacy act (FERPA), student code, and emergency procedures. These statements are often pre-written and tailored to the university at which the course is taught. As such, I have chosen to not include them so as to leave the syllabus more easily modified. Furthermore, this course is intended to be taught over a sixteen-week semester with twice weekly 2 hour and 40-minute class periods. Modification to course content and assignments may be necessary to accommodate for the semester length and class structure of an institution.

Figure 3

Identity and Cosplay Syllabus

IDENTITY AND COSPLAY¹²

Studio Course



Cao Fei, *Golden Fighter's despair*, 2004 <https://publicdelivery.org/cao-fei-cosplayers/>

Instructor information:¹³ **Class Meeting Time/Location:**¹⁴

Course Description:
The purpose of this course is to allow students the opportunity to explore the construction of identity through the creation of cosplay. Cosplay, which a composite word made from “costume” and “play”, is often defined as the act of dressing as a character from popular culture. Cosplay is a complex practice that combines the act of making and performing in a manner that is unique to each cosplayer. In this course, students will engage with popular culture from a cosplay perspective; explore cosplay as a form of artistic practice; take part in a class organized comic-con (short for comic convention) in their cosplay created during the class.

Course Objectives:

1. Students will learn skills in sewing, foam working, and basic cosplay construction.
2. Students will engage in scholarly discourse about identity and cosplay through readings, writings, and class discussions.
3. Students will explore the concept of identity [re]construction through meaningful artmaking.
4. Students will give and receive constructive feedback in order to improve prototypes throughout the semester.

¹² See Appendix A for *Identity and Cosplay Syllabus* without footnotes

¹³ To be determined by instructor.

¹⁴ To be determined by instructor.

Figure 3, Continued

Overall Grading:	
Project 1	25 pts
Project 2	25 pts
Project 3	25 pts
Character binder	25 pts
Artist statements (10 pts)	30 pts
Critique and discussion reflections (6 pts)	60 pts
Discussion questions (5 pts)	45 pts
Participation, effort, attendance (6 pts)	174 pts
Total	409 pts
Project Grading:	
Research	5 pts
Craft	5 pts
Design	5 pts
Student criteria	10 pts
Total	25 pts
Final Grades:	
409 pts – 369 pts	A
368 pts – 328 pts	B
327 pts – 287 pts	C
286 pts – 246 pts	D
245 pts – 0 pts	F
*Late assignments will receive a 1 point reduction per day	
Attendance: ¹⁵	
Attendance is <u>imperative</u> . Students are required to attend all class meetings and remain in class for the entire class session. Failure to attend class will result in points deduction (6 pts) from Participation, effort, attendance. A student that is late and/or leaves early without prior approval from the instructor will receive a 3-point reduction from their participation, effort, attendance grade. Emergencies, illness, and other life related conflicts shall be communicated to the instructor via email and will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.	
Students shall come to class with everything they need to fully participate in class. This includes but is not limited to: writing utensils and paper or computer and any supplies/tools for projects. Students shall complete all written assignments and submit them to Compass ¹⁶ prior to the beginning of class. In-class writings can be handwritten or typed and must be submitted to the instructor before the end of class.	
*If the student is late or absent, the student is responsible for the information presented during that class session. There are no make-up presentations. ¹⁷	

¹⁵ Attendance policy may be changed based on the institution policies and instructor preference.

¹⁶ Class website may be changed to suit instructor preference.

¹⁷ It is recommended to add institution policies such as FERPA, student code, (dis)ability, academic integrity, etc. following the attendance segment.

Figure 3, Continued

Required Readings:

- Duffett, M. (2013). *Understanding fandom: An introduction to the study of media fan culture*. Bloomsbury.
- Lamerichs, N. (2014). Costuming as subculture: The multiple bodies of cosplay. *Scene (2044-3714)*, 2(1/2), 113–125.
- Hale, M. (2014). Cosplay: Intertextuality, Public Texts, and the Body Fantastic. *Western Folklore*, 73(1), 1-33.
- Nichols, E. G. (2019). Playing with identity: gender, performance and feminine agency in cosplay. *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 33(2), 270–282. <https://doi-org.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/10.1080/10304312.2019.1569410>.
- van Veen, tobias c. (2019). Afrofutures of Cosplay: Deviance and DiY in Black Fantastic Performance. *Journal of Futures Studies*, 24(2), 75–83. [https://doi-org.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/10.6531/JFS.201912_24\(2\).0010](https://doi-org.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/10.6531/JFS.201912_24(2).0010).
- Winge, T. M. (2019). *Costuming Cosplay*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Supply List:

Character (3-ring) Binder: Students shall keep a three-ring binder (recommended 1” to 1.5”) to store all research, sketches, sample swatches, notes, and character research. **A bound sketchbook may not be used!**

General art supplies:

X-acto knife
Scissors
Cutting board
Rubber cement
Tracing paper
Drawing pencil
Ultra-fine permanent markers
Three-hole punch (optional)

(The following supplies will be required depending on student’s chosen cosplay and is not a complete list)

EVA foam
Fabric
Wire
Wooden dowels
Air-dry clay
Paint
Leather

Resources for purchasing supplies:

Joann Fabrics
Michaels
Home Depot
Ace Hardware
Lowe's

Figure 3, Continued

<p>Online sources for supplies: Dickblick.com Amazon Cosplaysupplies.com</p> <p>Online recourses for ideas/inspiration: Kamuicosplay.com (Free patterns and tutorials) Punish Prop Academy Youtube</p> <p>Resources for Writing: Citations: https://owl.purdue.edu</p> <p>Artist statements: https://thecreativeindependent.com/guides/how-to-write-an-artist-statement/#statement https://www.format.com/magazine/resources/art/how-to-write-artist-statement https://www.agora-gallery.com/advice/blog/2016/07/23/how-to-write-artist-statement/</p> <p>Fan Content Websites: Fandom.com</p> <p>Fan lore https://fanlore.org/wiki/Main_Page</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Course Calendar¹⁸</p>		
Wk	Activity ¹⁹	Assignments Due ²⁰
		Bold items shall be completed before class
1	Syllabus overview	In class: create a list of fandoms/characters you might be interested in exploring (5).
M ²¹	Introductions and sharing of fandom interest Introduction to making cosplay	Write a brief summary about each character to go in character binder

¹⁸ Course calendar is based on twice weekly two hour and forty-minute class sessions.

¹⁹ The *Activity* column denotes what will take place during the class period.

²⁰ The *Assignments Due* column denotes what assignments are due during that class period. Assignments that are bold shall be completed before the start of class. Assignments labeled *in class*, will be completed and turned in during the class period.

²¹For clarity, I have chosen Monday and Wednesday as the days the class would be taught, however, these days should be adjusted according to institution requirements.

Figure 3, Continued

1 W	<p>Studio Day</p> <p>Introduction to Project 1</p> <p>Introduction to the creation of masks, hoods, or makeup of cosplay</p> <p>Skills-to-be-demonstrated: foam work, air dry clay, sewing</p>	<p>Choose character to explore for the rest of the semester</p> <p>Writing: begin in-depth character research (this will be expanded on through the semester and serve as documentation of your progress and understanding of your character)</p> <p>Find and print (in color) at least 3 images of your chosen character from different angles to include in your character binder</p>
2 M	<p>Discussion of reading</p> <p>Studio work if time allows</p>	<p>Readings: Duffett pg. 1-34; Crawford and Hancock pg. 1-20²²</p> <p>Writings: Two discussion questions about reading²³</p> <p>In class: one paragraph discussion reflection</p>
2 W	<p>Studio Day</p>	<p>In class: workday</p> <p>In class: Update character binder</p>
3 M	<p>In progress critique of project 1</p> <p>Studio work if time allows</p>	<p>In class: one paragraph reflection on any changes to be based on critique</p>
3 W	<p>Studio Day</p>	<p>In class: workday</p> <p>In class: Update character binder</p>
4 M	<p>Discussion of reading</p> <p>How to write an artist statement</p>	<p>Reading: Winge pg. 97-135</p> <p>Writings: Two discussion questions about reading</p> <p>In class: one paragraph discussion reflection</p>
4 W	<p>Studio Day</p>	<p>In class: workday</p> <p>In class: Update character binder</p>

²² Readings can be posted on the class website as a scanned PDF.

²³ The instructor should provide a few examples of what a thought provoking-discussion question looks like.

Figure 3, Continued

5 M	Project 1 critique	Project 1 due in class Writing: one paragraph to one page artist statement on current project that incorporates readings
5 W	Introduction to project 2 Skills-to-be-demonstrated: Sewing, pattern making	In class workday In class: Update character binder
6 M	Discussion of reading Studio work if time allows	Reading: Winge pg. 55-95 Writings: Two discussion questions about reading In class: one paragraph discussion reflection
6 W	Studio day	In class: workday In class: Update character binder
7 M	Discussion of reading Studio work if time allows	Reading: Crawford and Hancock pg. 119-161 Writing: Two discussion questions about reading In class: one paragraph discussion reflection
7 W	Studio Day	In class: workday In class: Update character binder
8 M	In progress critique of project 2 Studio work if time allows	In class: one paragraph reflection on any changes to be based on critique
8 W	Studio Day	In class: workday In class: Update character binder
9 M	Discussion of reading Studio work if time allows	Reading: Hale pg. 1-33 Writings: Two discussion questions about reading In class: one paragraph discussion reflection

Figure 3, Continued

9 W	Studio Day	In class: workday In class: Update character binder
10 M	Project 2 critique	Project 2 due in class Writing: one paragraph to one-page artist statement on current project that incorporates readings
10 W	Introduction to project 3 Skills-to-be-demonstrated: Shoes	In class: workday In class: Update character binder
11 M	Discussion of reading Studio work if time allows	Reading: van Veen pg. 75-83; Nichols pg. 270-282 Writing: Two discussion questions about reading In class: one paragraph discussion reflection
11 W	Studio Day	In class: workday In class: Update character binder
12 M	In progress critique of project 3 Studio work if time allows	In class: one paragraph reflection on any changes to be based on critique
12 W	Studio Day	In class: workday In class: Update character binder
13 M	Discussion of reading Studio work if time allows	Reading: Lamerichs pg. 113-125 Writing: Two discussion questions about reading In class: one paragraph discussion reflection
13 W	Studio Day	In class: workday In class: Last update character binder

Figure 3, Continued

14 M	Project 3 critique Discussion of in class Comic-con	Project 3 due in class Writing: one paragraph to one-page artist statement on current project that incorporates readings
14 W	Last Studio Day	In class: final touches on cosplay as a whole Writing: Completed Character Binder
15 ²⁴ M	Class Comic-con event	Required attendance in full cosplay

Golden Fighter’s despair

The syllabus opens with title of the course, *Identity and Cosplay*, followed by the image *Golden Fighter’s despair* by Cao Fei. The image shows several cosplayers dressed in gold armor standing in a rural Chinese setting. Cao Fei is a Chinese artist whose work “is inspired by the popular culture of the Cantonese region of China” (Crawford & Hancock, 2019, p. 33). Cao Fei’s work, *COSplayers* (of which *Golden Fighter’s despair* is a part), featured a film and photography of cosplayers in Guangzhou, China. Opening the syllabus with an image of cosplay serves several purposes. First, it exposes students to a visual representation of cosplay early in the class. This is in keeping with the principles of VCAE which “should be based on both the making and appraisal of images” (Duncum, 2002b, p. 20). Along with creating a cosplay, students should also be exposed to images of cosplay. Second, it serves as an opening activity that introduces students to critical thinking.

