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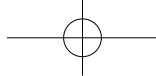
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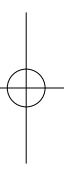
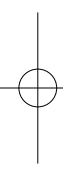
Course Objectives

In this course, you will learn how to:

- (1) be more creative in producing ideas for problem solving,
- (2) be more creative in prewriting to generate ideas for writing,
- (3) write summaries and reports.

Course Requirements and Grades

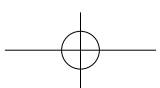
Eight assignments and tests, including a diagnostic and a final, will be given during the semester. A late report or exercise will be scored one letter grade lower and must be turned in within one week of the due date, or it will be recorded as a zero. All assignments must be submitted to receive course credit.

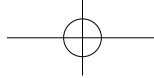


Assignments	Due Dates
(1) Diagnostic test, 0%	Week 1
(2) Take-home exercise, 10%	Week 4
(3) Creative strategy report, 15%	Week 7
(4) Open-ended story, 15%	Week 9
(5) In-class exercise, 10%	Week 11
(6) Quiz, 10%	Week 13
(7) Prewriting exercise, 10%	Week 15
(8) Final exam, 20%	TBA ¹

Exercises, tests, and writing assignments are weighed as noted above. Class participation will count 10%.

¹ TBA: to be arranged

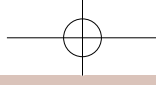




Tentative Schedule

Week 1	Diagnostic Test ¹ and Introduction
Week 2	What is Creative Thinking?
Week 3	Creative Strategies (I)
Week 4	Creative Strategies (I)
Week 5	May Day/National Day Holiday
Week 6	Characteristics of Creative Thinking
Week 7	Creative Strategies (II)
Week 8	Creative Strategies (II)
Week 9	Perceptual Blocks to Creativity
Week 10	Creative Strategies (III)
Week 11	Creative Strategies (III)
Week 12	Exercises
Week 13	Quiz
Week 14	Prewriting Techniques
Week 15	Prewriting Techniques
Week 16	Review
Week 17	Final Exam

¹ Test items are available in the editor's blog.



Part 1

Creative Thinking

Creative Thinking and Prewriting: An Introduction

Many studies have focused on emotional blocks to creativity, for example, Edward de Bono (1970), James L. Adams (1979, 2001), and James R. Evans (1991) among others. But a seminal statement on this issue was formulated by Abraham Maslow in 1957. According to him, creativity comes from the unconscious, and in dreams we can be more creative than we are in waking life: “With the lid taken off, with the controls taken off, the repressions and defenses taken off, we find generally more creativeness than appears to the naked eye” (Maslow 1992). Emotional blocks to creativity are the rules we follow and judgment we pass on issues that concern us, but rules and judgment do not apply in the unconscious—that’s why we tend to be more creative in our dreams. For Maslow, out of this unconscious portion of ourselves “of which we generally are afraid and therefore try to keep under control, out of this comes the ability to play—to enjoy, to fantasy, to laugh, to loaf, to be spontaneous—and, what’s most important for us here, creativity, which is a kind of intellectual play, which is a kind of permission to be ourselves, to fantasy, to let loose, and to be crazy, privately.”

It is imperative that creative thinkers overcome emotional blocks. To do that, as de Bono (1970) points out, is to suspend judgment. First, we need to be aware of the difference between being right and being effective: “Being right means being right all the time. Being effective means being right only at the end.” Second, creative thinking is about being effective: we are allowed to be wrong on the way as long as we are right in the end. De Bono says “judgment is suspended during the generative stage of thinking in order to be applied during the selective stage. The nature of the system is such that a wrong idea at some stage can lead to a right one later on.”¹

¹ For Adams (1979), it is important not to analyze or judge too early; one of the reasons is that “many techniques of conceptualization, such as brainstorming, depend for their effectiveness on maintaining ‘way-out’ ideas long enough to let them mature and spawn other more realistic ideas.”

Similarly, in the writing process, the prewriting stage is what de Bono calls “the generative stage,” while the writing stage itself is “the selective stage” in which we apply what has been produced in prewriting. So when we try to generate ideas for a topic in prewriting, we can afford to be wrong, because writing at this stage is only prewriting—nothing is going public yet (“a kind of permission to be ourselves, to fantasy, to let loose, and to be crazy, privately”). Once prewriting is done or enough information for the topic has been generated, we then come to the selective stage—only by now can we exercise our judgment.

In short, both creative thinking and prewriting are mainly generative, not selective, and the strategies and techniques to be covered in this book serve to open up different pathways of thinking in the generative or prewriting stage of the writing process, which paves the way for the writing stage by providing tools to produce the necessary “raw material” needed for later use.

► Unit 1 What Is Creative Thinking?

What to Look for in This Unit

What creative thinking is: Creativity is the ability to suspend judgment, discover new links between familiar things, look at problems or issues from new perspectives, and form new combinations from concepts already in the mind.