²⁴ While this course is for a sixteen-week semester, as fall and spring break do not fall on the same week for all universities, I have not included them in the semester calendar template. As such, this calendar must be further modified to include the semester breaks depending on the semester in which it is taught.

Students should be encouraged to examine *Golden Fighter's despair* as an introduction to cosplay. During this process the instructor will first allow students to converse with each other on their initial thoughts about the image. In doing so, the instructor will be engaging in problem-posing education (Freire, 1970/2017). Rather than depositing, as Freire describes, information about the artist and artwork, the students are asked to form their own conclusions. After this initial discussion, the instructor can then share information on the artist, Cao Fei, such as her Chinese heritage and how her work “desire[s] to explore the lifestyles and escapism of her generation” (Crawford & Hancock, 2019, p. 36). This creates a new context for the students’ consideration in their discussion of the image (Freire, 1970/2017). Some students may find they have a greater connection with the image while others may feel more removed or unchanged. The concluding activity will be to encourage students to critically explore why their impression of the image has changed or remained the same.

Course Description

Directly under *Golden Fighter's despair* is the instructor’s information, class meeting time/location, and the course description. The instructor and class information are fairly standard in terms of what an instructor should include in a syllabus (Davis, 2009). This section will include the instructor’s name, office address, email, location of the class, and class meeting times. Including this information on the first page allows students to easily find the crucial information for contacting their instructor. The next section, *Course Description*, is a brief overview of the course’s purpose and expectations. The intention is to clearly define the parameters of the class in terms of student learning and activities. In this case, I first define the term *cosplay* in order to give students an idea of what cosplay is. However, this short definition is only an introduction to the complexities of cosplay as “defining what cosplay is, who

cosplayers are, and understanding its history and contemporary context is far from straightforward” (Crawford & Hancock, 2019, p. 17). Next, I “[clarify] for students what they will learn” (Davis, 2009, p. 23) by laying out the semester’s three main goals: engagement with popular culture through cosplay, exploration of cosplay as a form of artistic practice, participation in a class organized comic-con.

Course Objective

Similar to the *Course Description*, the next section, *Course Objectives* describes what students can expect to learn over the course of the semester. I outline four main objectives:

1. Students will learn skills in sewing, foam working, and basic cosplay construction.
2. Students will engage in scholarly discourse through readings, writings, and class discussions.
3. Students will explore the concept of identity [re]construction through meaningful artmaking.
4. Students will give and receive constructive feedback in order to improve prototypes throughout the semester.

The first objective fosters an active studio practice through the creation of cosplay. Like other studio practices, the creation of a cosplay is a “performative and slow process; developed overtime, usually by a solitary individual, but ultimately designed to be consumed by an audience” (Crawford & Hancock, 2019, p. 72). Students will not only learn to think critically about popular culture, fandom, and identity, they will also learn how to translate critical thought into art through the practice of cosplay. The second objective refers to the reading and writing component of the course. Critical pedagogy operates on the premise that all knowledge is political (Freire, 1970/2017; Giroux, 2011; Jacobs, 1997; Monchinski, 2008). In order for students to engage critically with popular culture, fandom, and identity, students must first be exposed to what others have written about these topics and be allowed to form their own

response through the act of critical reflection (Kelly & Bhangal, 2018). The third objective connects the creation of meaningful art to the concept of identity [re]construction. Students will combine the “fantastic and ephemeral” (Winge, 2019, p. 56) identity of their character with their own during the process of constructing their cosplay. Finally, the fourth objective relates to the studio critiques held throughout the course. Critiques are a large part of academic art courses and can provide feedback to help students improve their prototypes and future art.

Overall Grading, Project Grading and Final Grades

Critical pedagogy is often critical of grading policies and assessment. Rather than a meaningful form of understanding student learning, “assessment outcomes like grade point averages (GPAs) and standardized test scores serve . . . as a metrics for employability of the student and speak to how well the student can perform in a capitalist market place” (Gardner & Halpern, 2016, p. 42). Instead of disrupting the power structure, grading often reduces student learning to numbers on a page that are then used to determine how well the student will perform in the capitalist market. Despite this issue, institutions often require instructors to engage in some form of assessment. Therefore, instructors must engage in assessment in a manner that is student-centered, reflective, and “resists regurgitating deposited content” (Gardner & Halpern, 2016, p. 44). In keeping with this, all of the assignments represented in the *Overall Grading* section are short essays, artwork, or participation, rather than a test or quiz.

Assignments such as Project 1: Head, Project 2: Shoulders (Body), Project 3: Knees and Toes, and the Character Binder are long-term artistic projects that students will complete over the course of the semester (see Project Handouts). These projects are graded using a rubric which I shall explain in detail in the section *Project Rubric*. Short-term assignments such as artist statements, critique and discussion reflections, and discussion questions are intended to be

reflective of student learning. Instead of using a rubric, these assignments should be assessed as “a way to reflect on student learning and teaching” (Gardner & Halpern, 2016, p. 44). As the instructor is grading, they should leave detailed notations for the student to explain the reasons a student received a certain amount of points. Furthermore, as “reflective teaching practices require vulnerability, honesty, and an openness to change” (Gardner & Halpern, 2016, p. 47), instructors should be flexible in their grading practice and open to discussing grading practices with students. This may include a class discussion of the instructor’s grading practices or private discussions with students.

Attendance

Like the grading sections, the *Attendance* section of the syllabus can be altered to suit the preferences of the instructor. Rather than deducting a percentage of the total grade based on the number of absences, I have chosen to use a point system. The benefit of using a point system is that it is easier for students to quickly calculate the effect an absence will have on their grade. Currently, as the attendance and participation points are built into the overall points structure, each absence will result in a 6-point deduction from *Participation, effort, and attendance*. Furthermore, arriving late or leaving early results in a 3-point deduction. In keeping with the lived experiences critical pedagogy highlights (Giroux 2011; Monchinski, 2008; Tavin, 2003a) and University policies, the instructor should be cognizant of issues such as illness, emergencies, and other life related conflicts. As such, excused absences should be handled on a case-by-case basis between the student and the instructor.

Readings and Discussions

The *Required Readings* in the syllabus detail the proper citations of the course’s required readings. These readings provide students with a context for fans, fandom, cosplay, and identity.

It should not be assumed by the instructor that students enrolled in the course identify as fans or participate in fan culture. In order to engage in critical discourse regarding cosplay and identity, it is important for students to read literature that explores these concepts. According to Tavin (2004b), “critical pedagogy focuses on classrooms . . . as places of production and exchange,” (p. 198). The readings required for this course are intended to create a shared context for students to engage in an active dialogue that promotes critical thinking.

Rather than require a written reflection or test, students are asked to develop two discussion questions. As noted by Freire (1970/2017), “only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking” (p. 65). The instructor should emphasize to students that the discussion questions are not to test reading memorization and comprehension but to engage the students in conversation. The questions should “pose problems that arise from students’ realities so that students can come to be more critical thinkers about their own situation” (Jacobs, 1997, p. 7). Figure 4 shows an example of an open-ended question.

Figure 4

Example Question

In Crawford and Hancock’s (2019) <i>Introduction: What is Cosplay</i> they state that the most common distinction between cosplay and other forms of costuming such as Furry, LARP, and Disneybounding is that it is “not just an isolated activity but one aspect of participation within a wider community and culture” (p. 15), if that is the case, then how might we classify other acts of costuming that are fan related but not explicitly cosplay?

The question in Figure 4 is not intended to have a right or wrong answer but to provoke students to consider how cosplay is defined. As “critical pedagogy recognizes that one of the most common and meaningful shared experiences for students is through popular culture” (Tavin, 2004b, p. 198), students should consider their own lived experiences with popular culture during

the discussions. This can be facilitated by the instructor joining in the discussion as a “teacher-student” (Freire, 1970/2017, p. 53). During the discussions, the instructor acts as both the facilitator of the discussion and as a peer engaged in the conversation. The instructor should mediate the conversation to ensure civility and positive criticism. Furthermore, when conversation grows stagnant, it is the role of the instructor to move on to the next discussion question. The instructor should also join the discussion with students so as to add an additional perspective and to encourage the development of new ideas.

Critical Reflections

To allow students to contextualize their lived experiences in relationship to the readings and discussion, students are asked to write down their thoughts after each class discussion. Although critical pedagogy emphasizes dialogue as the primary instigator of critical thinking (Freire 1970/2017; Jacobs, 1997), self-reflection is a valuable tool for encouraging students to recognize the role of popular culture in their construction of identity. As such, written reflections should take place immediately after reading discussions. This will allow students to express thoughts, feelings, and newfound connections made through the process of engaging in critical dialogue. For a self-reflection to be critical, it should be a “purposeful unveiling and disruption of assumptions, norms, and universal truths dealing with knowledge, power, social identities and their subsequent role in the continuation of hegemony” (Kelly & Bhangal, 2018, p. 43). The instructor should highlight to students that these reflections center on moments in the discussion that disrupted or questioned their understanding of the readings, cosplay, and identity. It may be useful to pose questions such as: How has your perception of the reading changed based on the discussion? What did you learn about your peers’ perception of the reading? How is that perception different from your own? How has this reading and related discussion changed your

perception of cosplay and/or identity? These questions will help guide students through critical self-reflection.

Critiques

The art critique is a standard practice in many studio art classes and serves as a type of assessment for students at the conclusion of a project. However, “a student’s experience of assessment is complex, charged and fraught with anxiety” (Doren, 2015, p. 194). Often, the format for a critique involves the student presenting their work in front of their peers who give feedback based on that presentation. This feedback is “a conversation that is both verbal and nonverbal, a back and forth where viewpoints are exponentially multiplied based on the number of participants, and as such the outcome is impossible to predict” (Harlan, 2020, p. 7). On the one hand, critiques can generate positive growth for the artist in the form of critical ideas produced during the conversation. On the other hand, critiques can result in banal or even harmful feedback that does not promote growth in the artist and may even demotivate them.

In order to create a positive and reflective form of critique, the instructor must be aware of the overall nature and attitude of the class. Gardner and Halpern (2016) point out “students are not a monolithic group; students competed and self-censored in a way related to which students had more privilege and power than others” (p. 46). Some students may be eager to engage in free form discussions about each other’s art. Other students may find this intimidating and struggle to verbalize their thoughts. Individuals within the class will vary from excited to petrified, at the prospect of sharing their work. The critique method “requires a synthesis of objective and subjective elements that recognizes the student as a whole person, one who thinks, but also one who feels” (Harlan, 2020, p. 8). Rather than dictating the critique format, the instructor should involve students in planning the critique. For example, students could be asked to develop a

criterion to guide their observations and feedback. This allows students to declare what they believe is important to address during the critique (Gardner & Halpern, 2016). Furthermore, it may be useful to vary the format of the critique. One critique can follow the traditional art critique format while the next utilizes small groups or even written feedback. By using different critique formats, the instructor ensures that most students will be able to participate comfortably in at least one type of critique.

Artist Statements

The artist statement is an opportunity for the artist to explain to the viewer what their art is and why they created it. It is an expression or narrative of the artist's work that guides the viewer in understanding the artwork. These characteristics make the artist statement useful to help students explore their relationship with the cosplay they are creating. However, writing an artist statement can be intimidating even for the seasoned artist. Therefore, the instructor should set aside time to review with the class what an artist statement is, its format, and overall criteria, before the conclusion of the first project.

Unlike an artist statement for a gallery or exhibition, the purpose of this artist statement is for students to conceptualize their understanding of identity and cosplay in a manner that is personal to them. The artist statements are first-person accounts of the blended identity (i.e., the merging of their identity with the identity of the character) their cosplay is creating. Students should use “cosplay as a mechanism to explore aspects of their [the student's] existing identity/identities” (Crawford & Hancock, 2019, p. 146) when writing the artist statement. The instructor may wish to provide an example (either written by the instructor or a past student) of an artist statement so that students have a basis of comparison when writing their own.

Supply List and Resources

The *Supply List* section of the syllabus is an overview of required and recommended supplies to complete the course work. At the top of the list is a three-ring binder that will be used to hold project notes, sketches, and character information. The binder will be submitted on the final day of class as fulfillment of the Character Binder (see section Character Binder). Other required supplies include an X-acto knife, scissors, cutting board, rubber cement, tracing paper, drawing pencil, ultra-fine permanent markers, and possibly a three-hole punch. This supply list can be modified by the instructor depending on the supplies provided in the classroom. For example, some instructors may have cutting boards, scissors, and three-hole punches for classroom use. Students will be required to purchase additional materials in order to craft their cosplay.

As each student will be crafting a unique cosplay, the required materials will vary. Therefore, I have included an incomplete list of possible materials to be used for the construction of the cosplay. Cosplay “involves individuals extensively researching the character that they are going to play, sourcing material, practicing and perfecting crafting skills” (Crawford & Hancock, 2019, p. 181). The *Resources for purchasing supplies*, *Online sources for supplies*, *Online resources*, *Resources for writing*, and *Fan Content Websites*, provides a list of useful links for students to use to: purchase supplies, address questions they may have when the instructor is not available, and research content on characters. This list may be expanded or modified based on instructor preference and student suggestion.

Project Handouts

The next sections will present the handouts for the Character Binder, Project 1: Head, Project 2: Shoulders (body), and Project 3: Knees and Toes. Each handout consists of two pages,

the first is guidelines for the project and the second is the grading rubric. At the conclusion of each project, students are expected to turn in all relevant research, sketches, and notes.

Character Binder

The Character Binder is the culmination of the student's research, notes, project sketches, and drawings made throughout the semester. Students will be required to keep a three-ring binder in which they store all documents related to Project 1: Head, Project 2: Shoulders (Body), Project 3: Knees and Toes. Students will need to be able to remove/add documents throughout the course of the semester, so it is imperative that students do not use a bound sketchbook. The purpose of the assignment is to: (1) encourage students to document their lived experiences, (2) create an overall book or journal of knowledge that students can return to, (3) introduce students to a method of research for future projects.

Figure 5

Cosplay Binder Instructions

Character Binder²⁵

Objective: Your character binder will serve as a place to keep notes, images, character research, and project sketches throughout the semester. This binder will be a creative endeavor and students are encouraged to add personal decorations and to treat it as a journal. Furthermore, research and notes do not necessarily have to be typed or written in complete sentences- bullet points, drawings, and other forms of notetaking are acceptable forms of research. I recommend using a 1” binder.

Required Inclusions:

- Demo and project notes
- Character notes and information
- Character Drawings (at least 3)
- Sketches for each project
- Class syllabus
- Rubrics from Character Binder and Projects 1-3
- Dividers to organize information (at least 3 but you may add more)

Organization: Please adhere to the following organization²⁶

1. Class syllabus
2. Character Binder instructions and Rubric
3. Character images
- 4. Divider Labeled Project 1**
5. Project 1 Rubric
6. Project 1 sketches
7. Demo and project notes
8. Character notes and information
- 9. Divider Labeled Project 2**
10. Project 2 Rubric
11. Project 2 sketches
12. Demo and project notes
13. Character notes and information
- 14. Divider Labeled Project 3**
15. Project 3 Rubric
16. Project 3 sketches
17. Demo and project notes
18. Character notes and information

***All pages should be hole punched. Please do not put pages in the side pockets**

²⁵ See Appendix B for Character Binder without footnotes

²⁶ Organization of the binder may be altered to suit instructor preference

Character Binder in Classroom Practice. Part of critical pedagogy and VCAE is recognizing lived experiences as a focal point of student learning (Giroux 2011; Monchinski, 2008; Tavin, 2003a). In the context of this proposed class, students are exploring their lived experiences through the act of cosplay. Throughout the course of the projects, students are expected to actively document their relationship with popular culture, cosplay, and identity in the form of project notes, character research, and drawings. Bamberg et al, (2011) state that identity is “constructed in discursive activities,” (p. 178). The Character Binder is a space for students to negotiate and construct their perception of popular culture and its possible role[s] in their identity. Through research of their character, students can “‘inhabit’ [the] text by negotiating meanings through it and creating new cultural products in response, making it one’s own” (Sturken & Cartwright, 2018, pp. 78-79). In particular, when researching their character, students be should asked to reflect on the connections they see between themselves and the character. The character research is more than noting personality traits, timelines, and important events; it is where students begin to contextualize the character as a point of identity exploration.

Along with documenting the students’ lived experiences with popular culture, the Character Binder is a source of knowledge in the form of notes on technical demonstrations, identity research, and an example of their artistic process. While it should not be assumed that all students enrolled in the course intend to become artists or educators, the Character Binder is potentially a useful example of a student’s artistic and research capabilities. Furthermore, it is a collection of documents that can be revisited in order to review demonstration notes if the student desires to continue creating cosplay.

The Character Binder assignment asks students to develop and organize a binder that contains all of the relevant information to a project. This method of research organization can

then be applied to future projects in the arts, sciences, and humanities. To make the Character Binder more opened ended, and thus, applicable to future projects, the instructor should encourage students to experiment with the format of their notes, drawings, and overall design of the character binder. Although the organization and format of the binder is laid out in the instructions, students are not required to adhere to a particular style of notetaking or drawing. In keeping with critical pedagogy, students are able to “come up with their own solution” (Jacobs, 1997, p. 6) in the presentation of their learning; therefore, the Character Binder is an opportunity for students to explore methods of artistic research that work best for them. It may be helpful to frame the project as an artistic endeavor rather than as research. An instructor should show several examples (either made by the instructor or past student work) that vary in notetaking and/or drawing style.

Project 1: Head, Project 2: Shoulders (Body), Project 3: Knees and Toes

Project 1: Head, Project 2: Shoulders (Body), Project 3: Knees and Toes split the creation of a single cosplay into three aspects. Project 1: The Head, asks students to create a wig, make up, mask, or other head coverings of the cosplay. Project 2: Shoulders (Body), asks students to create the body of the cosplay. Project 3: Knee and Toes, asks students create the footwear of the cosplay. The instructions for each of the three parts share a similar format which is intended to promote critical thinking and give clear instructions.

Figure 6

Project 1: Head Instructions

Project 1: Head



Iron Man Helmet made of 1,5mm Industrial Cardboard by Bullrick <https://www.deviantart.com/bullrick/art/Iron-Man-Helmet-Cardboard-266948034>

Objective: You will design headwear, wigs, masks, and/or makeup based on your chosen character. The purpose of this project is **not to** recreate the character's features exactly, but to integrate aspects of the character with aspects of your own identity to create a unique object or look. You may use (but are not limited to) materials such as EVA foam, fabric, make up, clay, wire, and fabric.

Process: Your design should transform, amplify, or recontextualize your character in a manner that can be related to your identity. It is recommended that you consider what first attracted you to the character and then use those aspects in order to relate the character back to yourself. The following questions will aid in this process:

- What strengths of the character do you also possess? [same with weaknesses]
- What strengths of theirs would you like to possess and why?
- What personality traits resonate with you? How so?
- How do they treat people?
- How do they approach life?
- What thoughts do you think plague them at night?
- How could you show your unique personality in your head piece?

Research: Sketch a minimum of **5** ideas for your project. From these sketches you will choose one as your final project. Re-sketch your final idea from the front, back, and side view (**3 sketches**). You will have a total of **8 sketches**.

Figure 7

Project 2: Shoulders (body) Instruction

Project 2: Shoulders (body)



Yaya Han,
*Sue Storm – Fantastic
4*, photography by Judy
Stephens, Elysiam,
Brian Boling, Sweet
Sensation Photography,
[http://www.yayahan.com/
portfolio/costumes/s
ue-storm-fantastic-4](http://www.yayahan.com/portfolio/costumes/sue-storm-fantastic-4)

Objective: You will design and craft the body of your cosplay based on your chosen character. Your outfit should be inspired by your character but **not** a direct copy. This piece should be created as a companion to Project 1: Head. As such it may be helpful to return to your Project 1 sketches. You may use (but are not limited to) materials such as EVA foam, fabric, wire, air dry clay, leather, and premade clothing (no premade completed costumes).

Process: Integrate aspects of your identity through exaggeration, transformation, or recontextualization. It is recommended that you consider what first attracted you to the character and then use those aspects in order to relate the character back to yourself. The following questions will aid in this process:

How does the character's backstory impact their decisions?

Are there any similarities between your history and the character's? Are there events in the character's history that you imagine yourself a part of?

What would you ask the character if you met them? Describe the conversation.

How does your character respond to challenges?

What would be on the character's grocery list?

What does the character's costume say about them? What does it say to you?

How could you show your unique personality in the body of your costume?

Research: Sketch a minimum of **5** ideas for your project. From these sketches you will choose one as your final project. Re-sketch your final idea from the front, back and side view (**3 sketches**). You will have a total of **8 sketches**.

Figure 8

Project 3: Knees and Toes Instruction

Project 3: Knees and Toes



SATYR hoof boots,
By misanthropicmessiah
<https://misanthropicmessiah.tumblr.com/post/137598496846/horseking-design-satyr-hoof-boots-ankle-high>

Objective: Design and craft the shoes and/or legs of your cosplay. This project should be inspired by your character but **not** an exact copy. Your design should relate to Project 1 and Project 2. It may be helpful to review sketches from Project 1 and Project 2. You may use (but are not limited to) materials such as; EVA foam, premade shoes (no costume shoes or exact replicas of your characters shoes), leather, wire, and fabric.