According to Stephen Bowkett (2005), there has been false belief about creativity. Among some of the chief myths¹ he discussed, the following are perhaps most relevant to our writing class:

- creativity is the gift of the few;
- you have to be “bright” to be creative;
- creative people tend to be rather eccentric²;
- creative thinking skills cannot be taught.

Actually, Bowkett says “creativity is as much an attitude as it’s a set of mental processes. It incorporates playfulness, curiosity, sensitivity, self-awareness and independence.” One of the most important things in creative thinking is “making links

¹ myth: an idea or story that is believed by many people but that is not true

² eccentric: tending to act in strange or unusual ways

between ideas as a habit of thought and looking at things in many different ways” (also called “pathways”). For example, “if a student makes a link that he or she has never made before, then that is originality on an individual level.” This is, in part, what we are looking for in this class, although we always aim higher by striving to develop your creative potential so that you may achieve great breakthroughs in your areas of expertise in the future. Moreover, for Donald J. Treffinger and Jaclyn R. Huber (1992) creativity can be defined as follows:

Be able to break away from habit-bound thinking and learn to question the habitual response; develop many possible alternative ways of responding.

Be able to defer judgment and refrain from evaluating the responses of others; give responses without imposing evaluations.

Be able to see new relationships and identify similarities among objects or experiences; identify differences among objects or experiences.

Creativity, in sum, is the ability to suspend judgment, discover new links between familiar things, look at problems or issues from new perspectives, and form new combinations from concepts already in the mind. It is the ability to think outside the box¹. As Diane F. Halpern (1984) succinctly² puts it, creativity is “a blend of unusual and good or useful ideas.”

Unusual and useful, creativity may be best illustrated by the following exercises:

Exercises

Clever Girl

Many years ago, a landlord was threatening to evict³ a girl, unless she agreed to marry him. In a false gesture of sincerity, he proposed they let chance decide the matter. He told her he would write a “Yes” on one slip of paper and a “No” on another, and he would put the slips in a bag to let her draw lots⁴. If she drew a “Yes” then she would win and could remain in the house, without marrying him; otherwise, she had to either marry him or move out. To make the deal more pleasant, they came to the cool back garden of the house and sat down at a table by a deep well, with two of the servants as their witnesses. The girl happened to see the sneaky⁵ landlord write a “No” on both slips. He folded them up, and put them into the bag.

What was the girl going to do in order to win?

¹ think outside the box: If you think outside the box, your thoughts are not limited or controlled by rules or tradition and you have ideas that are creative and unusual.

² succinct: using few words to state or express an idea

³ evict: to force (someone) to leave a place

⁴ draw lots: to decide who will do something by taking pieces of paper, etc out of a container

⁵ sneaky: behaving in a secret and usually dishonest manner

Long Lines

A problem of long lines at a service facility might routinely suggest a “technical” approach to change the facilities while ignoring important behavioral solutions. An actual case involved complaints about long waiting times for luggage at an airport terminal.

What would you do to make the complaints disappear?



This is a good example of problem solving in Evans (1991), a particular case study of creative decision making and management. List some possible solutions before you check the key at the end of the book for the ingenious solution Evans discussed. The long-waiting-times problem with baggage claim at the airport was solved in a creative way in that it was not in any way a conventional or “technical” solution but an unusual and useful one.

The following exercise, adapted from Eugene Raudsepp (1977), can be used for understanding what creative thinking is about. Raudsepp says that “thinking of a suitable title for a short story is a good stretching exercise for the imagination, and fun to do in a group. It not only increases your originality and flexibility¹ but also allows you to distill² your understanding of the content of the story into a few evocative³ words.”

Suppose you were the writer of the following tale and wanted to replace the original title. In groups of four, write as many titles as you can to highlight the message of the tale from different angles. There will be no right or wrong answers, but try to come up with at least ten suitable titles. Have fun!

Exercise

Write ten suitable titles for the following tale and a statement to explain what each title means. Developing a focus on different aspects of the tale (i.e. the wizard, the king, and the lock) is crucial to this exercise.

The Royal Wizard⁴

There once lived a king who depended greatly on his wise man. But, through one

¹ We'll discuss originality and flexibility in Unit 3, “Characteristics of Creative Thinking.”

² distill: to take the most important parts of something and put them in a different and usually improved form

³ evocative: bringing thoughts, memories, or feelings into the mind

⁴ wizard: someone who is very good at something

circumstance and another, he grew to doubt the powers and perceptions of his chosen adviser. So, to test him, he had him tossed into a rather comfortable dungeon¹ with a huge door secured by a combination lock. The king promised that if the wise man could free himself, he would be restored to his former exalted² post.

The wise man examined the combination lock and calculated that there were 288,000 possible combinations. He further calculated that, at the rate of trying one combination per minute, working an eight-hour day, he would be free in 600 days at the latest.

He made an elaborate chart to keep track of the combinations he tried, hung up his calendar, and buckled down³ to business as 599 days passed. Before noon of the last day, he twirled⁴ half of his quota of combinations and then had a light lunch.

After lunch, he took down his calendar and returned to his job whistling happily. At 4:59 p.m., he had only one more combination to go, so he placed the rolled-up calendar under his arm and smiling confidently, twisted the final combination into place.

Nothing happened! His mouth hung open in shock. He beat on the lock, but it stood firm. In frustration, he threw himself against the heavy door. Slowly, it swung open. It was then that he found that when he had first been imprisoned, the king had ordered that the cell bolt not be thrown.

More Practice

5

Group Activity: In groups of four, write as many titles as you can (at least ten) for the following story. And write out in one general statement the main idea expressed by each title.

Suitable Titles and Main Ideas⁵

There was a merchant in Bagdad who sent his servant to market to buy provisions, and in a little while the servant came back, white and trembling, and said, "Master, just now when I was in the market, I was jostled⁶ by a woman in the crowd and when I turned I saw it was Death⁷ that jostled me. She looked at me and made a threatening gesture; now, lend me your horse, and I will ride away from this city and avoid my fate. I will go to Samarra and there Death will not find me." The merchant lent him his horse, and the servant mounted it, and he dug his spurs in its flanks and as fast as the horse could gallop he went. Then the merchant went down to the market, and he saw Death standing in the crowd and he came to Death and said, "Why did you

1 dungeon: dark prison below the surface of the earth, especially under a castle

2 exalted: having a very high rank and highly respected

3 buckle down: start working seriously

4 twirl: turn around and around

5 This is a tale by Somerset Maugham. Can you figure out the title of the story?

6 jostle: to knock or push against (someone) rather roughly

7 Death: the force that ends life and is often shown in art or literature as a skeleton

make a threatening gesture to my servant when you saw him this morning?” “That was not a threatening gesture,” Death said. “It was only a start of surprise. I was astonished to see him in Bagdad, for I had an appointment with him tonight in Samarra.”

Pair Work: First, think of solutions to the following puzzle on your own for five minutes. Then add more to the list of the answers after you compare them with each other. Make sure you both are ready to join the class for discussion.

Bug in the Coffee

At a restaurant a customer was shocked to find a bug in her coffee. She sent the waiter back for a fresh cup. A moment later, the customer pounded on the table and shouted: “This is the same cup of coffee I had before!”

How could she tell?

(How about four solutions?)

* * * * *

Homework

6

The Merchant and the Cheat

A wealthy merchant ordered 100 coins from the top ten goldsmiths of the country, ten coins from each. Each coin was to weigh exactly ten grams of pure gold. One of the goldsmiths decided to cheat. He made each of his ten coins one gram short, but no one could tell the difference from its size, because it was filled with a lighter-than-gold substance. Now the merchant was informed of everything about these counterfeit¹ coins but didn't know who the cheat was. The merchant didn't want to burn the coins in a fire to detect the fakes (pure gold wouldn't discolor in a fire). The goldsmiths came to the merchant's house to deliver the coins on the same day.

How many times did the merchant have to weigh the coins to find out who the crook² was?

Ten Dollars per Point

Nick grew up in a very rich family, but he was one of those spoiled kids you could find on campus. He cut classes, threw fancy parties for his friends in his downtown hotel suite or drove his Ferrari along the coast in the evening, and spent the weekend with his girlfriend in his sailboat on the sea. He didn't have to worry about a thing in college except his grades,

¹ counterfeit: made to look like an exact copy of something in order to trick people

² crook: an dishonest person

but he believed money could buy just everything.

He was having trouble with his microeconomics class one semester. One day, the professor was giving a test. He handed out all of the tests and went back to his desk to wait. Once the test was over, the students all handed the tests back in. The professor noticed that Nick had attached ten \$100 bills to his test with a note saying “Ten dollars per point,” hoping he could get the perfect score, 100 points, for \$1,000.

What was the professor going to do with Nick’s test?

(At least three solutions)

Hungry Wolf

A wolf had spent days in the mountains without anything to eat. He came up to a farm where well-fed sheep were enclosed in a large fold¹. The wolf was so thin that he could squeeze in through the bars of the enclosure and eat as many sheep as he wanted. But he realized that after he ate a sheep, he would be unable to escape from the fold.

What could the wolf do to eat a sheep here?

(At least three solutions)

Speeding

One day a cop had set up a speed trap behind a billboard² trying to catch speeders. He had been standing there for about an hour when a brand-new BMW came zooming³ down the road at about 110 mph. The cop noted the speed from his radar gun. Instantly, he switched on the siren, gave chase, and finally flagged down⁴ the car.

The cop got out of his cruiser, approached the car, leaned down, and said “Listen, mister. Give me a good excuse and I’ll let you go. But it better be good. You were going well over 100.”

What excuse would the driver give to avoid a ticket for speeding?

(At least three solutions)

1 fold: an enclosed area for sheep

2 billboard: a large sign for advertisements that is next to a road, on the side of a building, etc

3 zoom: to go somewhere quickly, often making a lot of noise

4 flag down: to make the driver of a vehicle stop by waving at him/her