Process: Integrate aspects of your identity through exaggeration, transformation, or recontextualization. It is recommended that you consider what first attracted you to the character and then use those aspects in order to relate the character back to yourself. The following questions will aide in this process:

What do you think your character's hobbies are? Do you imagine they are similar to your own?
Describe what would be an ideal day for your character? Describe their worst day.
How do other characters interact with your character? Describe your character's role in the narrative.
How could you show your unique personality in your footwear?

Research: Sketch a minimum of **5** ideas for your project. From these sketches you will choose one as your final project. Re-sketch your final idea from the front, back and side view (**3 sketches**). You will have a total of **8 sketches**.

Project 1: Head, Project 2: Shoulders (Body), Project 3: Knees and Toes in Classroom

Practice. Similar to the syllabus, the first page of each project assignment document features an image that is representative of the part of the cosplay to be made. I have chosen an image of a cardboard Iron Man helmet for Project 1: Head; Yaya Han's Invisible Woman cosplay for Project 2: Shoulders (Body); and saytr boots for Project 3: Knees and Toes. The intention is to help "students to ground studio activities in an understanding of a wider context" (Duncum, 2003, p. 24) by presenting them with representations of the possibilities of cosplay.

Following the images is the project *Objective*. Each of the three projects is to be based on a single character in order to create a cohesive cosplay at the conclusion of the class. However, it should be emphasized that students are not attempting to replicate the character's costume as it is known and recognized in popular media. The student is meant to actively look for "the point of *suture* between" (Hall, 1996, p. 5) the character's identity and their own. The goal is for students to exaggerate the point of intersection between their identity and the character's identity. As such, instructors should highlight the need to critically consider the choice of character in relationship to personal identity. Crawford and Hancock (2019) suggest "cosplayers are not simply trying *to be* the character they dress as, but rather they are using this [cosplay] to create and *play with* different identities" (p. 135). Cosplayers often choose characters that they see aspects of themselves in, either in personality or physical characteristics (Crawford & Hancock, 2019; Winge, 2019). However, instructors should be cognizant that not all students will be fans or possess the in-depth knowledge of popular culture characters often needed to craft a cosplay. As such, students should create a list of five popular culture characters before beginning Project 1: Head. Once students have created the list, have them write a short description of each character. Focus students on their depth of knowledge, emotional attachment, and interest in a

particular character. Students can then make an informed decision on the character to be the basis of their cosplay.

Crafting the Cosplay

Once a character is chosen, students can begin to explore the “intimate and complex relationship between fan and the character” (Lamerichs, 2018, p. 210) through research and in-class discussions. Researching the character by watching/reading the original source [e.g., movie, TV show, or novel], reading fan blogs and websites, and viewing images will allow students to become familiar with the character. Crawford and Hancock (2018) point out that although some “cosplayers may not necessarily start out as fans of a particular text or character, by creating a costume and playing a character, Lamerichs (2015) suggests, they pour themselves and their emotions into the process” (p. 176). Therefore, students should look for behavior and/or physical appearances that they have a strong response to in order to begin making connections between their own identity and the character’s identity. To guide this research, the *Process* section of the project handout poses a series of questions for the students to consider. For example, in Project 1: Head, students are asked to consider: (1) What strengths of the character do you also possess? [same with weaknesses] (2) What strengths of theirs would you like to possess and why? (3) What personality traits resonate with you? How so? (4) How do they treat people? (5) How do they approach life? (6) What thoughts do you think plague them at night? (7) How could you show your unique personality in your head piece? These questions ask students to begin to consider their character in the context of identity, popular culture, and physical appearance.

As students conduct research, the instructor can use Freire’s problem-posing education theory to facilitate dialogue between students to share their research with one another through a series of prompts or ice breakers as they work on constructing their cosplay. The instructor

should encourage students to use these informal discussions as a way of verbalizing their thoughts and gaining outside perspective via other students on the relationship between fandom and identity. Character research and class discussions (see section Reading and Discussions) are critical to the development of the relationship between student and character needed for crafting a transformative, identity-based cosplay. Connections students make between their identity and the character's identity through research and dialogue should serve as inspiration during the process of designing and crafting their cosplay. The process of crafting a cosplay will require the students to carefully consider the necessary skills and materials needed in order to realize their visions. Bainbridge and Norris (2013) note that “the authenticity of the costume very much depends on the craft that goes into its making” (para. 9). As such, cosplayers spend time learning and improving crafting skills including but not limited to, sewing and pattern making, prop construction, and leather work. Many of these skills are self-taught “through the assistance of online forums, cosplaying sites (for example cosplay.com) and other peer communities” (Bainbridge & Norris, 2013, para. 9).

Given the wide variety of popular culture characters and seemingly endless range of techniques used by cosplayers, it is not possible for an instructor to know or teach every skill needed for each student's cosplay. Thus, it is recommended that the instructor focus on teaching basic skills such as sewing, pattern making, and EVA foam construction. For specialized or in-depth tutorials, the instructor should encourage students to use online cosplay tutorials and forums. Not only will this stimulate students to participate in the larger cosplay community, it is also an opportunity for the instructor to enact critical pedagogy in a two-fold manner. First, the instructor is guiding the student to their own creative solution rather than solving the problem for

them (Freire, 1970/2017; Jacobs, 1997). Second, the instructor learns from the student and vice versa (Freire, 1970/2017) because both are engaged in learning an unfamiliar skill.

Assessment

As I iterated in the section *Overall Grading, Project Grading and Final Grades*, assessment of student work is a complex topic within critical pedagogy. Gardner and Halpern (2016) point out that the practice of “assessing student performance and learning obscures the social and political inequalities inherent in the higher education system” (p. 42). Often, assessment practices have a tendency to reduce student learning to numbers on a page and GPAs that fail to reflect the complexities of learning in a classroom. Even so, it is possible for assessment to produce meaningful feedback for students and the instructor. Student assessment must “allow for nuances, flatten hierarchies, encourage students to pose problems, and accurately reflect the messy processes that are critical thinking” (Gardner & Halpern, 2016, p. 44). However, this is easier said than done, as such, the rubrics presented in Figures 9-12 should be used as a baseline for assessment that will be revisited and modified in collaboration with students. As described by Gardner and Halpern (2016), “rubrics can be meaningful assessment tools for critical pedagogues because they can be used collaboratively with students and other instructional partners, provide meaningful feedback to students and be used reflectively as a tool to assess the assessment instrument itself” (p. 43). Therefore, the Character Binder and Project 1: Head, Project 2: Shoulders (Body), Project 3: Knees and Toes are graded on three criteria chosen by the instructor (research, craft, design) and final criteria that will be developed in dialogue with students at the beginning of the project (see section Final Criteria.). The research, craft, and design criteria are worth 5 points each while the student-developed criterion is counted for double (10 points), for a total of 25 points overall.

Figure 9

Project 1: Head Rubric

Project 1 Rubric			Student Name _____	
	Research	Craft	Design	²⁷ *worth double points (10)
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has more than the minimum sketches Class notes are legible & identify all demonstrated techniques Character research has addressed & expanded on the questions in handout (3 pages or more) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows definitive understanding of techniques used to create project Object is well constructed with no obvious glue or tape All parts of the piece are intentionally finished Care and planning is evident in all aspects of the piece 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design is clearly influenced by the character Clearly incorporates elements of the student's identity Piece is wearable and functional 	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has all required sketches Class notes are legible & identifies all demonstrated techniques Character research addresses questions in handout (2-2.5 pgs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows understanding of techniques used to create project Object is mostly well constructed with some tape or glue visible Most or all parts of piece are intentionally finished Clear care and planning in most parts of the piece 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design is influenced by character Incorporates elements of the student's identity Piece is wearable but may be somewhat difficult to wear/put on 	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Missing one or two required sketches Missing details for demonstrated techniques and/or legibility of notes is not always clear Character research has minimally addressed questions (1-1.5 pgs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some understanding of techniques used to create project Object is somewhat well constructed/ large amount of glue/tape visible Some parts are intentionally finished Some care and planning is visible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design is either somewhat derivative or character influence is stretched Some elements of student identity are present Piece is somewhat wearable 	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is missing half or more sketches Missing most of demonstrated techniques or class notes are unreadable Character research addresses half or less handout questions (>1 pg) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technique needs improvement Object is not well constructed Little to no parts of the piece is adequately finished Very little care and planning evident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design too derivative or has too little character influence Elements of student identity are difficult to see Piece is unwearable 	
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is missing most or all sketches Missing most or all class notes No character research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No effort in technique mastery present Object is unfinished No care and planning evident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design is entirely derivative No elements of student identity are present Piece is unwearable 	

Late Deduction: #days ____ x 1 pts = ____

Final Grade: ____/25

²⁷ Last grading criterion is left blank for instructor-student collaboration.

Figure 10

Project 2: Shoulders Rubric

Project 2 Rubric		Student Name _____		
	Research	Craft	Design	*worth double points (10)
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has more than the minimum sketches • Class notes are legible & identify all demonstrated techniques • Character research has addressed & expanded on the questions in handout (3 pages or more) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows definitive understanding of techniques used to create project • Object is well constructed with no obvious glue or tape • All parts of the piece are intentionally finished • Care and planning is evident in all aspects of the piece 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design is clearly influenced by the character • Design seamlessly fits with project 1 • Clearly incorporates elements of the student's identity • Piece is wearable and functional 	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has all required sketches • Class notes are legible & identifies all demonstrated techniques • Character research addresses questions in handout (2-2.5 pgs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows understanding of techniques used to create project • Object is mostly well constructed with some tape or glue visible • Most or all parts of piece are intentionally finished • Clear care and planning in most parts of the piece 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design is influenced by character • Design fits with project 1 • Incorporates elements of the student's identity • Piece is wearable but may be somewhat difficult to wear/put on 	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing one or two required sketches • Missing details for demonstrated techniques and/or legibility of notes is not always clear • Character research has minimally addressed questions (1-1.5 pgs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some understanding of techniques used to create project • Object is somewhat well constructed/ large amount of glue/tape visible • Some parts are intentionally finished • Some care and planning is visible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design is either somewhat derivative or character influence is stretched • Aspects of the design work with project 1 • Some elements of student identity are present • Piece is somewhat wearable 	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is missing half or more sketches • Missing most of demonstrated techniques or class notes are unreadable • Character research addresses half or less handout questions (>1 pg) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technique needs improvement • Object is not well constructed • Little to no parts of the piece is adequately finished • Very little care and planning evident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design too derivative or has too little character influence • Little to no parts of the design work with project 1 • Elements of student identity is difficult to see • Piece is unwearable 	
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is missing most or all sketches • Missing most or all class notes • No character research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No effort in technique mastery present • Object is unfinished • No care and planning evident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design is entirely derivative • Design does not relate to project 1 • No elements of student identity are present • Piece is unwearable 	

Late Deduction: #days ___ x 1 pt = ___

Final Grade: ___/25

Figure 11

Project 3: Knees and Toes Rubric

Project 3 Rubric		Student Name _____		
	Research	Craft	Design	* worth double points (10)
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has more than the minimum sketches Class notes are legible & identify all demonstrated techniques Character research has addressed & expanded on the questions in handout (3 pages or more) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows definitive understanding of techniques used to create project Object is well constructed with no obvious glue or tape All parts of the piece are intentionally finished Care and planning is evident in all aspects of the piece 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design is clearly influenced by the character Design seamlessly fits with projects 1 & 2 Clearly incorporates elements of the student's identity Piece is wearable and functional 	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has all required sketches Class notes are legible & identifies all demonstrated techniques Character research addresses questions in handout (2-2.5 pgs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows understanding of techniques used to create project Object is mostly well constructed with some tape or glue visible Most or all parts of piece are intentionally finished Clear care and planning in most parts of the piece 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design is influenced by character Design fits with projects 1 & 2 Incorporates elements of the student's identity Piece is wearable but may be somewhat difficult to wear/put on 	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Missing one or two required sketches Missing details for demonstrated techniques and/or legibility of notes is not always clear Character research has minimally addressed questions (1-1.5 pgs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some understanding of techniques used to create project Object is somewhat well constructed/ large amount of glue/tape visible Some parts are intentionally finished Some care and planning is visible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design is either somewhat derivative or character influence is stretched Aspects of the design work with projects 1 & 2 Some elements of student identity are present Piece is somewhat wearable 	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is missing half or more sketches Missing most of demonstrated techniques or class notes are unreadable Character research addresses half or less handout questions (>1 pg) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technique needs improvement Object is not well constructed Little to no parts of the piece is adequately finished Very little care and planning evident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design too derivative or has too little character influence Little to no parts of the design work with projects 1 & 2 Elements of student identity is difficult to see Piece is unwearable 	
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is missing most or all sketches Missing most or all class notes No character research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No effort in technique mastery present Object is unfinished No care and planning evident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design is entirely derivative No elements of student identity are present Design does not relate to projects 1 & 2 Piece is unwearable 	

Late Deduction: #days ____ x 1 pt = ____

Final Grade: ____/25

Figure 12

Character Binder Rubric

Character Binder Rubric		Student Name _____		
	Research	Craft	Design	* worth double points (10)
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demo and project notes are descriptive and reflect the techniques the student has learned Has detailed character descriptions and thoughtful interpretation based on available sources (9 pages or more) Has more than 3, full page, colored character images 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Binder is in required format All writing is legible, and sketches are neat Binder is well cared for; pages are uncrumpled and free of tears free of stains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Binder has been personalized to the individual taste and aesthetic of the student Has all required parts Care and planning are evident in all aspects of the piece 	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demo and project notes are reflective of the techniques the student has learned Has sufficiently described and interpreted the character based on available sources (6-8 pgs.) Has 3 full page, colored character image 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Binder is in required format Majority of writing is legible, and sketches are neat Binder is well cared for; mostly pages are uncrumpled and free of tears free of stains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Binder has personalization Has most of the required parts but is missing one or two Clear care and planning in most parts of the piece 	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demo and project notes reflect some aspects of the techniques the student has learned but some are vague or incorrect Some character descriptions and interpretation (3-5 pgs.) Has less than required images or images are of poor quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Binder is mostly in the required format Most of the writing is legible and sketches are somewhat neat Binder is mostly cared for; some pages crumpled. A few tears and stains are present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some personalization has been added to the binder Is missing three or more required parts Some care and planning is visible 	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Missing half of the demo & project notes Very little character research completed (Less than 3 pgs.) Has less than required images and images are of poor quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Binder is not in the required format Some of writing is legible and sketches messy Binder is not cared for; pages are crumpled and there are many tears and stains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little to no personalization Missing half of the required parts Very little care and planning evident 	
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little to no project and demo notes Little to no character research (1 pg. or less) No images 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Binder is not in the required format None of writing is legible and sketches are messy are not present Binder is not cared for; pages are crumpled and there are many tears and stains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No personalization Missing more than half of the required parts No care or planning evident 	

Late Deduction: #days ___ x 1 pt = ____

Final Grade: ____/25

Assessment Criteria

The criteria of research, craft, and design used in assessing the project outcomes are based on observable aspects of the student's project. In order to make "critically aligned learning outcomes more transparent to our students" (Gardner & Halpern, 2016, p. 44), instructors should review the criteria with students at the beginning of each project.

Research. The research criteria of the rubric grades students on project sketches, character research, and class notes. In order for students to receive full points in the research criteria for Project 1: Head, Project 2: Shoulders (Body), Project 3: Knees and Toes (see Figure 9-12) the student must: (1) have more than the minimum sketches; (2) class notes are legible and identify all demonstrated techniques; (3) character research has addressed & expanded on the questions in handout (3 pages or more). The Character Binder rubric (see Figure 12) has similar criteria; (1) demo and project notes are descriptive and reflect the techniques the student has learned; (2) has detailed character descriptions and thoughtful interpretation based on available sources (9 pages or more); (3) has more than 3, full page, colored character images. The observable criteria of the research segment are defined by page numbers, readability of writing, and the student's ability to comprehensively follow and record process steps during class demonstrations. At first glance, these criteria are in opposition with the practices of critical pedagogy as it dictates requirements rather than democratizing them (Freire, 1970/2017). However, there are aspects of this criteria that the instructor and student should negotiate in order to accommodate student lived experiences (Freire, 1970/2017).

For example, instructors should be mindful that not all students will have drawing experience. Rather than require students to submit eight drawings the instructor and students should develop a list of forms of "sketching" that would fulfil the requirement. Examples may

include photos of student made models, digital drawings, composite images, or collage. This allows for instructors to engage in “a learner-centered approach to teaching that acknowledges and values prior experiences and knowledge” (Gardner & Halpern, 2016, p. 44) of students. Similarly, students are expected to be engaging in character research throughout each project and are expected to take notes during instructor demonstrations. However, notetaking should be individualized to the student and allow for students to learn and retain information in the manner best suited to them. Therefore, the instructor may discuss different forms of notetaking including handwriting, typing, and even drawing.

Craft. The craft section of the rubric assesses students on their use of technique, the care and handling of the project, and the overall finishing. In essence, this section examines the effort a student put into carefully creating a wearable object. For a student to receive full points they must meet the following criteria (see Figure 9-12): (1) show definitive understanding of techniques used to create project; (2) object is well constructed with no obvious glue or tape; (3) all parts of the piece are intentionally finished; care and planning is evident in all aspects of the piece.

Craft and detail are an important aspect of cosplay (Winge, 2019; Hansen, 2018). Hansen (2018) points out, “cosplay allows for highly detailed costumes built for close-up viewing” (p. 38). Therefore, a student’s cosplay should be constructed with the expectation of close inspection. I have intentionally left the types of technical skills students are expected to use in the construction of their cosplay open-ended in the rubrics. As different cosplays will require different techniques, students will be self-directed in terms of the techniques they choose to master. The projects should show that the student understands the techniques they have chosen to use in the construction of their cosplay. However, the instructor should keep in mind that “the

value in this [cosplay] type of artwork is not necessarily about technical skills . . . rather it is more about the cleverness of intertextuality, appropriation, juxtaposition, and recontextualizing” (Hetrick, 2018, p. 61).

The criteria for craft in terms of the Character Binder (see Figure 12) consist of the following: (1) binder is in required format (see Figure 5); (2) all writing is legible, and sketches are neat; (3) binder is well cared for; pages are uncrumpled and free of tears free of stains. This section of the criteria focuses on “the concepts, skills, or behavior the rubric seeks to measure,” (Gardner & Halpern, 2016, p. 46). In this case, the skill is the student’s ability to follow directions and maintain and expand a dynamic object through the entire semester.

Design. The design criteria grade the student’s overall design and functionality of their costume. Specifically, this section looks at whether: (1) design is clearly influenced by the character; (2) clearly incorporates elements of the student’s identity; (3) piece is wearable and functional; (4) design seamlessly fits with project 1 (see Figure 10); (5) design seamlessly fits with projects 1 & 2 (see Figure 11). As Winge (2019) suggests “these costumed representations also present understandings of mediated identities that extend and expand the self” (p. 70). Therefore, the design criteria assess the student’s ability to design a costume that transforms a popular culture character through an exaggeration or transformation of that character based on what they see, or want to see, in their own identity. Furthermore, this section also grades the wearability of the costume. The student is required to wear the costume at the conclusion of the class, so the pieces must be wearable. Wearability, in this case, can be defined as the ability of the cosplay to be worn on the body without hindering the student’s capacity to see, move, or communicate. Although “Cosplayers design costumes that reflect the appearance of the character rather than considering the physical constraints and demands on the Cosplayer’s physical body”

(Winge, 2019, p. 67), students are expected to be able to wear their costumes during the class Comic-Con (see section Comic-Con). Due to this requirement, students must be able to interact with others with minimal hindrance. Students could be asked to demonstrate wearability by either wearing or presenting a picture of them wearing the costume during the project critique.

For the Character Binder, the design criterion requires the following (see Figure 12): (1) binder has been personalized to the individual taste and aesthetic of the student; (2) has all required parts; (3) care and planning is evident in all aspects of the piece. Even though students are required to follow the prescribed page order, they should still be encouraged to personalize the overall binder to suite the student's personal taste and aesthetics. The instructor should show student examples of binder personalization. For example, students could enhance and decorate the binder cover using EVA foam and other materials.

Final Criterion. The final criterion for Project 1: Head, Project 2: Shoulder (Body), and Project 3: Knees and Toes and the Character binder is left blank in order to facilitate critical dialogue between instructor and student in regard to assessment. Gardner and Halpern (2016) explain that “students can and should participate in determining their own learning” (p.45). Furthermore, by affording students the opportunity to declare what they feel is important in their own assessment, the instructor is able to learn students' needs and expected outcomes for a project. Instructors should first ask students to develop the fourth criterion for grading after introducing the project. To do so, instructors could pose questions such as: What do you want to learn during the project? Is there a particular skill you want to learn? What do you think is the most important aspect of the project? What do you feel is missing in the rubric? Posing questions such as these “shifts the conversation away from exclusively what the instructor wants or needs to cover” (Gardner & Halpern, 2016, p. 45). After the student and the instructor have come to an

agreement on the requirements for the fourth criterion student can fill in the boxes left blank on the far right of the rubrics (see Figure 9-12). By engaging students in the process of assessing their own learning, the instructor has allowed students agency and self-determination. This student-generated criterion will be counted twice for a total of 10 points.

Comic-Con Event

At the conclusion of the semester, a day should be set aside for students to wear their costumes and perform as their character. Cosplay is typically a site-specific act that is intimately tied to the fan convention space (Lamerichs, 2015; Winge, 2019). Fan conventions such as Comic-Con, Naka-Con, and Dragon-Con, act as a temporary setting for cosplayers to perform and interact with one another. Although it can be difficult to achieve the atmosphere of a fan convention (which often features merchandise vendors, famous guest presenters, and cosplaying activities) in a classroom setting, students can interact with one another on a level similar to cosplayers interacting with each other at a fan convention.

This final event could also be made available to the general university student and teacher population or even the outside community. In any case, the instructor should involve students in the planning of the event by asking them to bring food and create decorations. Usually, Comic-Con events host cosplay specific activities such as a cosplay parade, competitions, and performances (Winge, 2019). These activities can be simulated during the class Comic-Con by having students engage in performances (recommend rehearsed rather than impromptu) with one another, having a parade in the studio halls, or even creating competitions for students to preside over. The class Comic-Con is an opportunity for students to experience a comic-con type atmosphere without the expense and time commitment of attending a convention.

Conclusion

In this section I have presented the documents to be used in a college level cosplay course. These documents consist of a syllabus and project handouts for the Character Binder, Project 1: Head, Project 2: Shoulder (Body), and Project 3: Knees and Toes, along with rubrics for each. In my presentation of these documents, I expanded upon the intended use of each. I then discussed classroom practice in conjunction with these documents. These practices are based on critical pedagogy and VCAE in order to promote critical thinking and identity construction.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

To conclude this thesis, Chapter 5 will first discuss the answers to the research questions stated in Chapter 1. Then I will discuss further applications of this curriculum in online courses and in grades K-12. Finally, I conclude by discussing the implications of this research in the field of art education and studio art as well as further research applications.

Answering the Research Questions

Main Research Question: How can critical pedagogy and visual culture-based art education be used to create a college studio art course utilizing cosplay to explore identity [re]construction?

As shown in the curriculum documents presented in Chapter 4, critical pedagogy and VCAE can be used in conjunction with cosplay to allow students to thoughtfully consider popular culture as a means of identity expression and [re]construction. Students have agency to choose the popular culture character they have the greatest connection to and then work to transform that character by exaggerating aspects of the character's identity they feel most represents and/or challenges their own identity. In doing so, this curriculum asks students to consider their lived experiences with popular culture and then critically explore the identity of that character in relationship to their own.

To facilitate critical thinking and add greater context, students are asked to read literature pertaining to cosplay and/or identity and then develop open-ended questions for discussion. During the discussions, the instructor participates as a teacher-student (Freire, 1970/2017). The instructor acts as a mediator and facilitator of the discussion yet also joins the discussion to add further perspective and growth. However, the instructor should take care not to dominate the discussion so as to avoid "making deposits of information which he or she [the instructor]

considers to constitute true knowledge” (Freire, 1970/2017, p. 49). This will allow the instructor to engage in a democratic discussion in order to enable students to freely express their perspectives on cosplay and identity while at the same time learn from the perspectives of their peers. Students can then translate the critical thinking and questioning they have learned during discussion into researching their character. Therefore, the handouts for Project 1: Head, Project 2: Shoulders (Body), Project 3: Knees and Toes include a series of critical questions designed to encourage students to engage in deeper analysis of their character in connection to their own identities.

Finally, students engage in critical reflection on cosplay and identity through critique and discussion reflections and artist statements. At the conclusion of each discussion or critique, students will be asked to critically reflect on how their interactions with peers have affected their perception of the readings or their projects. These reflections encourage students to process their thoughts, feelings, and connections made over the course of the semester. Self-reflection is an important aspect of critical pedagogy as it allows students to “question and evaluate the accuracy of our knowledge, assumptions, and beliefs” (Kelly & Bhangal, 2018, p. 42). Furthermore, students have the opportunity to internally reflect upon changes in their identity, perspectives, and learning as these reflections will only be shared with the instructor.

Supporting Question: How can cosplay be utilized to teach artistic skills and techniques?

Cosplay is connected to studio art through craft practices, costume making, theater, and performance art. The costumes cosplayers craft are labor intensive, detail-orientated, and require the cosplayer to master artistic skills such as leather working, prop making, sewing, and costume design. This requires that a cosplayer be creative when problem solving during the construction of a costume (Winge, 2019). After the costume is created, the cosplayer engages in performance

art while wearing the costume in the convention space. During this performance, the identity of the character and cosplayer become intertwined as the cosplayer constructs the character's identity based on the known personality traits of the character and inferences made by the cosplayer.

Creating a cosplay often requires learning techniques such as sewing, patterning making, foam working, prop making, leatherworking, resin casting, etc. Cosplayers often utilize online resources such as tutorials, blogs, and cosplay websites in order to learn new techniques necessary to craft their costumes (Winge, 2019, Crawford & Hancock, 2019). In a class setting, teaching cosplay allows the instructor to instruct students on basic crafting techniques such as sewing, patterning making, and foam work. However, given the wide variety of techniques that can be used in the construction of a cosplay it would not be possible for the instructor to demonstrate every necessary technique. Instead, instructors can engage students in a self-directed approach to artistic learning that mirrors the methods cosplayers use to learn a new technique.

This also utilizes critical pedagogy as the instructor must be responsive to the specific needs and interests of each student in order to guide students through the process of creating their cosplay. Students will need to engage in problem solving and carefully consider the necessary skills and materials they will need to craft their cosplay. This will require students to find their own creative solutions that are informed by instructor guidance (Freire, 1970/2017; Jacobs, 1997).

Further Application

This section will examine further applications of this curriculum in online courses and grades K-12. Although the curriculum is intended to be taught at the college level, it could be modified for other educational settings.

Implementation in an Online Format

In March 2020, the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). Shortly thereafter, the United States of America, like many other countries, declared a national emergency. Many states implemented stay-at-home orders, resulting in most universities to cease face-to-face teaching and transition all classes to online only. Online classes in studio arts create a unique challenge as many require specialized or expensive equipment and hands-on teacher demonstrations and guidance. For example, teaching a traditional jewelry or sculpture class, which often requires specialized equipment, materials, and chemicals, in an online format would be nearly impossible. Arts educators have had to be creative in altering their curricula to suit the current pandemic.

With this in mind, I have considered the possibility of a cosplay curriculum as an online course. Cosplay is often a self-taught discipline using online resources (Crawford & Hancock, 2019; Winge, 2019). As mentioned in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4, many cosplayers utilize online resources such as forums, blogs, videos, and tutorials. Most of the materials can be sourced from art supply retailers such as Joann Fabrics and Michaels and online art supply retailers such as Dickblick, Amazon, and cosplaysuppliers.com. As a result, a cosplay curriculum could be relatively easy to transfer to an online-only format depending on the instructor's existing course website. Therefore, the instructor may want to utilize their course website for their syllabus, project submissions, and grade entry at the beginning of the semester. Not only will this make any sudden transition to an online format easier, it is also useful in ensuring students have access to necessary documents in case they misplace the paper copy.

To prepare for the possibility of teaching an online course, the instructor may want to prerecord²⁸ videos of themselves giving demonstrations for various techniques that would normally be presented in person. These videos can then be posted to the course website either all at once or on the demonstration days specified in the syllabus. Along with the videos, the instructor (if they have not already) should post links to tutorials, how-to-videos, and cosplay websites so that students can explore techniques not presented by the instructor.

Critiques and discussions can also be transferred to an online format. Depending on instructor preference, students can be asked to discuss their costumes and readings either via discussion boards or Zoom. For discussion boards, students can post their assigned discussion questions. Students should then respond to the discussion question posted by their peers in a thoughtful and critical manner. Similarly, for critiques, students could post images of their cosplay along with their artist statement. Discussions on online videoconferencing programs such as Zoom, on the other hand, could be conducted in a manner similar to in person discussions. Students could discuss readings in a manner similar to how they would in an in-person class. Critiques present a more challenging issue as not all students have access to working cameras or feel comfortable sharing their living spaces. Instead, either the student or the instructor could screen share an image of the student's cosplay.

Implementation in K-12 Schools

Although the curriculum I have presented is intended to be taught at the college level, there are potential applications in K-12 grades. Depending on the intended age level, the instructor will be required to eliminate or simplify aspects of the current course. For example, separating the creation of the cosplay into three projects is useful for the time frame that the

²⁸ It should be noted that these prerecorded videos could also be used in an in-person course to allow students to review demonstrations.

college-level students have to create their costume. However, K-12 classes rarely spend an entire semester on one project. Therefore, the instructor may want to condense and simplify the project to a single aspect such as mask/headpiece or body garment.

Another aspect the instructor will need to modify is the reading and discussions. The current articles used are intended for a college-level student and therefore maybe frustrating for the high school and middle school student and incomprehensible to a grade schooler. Instead, the instructor should take the time to present fandom, cosplay, and popular culture in a language that is accessible to the age level of the students; encourage students to express their thoughts about these topics in relationship to their own experiences; and pose questions such as: What is your favorite TV show and why? Who is your favorite character and why? What similarities do you and this character share? What differences? The goal is to guide students to begin to think about popular culture in a manner that is more critical.

Implications and Significance in Art Education

The curriculum presented in this study suggests that applications of critical pedagogy and VCAE to teach a cosplay-centered class have the potential to allow students to critically explore their identity in relationship to popular culture. In doing so, this curriculum engages students in critical thought regarding their relationships with popular culture. For the art educator, this can engage students in a unique artistic practice that is built from lived experiences, identity construction, and popular culture. Through this curriculum, art educators have the opportunity to encourage students to consider art and art making beyond traditional techniques such as painting and sculpture.

This thesis addresses a gap in literature between fan studies and art education. Although there is a growing trend towards theoretical discussions of cosplay as an artistic medium, there is

very little in terms of practical applications of teaching cosplay as a form of meaningful artmaking. Therefore, this thesis demonstrates a possible teaching methodology for art educators to explore cosplay in the studio arts classroom. In doing so, this curriculum highlights the depth of meaning, skill, and criticality that fan practices such as cosplay possess. It thereby validates cosplay as a form of artistic meaning making in the fields of art education and studio art.

Currently, the curriculum presented in this thesis is theoretical. The next step is to implement the curriculum in a college level studio arts classroom. As with most theoretical curriculum there will be necessary adaptations, eliminations, and changes to the curriculum to suit a real-world praxis. Further research should be conducted to determine the effectiveness of the curriculum in engaging students in critical artistic practice through cosplay. This research could endeavor to examine student engagement in the assigned materials, the overall practicality of the curriculum, and the teacher-student relationship. In particular, student feedback will be paramount in determining the changes to be made to the curriculum in order to further foster a student-centered learning experience.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have explored the potential for student fan exploration of identity through the creation of a cosplay-based curriculum that utilizes critical pedagogy and VCAE. To do so, I first examined literature relevant to cosplay, identity, critical pedagogy, and VCAE. I then presented the curriculum documents which included a syllabus and four projects. I then demonstrated that critical pedagogy and VCAE will allow students to engage with cosplay, fandom, and identity in a thoughtful, critical, and holistic manner. Through critical pedagogy and VCAE, students can begin to explore the way popular culture influences and constructs their

identities. Cosplay is uniquely suited to the endeavor because as students construct their costumes, they will begin to consider their own connections to the character.

In the introduction to this thesis, I described the skepticism and rejection I experienced when attempting to share my cosplay-based art with my professors and peers during a graduate school critique. While the experience was disheartening, it led me to consider the possibilities of cosplay and fandom within the greater art education context. Cosplay has the potential to allow students to explore their identities, to critically analyze popular culture, and to engage in an activity that is labor intensive, craft-oriented, and enjoyable.

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APPENDIX A: CLASS SYLLABUS

IDENTITY AND COSPLAY

Studio Course



Cao Fei, *Golden Fighter's despair*, 2004 <https://publicdelivery.org/cao-fei-cosplayers/>

Instructor information:

Class Meeting Time/Location:

Course Description:

The purpose of this course is to allow students the opportunity to explore the construction of identity through the creation of cosplay. Cosplay, which is a composite word made from “costume” and “play”, is often defined as the act of dressing as a character from popular culture. Cosplay is a complex practice that combines the act of making and performing in a manner that is unique to each cosplayer. In this course, students will engage with popular culture from a cosplay perspective; explore cosplay as a form of artistic practice; take part in a class organized comic-con (short for comic convention) in their cosplay created during the class.

Course Objectives:

1. Students will learn skills in sewing, foam working, and basic cosplay construction.
2. Students will engage in scholarly discourse about identity and cosplay through readings, writings, and class discussions.
3. Students will explore the concept of identity [re]construction through meaningful artmaking.
4. Students will give and receive constructive feedback in order to improve prototypes throughout the semester.

Overall Grading:

Project 1	25 pts
Project 2	25 pts
Project 3	25 pts
Character binder	25 pts
Artist statements (10 pts)	30 pts
Critique and discussion reflections (6 pts)	60 pts
Discussion questions (5 pts)	45 pts
Participation, effort, attendance (6 pts)	174 pts
Total	409 pts

Project Grading:

Research	5 pts
Craft	5 pts
Design	5 pts
Student criteria	10 pts
Total	25 pts

Final Grades:

409 pts – 369 pts	A
368 pts – 328 pts	B
327 pts – 287 pts	C
286 pts – 246 pts	D
245 pts – 0 pts	F

*Late assignments will receive a 1 point reduction per day

Attendance:

Attendance is imperative. Students are required to attend all class meetings and remain in class for the entire class session. Failure to attend class will result in points deduction (6 pts) from participation, effort, attendance. A student that is late and/or leaves early without prior approval from the instructor will receive a 3 point reduction from Participation, effort, attendance. Emergencies, illness, and other life related conflicts shall be communicated to the instructor via email and will be addressed on a case by-case-basis.

Students shall come to class with everything they need to fully participate in class. This includes but is not limited to: writing utensils and paper or computer and any supplies/tools for projects. Students shall complete all written assignments and submit them to Compass prior to the beginning of class. In-class writings can be handwritten or typed and must be submitted to the instructor before the end of class.

*If the student is late or absent, the student is responsible for the information presented during that class session. There are no make-up presentations.

Required Readings:

Duffett, M. (2013). *Understanding fandom: An introduction to the study of media fan culture*.

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Lamerichs, N. (2014). Costuming as subculture: The multiple bodies of cosplay. *Scene (2044-3714)*, 2(1/2), 113–125.

Matthew Hale. (2014). Cosplay: Intertextuality, Public Texts, and the Body Fantastic. *Western Folklore*, 73(1), 1-33.

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Winge, T. M. (2019). *Costuming Cosplay*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Supply List:

Character (3-ring) Binder: Students shall keep a three-ring binder to store all research, sketches, sample swatches, notes, and character sheets. **A bound sketchbook may not be used!**

General art supplies:

3-ring binder (recommend 1")
X-acto knife
Scissors
Cutting board
Rubber cement
Tracing paper
Drawing pencil
Ultra-fine permanent markers
Three-hole punch (optional)

(The following supplies will be required depending on students chosen cosplay and is not a complete list)

EVA foam
Fabric
Wire
Wooden dowels
Air-dry clay
Paint
Leather

Resources for purchasing supplies:

Joann Fabrics
Michaels
Home Depot
Ace Hardware
Lowe's

Online sources for supplies:

Dickblick.com
Amazon
Cosplaysupplies.com

Online recourses

Kamuicosplay.com (Free patterns and tutorials)
Punish Prop Academy
Youtube

Resources for Writing:

Citations:

<https://owl.purdue.edu>

Artist statements:

<https://thecreativeindependent.com/guides/how-to-write-an-artist-statement/#statement>

<https://www.format.com/magazine/resources/art/how-to-write-artist-statement>

<https://www.agora-gallery.com/advice/blog/2016/07/23/how-to-write-artist-statement/>

Fan Content Websites:

Fandom.com

Fan lore

https://fanlore.org/wiki/Main_Page

COURSE CALENDAR

wk	Activity	Assignments Due Bold items shall be completed before class
1 M	Syllabus overview Introductions and sharing of fandom interest Introduction to making cosplay	In class: create a list of fandoms/characters you might be interested in exploring (5). Write a brief summary about each character to go in character binder
1 W	Studio Day Introduction to Project 1 Introduction to the creation of masks, hoods, or makeup of cosplay Skills-to-be-demonstrated: foam work, air dry clay, sewing	Choose character to explore for the rest of the semester Writing: begin in-depth character research (this will be expanded on through the semester and serve as documentation of your progress and understanding of your character) Find and print (in color) at least 3 images of your chosen character from different angles to include in your character binder
2 M	Discussion of reading Studio work if time allows	Readings: Duffett pg. 1-34; Crawford and Hancock pg. 1-20 Writings: Two discussion questions about reading In class: one paragraph discussion reflection
2 W	Studio Day	In class: workday In class: Update character binder
3 M	In progress critique of project 1 Studio work if time allows	In class: one paragraph reflection on any changes to be based on critique
3 W	Studio Day	In class: workday In class: Update character binder

4 M	Discussion of reading How to write an artist statement	Reading: Winge pg. 97-135 Writings: Two discussion questions about reading In class: one paragraph discussion reflection
4 W	Studio Day	In class: workday In class: Update character binder
5 M	Project 1 critique	Project 1 due in class Writing: one paragraph to one page artist statement on current project that incorporates readings
5 W	Introduction to project 2 Skills-to-be-demonstrated: Sewing, pattern making	In class workday In class: Update character binder
6 M	Discussion of reading Studio work if time allows	Reading: Winge pg. 55-95 Writings: Two discussion questions about reading In class: one paragraph discussion reflection
6 W	Studio day	In class: workday In class: Update character binder
7 M	Discussion of reading Studio work if time allows	Reading: Crawford and Hancock pg. 119-161 Writing: Two discussion questions about reading In class: one paragraph discussion reflection
7 W	Studio Day	In class: workday In class: Update character binder
8 M	In progress critique of project 2 Studio work if time allows	In class: one paragraph reflection on any changes to be based on critique
8 W	Studio Day	In class: workday In class: Update character binder

9 M	Discussion of reading Studio work if time allows	Reading: Hale pg. 1-33 Writings: Two discussion questions about reading In class: one paragraph discussion reflection
9 W	Studio Day	In class: workday In class: Update character binder
10 M	Project 2 critique	Project 2 due in class Writing: one paragraph to one-page artist statement on current project that incorporates readings
10 W	Introduction to project 3 Skills-to-be-demonstrated: Shoes	In class: workday In class: Update character binder
11 M	Discussion of reading Studio work if time allows	Reading: van Veen pg. 75-83; Nichols pg. 270-282 Writing: Two discussion questions about reading In class: one paragraph discussion reflection
11 W	Studio Day	In class: workday In class: Update character binder
12 M	In progress critique of project 3 Studio work if time allows	In class: one paragraph reflection on any changes to be based on critique
12 W	Studio Day	In class: workday In class: Update character binder
13 M	Discussion of reading Studio work if time allows	Reading: Lamerichs pg. 113-125 Writing: Two discussion questions about reading
13 W	Studio Day	In class: workday In class: Last update character binder

14 M	Project 3 critique Discussion of in class Comic-con	Project 3 due in class Writing: one paragraph to one-page artist statement on current project that incorporates readings
14 W	Last Studio Day	In class: final touches on cosplay as a whole Writing: Completed Character Binder
15 M	Class Comic-con event	Required attendance in full cosplay

APPENDIX B: CHARACTER BINDER INSTRUCTIONS AND RUBRIC

Character Binder

Objective: Your character binder will serve as a place to keep notes, images, character research, and project sketches throughout the semester. This binder will be a creative endeavor and students are encouraged to add personal decorations and to treat it as a journal. Furthermore, research and notes do not necessarily have to be typed or written in complete sentences bullet points, drawings, and other forms of notetaking are acceptable forms of research. I recommend using a 1” binder

Required Inclusions:

- Demo and project notes
- Character notes and information
- Character Drawings (at least 3)
- Sketches for each project
- Class syllabus
- Rubrics from Character Binder and Projects 1-3
- Dividers to organize information (at least 3 but you may add more)

Organization: Please adhere to the following organization

1. Class syllabus
2. Character Binder instructions and Rubric
3. Character images
- 4. Divider Labeled Project 1**
5. Project 1 Rubric
6. Project 1 sketches
7. Demo and project notes
8. Character notes and information
- 8. Divider Labeled Project 2**
9. Project 2 Rubric
10. Project 2 sketches
11. Demo and project notes
12. Character notes and information
- 13. Divider Labeled Project 3**
14. Project 3 Rubric
15. Project 3 sketches
16. Demo and project notes
17. Character notes and information

***All pages should be hole punched. Please do not put pages in the side pockets**

Character Binder Rubric

Student Name _____

	Research	Craft	Design	*worth double points (10)
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demo and project notes are descriptive and reflect the techniques the student has learned • Has detailed character descriptions and thoughtful interpretation based on available sources (9 pgs. or more) • Has more than 3, full page, colored character images 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Binder is in required format • All writing is legible, and sketches are neat • Binder is well cared for; pages are uncrumpled and free of tears free of stains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Binder has been personalized to the individual taste and aesthetic of the student • Has all required parts • Care and planning are evident in all aspects of the piece 	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demo and project notes are reflective of the techniques the student has learned • Has sufficiently described and interpreted the character based on available sources (6-8 pgs.) • Has 3 full page, colored character image 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Binder is in required format • Majority of writing is legible, and sketches are neat • Binder is well cared for; mostly pages are uncrumpled and free of tears free of stains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Binder has personalization • Has most of the required parts but is missing one or two • Clear care and planning in most parts of the piece 	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demo and project notes reflect some aspects of the techniques the student has learned but some are vague or incorrect • Some character descriptions and interpretation (3-5 pgs.) • Has less than required images or images are of poor quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Binder is mostly in the required format • Most of the writing is legible and sketches are somewhat neat • Binder is mostly cared for; some pages crumpled. A few tears and stains are present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some personalization has been added to the binder • Is missing three or more required parts • Some care and planning is visible 	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing half of the demo & project notes • Very little character research completed (Less than 3 pgs.) • Has less than required images and images are of poor quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Binder is not in the required format • Some of writing is legible and sketches messy • Binder is not cared for; pages are crumpled and there are many tears and stains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little to no personalization • Missing half of the required parts • Very little care and planning evident 	
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little to no project and demo notes • Little to no character research (1 pg. or less) • No images 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Binder is not in the required format • None of writing is legible and sketches are messy are not present • Binder is not cared for; pages are crumpled and there are many tears and stains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No personalization • Missing more than half of the required parts • No care or planning evident 	

Late Deduction: #days ___ x 1 pt = _____

Final Grade: _____/25

APPENDIX C: PROJECT 1: HEAD INSTRUCTIONS AND RUBRIC

Project 1: Head



Iron Man Helmet
made of 1,5mm
IndustrialCardboard
by Bullrick
<https://www.deviantart.com/bullrick/art/Iron-Man-Helmet-Cardboard-266948034>

Objective: You will design headwear, wigs, masks, or makeup based on your chosen character. The purpose of this project is **not to** recreate the character's features exactly but to integrate aspects of the character with aspects of your own identity to create a unique object or look. You may use (but are not limited to) materials such as EVA foam, fabric, make up, clay, wire, and fabric.

Process: Your design should transform, amplify, or recontextualize your character in a manner that can be related to your identity. It is recommended that you considered what first attracted you to the character and then use those aspects in order to relate the character back to yourself. The following questions will aid in this process:

- What strengths of the character do you also possess? [same with weaknesses]
- What strengths of theirs would you like to possess and why?
- What personality traits resonate with you? How so?
- How do they treat people?
- How do they approach life?
- What thoughts do you think plague them at night?
- How could you show your unique personality in your costume?

Research: Sketch a minimum of **5** ideas for your project. From these sketches you will choose one as your final project. Re-draw your final idea from the front, back and side view (**3 sketches**). You will have a total of **8 sketches**.

Project 1 Rubric

Student Name _____

	Research	Craft	Design	*worth double points (10)
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has more than the required sketches Class notes are legible & identify all demonstrated techniques Character research has addressed & expanded on the questions in handout (3 pgs. or more) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows definitive understanding of techniques used to create project Object is well constructed with no obvious glue or tape All parts of the piece are intentionally finished Care and planning is evident in all aspects of the piece 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design is clearly influenced by the character Clearly incorporates elements of the student's identity Piece is wearable and functional 	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has all required sketches Class notes are legible & identifies all demonstrated techniques Character research addresses questions in handout (2-2.5 pgs.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows understanding of techniques used to create project Object is mostly well constructed with some tape or glue visible Most or all parts of piece are intentionally finished Clear care and planning in most parts of the piece 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design is influenced by character Incorporates elements of the student's identity Piece is wearable but may be somewhat difficult to wear/put on 	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Missing one or two required sketches Missing details for demonstrated techniques and/or legibility of notes is not always clear Character research has minimally addressed questions (1-1.5 pgs.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some understanding of techniques used to create project Object is somewhat well constructed/ large amount of glue/tape visible Some parts are intentionally finished Some care and planning is visible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design is either somewhat derivative or character influence is stretched Some elements of student identity are present Piece is somewhat wearable 	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is missing half or more sketches Missing most of demonstrated techniques or class notes are unreadable Character research addresses half or less handout questions (>1 pg.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technique needs improvement Object is not well constructed Little to no parts of the piece is adequately finished Very little care and planning evident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design too derivative or has too little character influence Elements of student identity are difficult to see Piece is unwearable 	
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is missing most or all sketches Missing most or all class notes No character research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No effort in technique mastery present Object is unfinished No care and planning evident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design is entirely derivative No elements of student identity are present Piece is unwearable 	

Late Deduction: #days ___ x 1 pt = _____

Final Grade: _____/25

APPENDIX D: PROJECT 2: SHOULDERS (BODY) INSTRUCTIONS AND RUBRIC

Project 2: Shoulders (body)



Yaya Han,
*Sue Storm –
Fantastic 4*,
photography by Judy
Stephens, Elysiam,
Brian Boling, Sweet
Sensation
Photography,
<http://www.yayah.com/portfolio/costumes/sue-storm-fantastic-4>

Objective: You will design and craft the body of your cosplay based on your chosen character. Your outfit should be inspired by your character but **not** a direct copy. This piece should be created as a companion to project 1: Head. As such it may be helpful to return to your Project 1 sketches. You may use (but are not limited to) materials such as EVA foam, fabric, wire, air dry clay, leather, and premade clothing.

Process: Integrate aspects of your identity through exaggeration, transformation, or recontextualize. It is recommended that you considered what first attracted you to the character and then use those aspects in order to relate the character back to yourself. The following questions will aide in this process:

- How does the character's backstory impact their decisions?
- Are there any similarities between your history and the character's? If not, are there events in the characters history that you imagine yourself a part of?
- What would you ask the character if you met them? Describe the conversation.
- How does your character respond to challenges?
- What would be on the character's grocery list?
- What does the character's costume say about them? What does it say to you?
- How could you show your unique personality in the body of your costume?

Research: Sketch a minimum of **5** ideas for your project. From these sketches you will choose one as your final project. Re-draw your final idea from the front, back and side view (**3 sketches**). You will have a total of **8 sketches**.

Project 2 Rubric

Student Name _____

	Research	Craft	Design	*worth double points (10)
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has more than the required sketches Class notes are legible & identify all demonstrated techniques Character research has addressed & expanded on the questions in handout (3 pgs. or more) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows definitive understanding of techniques used to create project Object is well constructed with no obvious glue or tape All parts of the piece are intentionally finished Care and planning is evident in all aspects of the piece 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design is clearly influenced by the character Design seamlessly fits with project 1 Clearly incorporates elements of the student's identity Piece is wearable and functional 	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has all required sketches Class notes are legible & identifies all demonstrated techniques Character research addresses questions in handout (2-2.5 pgs.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows understanding of techniques used to create project Object is mostly well constructed with some tape or glue visible Most or all parts of piece are intentionally finished Clear care and planning in most parts of the piece 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design is influenced by character Design fits with project 1 Incorporates elements of the student's identity Piece is wearable but may be somewhat difficult to wear/put on 	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Missing one or two required sketches Missing details for demonstrated techniques and/or legibility of notes is not always clear Character research has minimally addressed questions (1-1.5 pgs.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some understanding of techniques used to create project Object is somewhat well constructed/ large amount of glue/tape visible Some parts are intentionally finished Some care and planning is visible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design is either somewhat derivative or character influence is stretched Aspects of the design work with project 1 Some elements of student identity are present Piece is somewhat wearable 	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is missing half or more sketches Missing most of demonstrated techniques or class notes are unreadable Character research addresses half or less handout questions (>1 pg.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technique needs improvement Object is not well constructed Little to no parts of the piece is adequately finished Very little care and planning evident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design too derivative or has too little character influence Little to no parts of the design work with project 1 Elements of student identity is difficult to see Piece is unwearable 	
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is missing most or all sketches Missing most or all class notes No character research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No effort in technique mastery present Object is unfinished No care and planning evident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design is entirely derivative Design does not relate to project 1 No elements of student identity are present Piece is unwearable 	

Late Deduction: #days ___ x 1 pts = _____

Final Grade: ____/25

APPENDIX E: PROJECT 3 KNEES AND TOES INSTRUCTIONS AND RUBRIC

Project 3: Knees and Toes



SATYR hoof boots,
By misanthropicmessiah
<https://misanthropicmessiah.tumblr.com/post/137598496846/horseking-design-satyr-hoof-boots-ankle-high>

Objective: Design and craft the shoes and/or legs of your cosplay. This project should be inspired by your character but **not** an exact copy. Your design should relate project 1 and project 2. It may be helpful to review sketches from projects 1 and project 2. You may use (but are not limited to) materials such as; EVA foam, premade shoes (no costume shoes or exact replicas of your characters shoes), leather, wire, and fabric.

Process: Integrate aspects of your identity through exaggeration, transformation, or recontextualize. It is recommended that you considered what first attracted you to the character and then use those aspects in order to relate the character back to yourself. The following questions will aide in this process:

What do you think your character’s hobbies are? Do you imagine they are similar to your own?

Describe what would be an ideal day for your character. Describe their worst day.

How do other characters interact with your character? Describe is your character’s role in the narrative

How could you show your unique personality in your footwear?

Research: Sketch a minimum of **5** ideas for your project. From these sketches you will choose one as your final project. Re-draw your final idea from the front, back and side view (**3 sketches**). You will have a total of **8 sketches**.

Project 3 Rubric

Student Name _____

	Research	Craft	Design	*worth double points (10)
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has more than the required sketches Class notes are legible & identify all demonstrated techniques Character research has addressed & expanded on the questions in handout (3 pgs. or more) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows definitive understanding of techniques used to create project Object is well constructed with no obvious glue or tape All parts of the piece are intentionally finished Care and planning is evident in all aspects of the piece 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design is clearly influenced by the character Design seamlessly fits with projects 1 & 2 Clearly incorporates elements of the student's identity Piece is wearable and functional 	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has all required sketches Class notes are legible & identifies all demonstrated techniques Character research addresses questions in handout (2-2.5 pgs.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows understanding of techniques used to create project Object is mostly well constructed with some tape or glue visible Most or all parts of piece are intentionally finished Clear care and planning in most parts of the piece 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design is influenced by character Design fits with projects 1 & 2 Incorporates elements of the student's identity Piece is wearable but may be somewhat difficult to wear/put on 	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Missing one or two required sketches Missing details for demonstrated techniques and/or legibility of notes is not always clear Character research has minimally addressed questions (1-1.5 pgs.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some understanding of techniques used to create project Object is somewhat well constructed/ large amount of glue/tape visible Some parts are intentionally finished Some care and planning is visible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design is either somewhat derivative or character influence is stretched Aspect of the design work with projects 1 & 2 Some elements of student identity are present Piece is somewhat wearable 	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is missing half or more sketches Missing most of demonstrated techniques or class notes are unreadable Character research addresses half or less handout questions (>1 pg.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technique needs improvement Object is not well constructed Little to no parts of the piece is adequately finished Very little care and planning evident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design too derivative or has too little character influence Little to no parts of the design work with projects 1 & 2 Elements of student identity is difficult to see Piece is unwearable 	
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is missing most or all sketches Missing most or all class notes No character research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No effort in technique mastery present Object is unfinished No care and planning evident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design is entirely derivative No elements of student identity are present Design does not relate to projects 1 & 2 Piece is unwearable 	

Late Deduction: #days ___ x 1 pt = _____

Final Grade: ____/25