

University of Manitoba – Department of Philosophy / School of Art
PHIL 2710 / FAAH 4090 – FALL 2018
Theories of Creativity
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ABOUT THE FINAL PAPER – Version 02 Nov.

Length: 3000-4000 words (size is not crucial for quality), format: as usual (12 font, double spaced)

Style: Chicago http://libguides.lib.umanitoba.ca/ld.php?content_id=26413944

Submission-Date: Friday **Dec. 7th**. (Should you need more time, ask me for an extension of a few days, if I do not hear from you I expect you to submit Dec. 7th.) **Submit via email** as one single word- or pdf-file to my email-address above.

You can freely choose your topic, as long as it relates to questions, discussions and/or texts we addressed in class – or, as long as it relates to the topic of creativity-theories. A one-page outline of your idea (or, if you wish, two competing ideas) is due via email on Sat., Nov. 17th – or anytime earlier than that. It should contain the question or problem you would like to discuss, regarding “creativity” – as well as the texts you want to use or quote as reference-points. It should also contain a preliminary outline (this outline can change in the course of writing).

You are supposed to quote in your text at least five academic sources – one of which can be a (trans-academic) online-link. These sources are by no means confined to texts we addressed in class – you might find your own texts (most of the books mentioned in the syllabus are available as e-books, as well as articles find some additional literature

Structure: (something like the following, it does not have to be exactly like this)

I. Introduction:

- The question (or: The problem, or: The topic ...)
- Why is it relevant – or: what is it relevant for
- Outline of your paper

II. Main Part.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

(The number of steps here depends on your topic and your outline.)

III. Summary and conclusion (open questions, outlooks, new ideas).

IV. Works quoted

Feel free, if you wish, to insert visualizations, pictures, examples etc.

And: don't forget pagination !!!

Sample topics: (and again, you can come up with your own topic or choose one from the list below).

- The problem of creativity in computers / Can Computers be creative? / Creativity and computers
- (Problems of) The evolutionary theory of creativity
(Why it is convincing, or, in what sense is it not convincing, what problems does it solve ...) – we will look at more material regarding this
- Creativity theories and the qualification of the Unconscious (e.g. de Bono, Ehrenzweig, and others)
- You can take one of the authors we looked at (or will look at) and write a more detailed characterization (and critique, in the sense of: evaluation) of her/his theory of creativity.
- You can compare **two or three** of the authors we looked at (or will look at) under a certain perspective (problem or question) that interests you. (For instance: Some authors discussed the role of aesthetic properties such as beauty, harmony, wholeness etc. for creative scientific discovery.)
- Creativity-theory and the interaction of Logics/Epistemology and Aesthetics
- Imagination and creativity (texts still to come)
- Critique of the romantic theory of creativity
- Critique of the rationalistic theory of creativity
- A new synthesis between the romantic and the rationalistic theory of creativity
(note: in the last three cases you would of course first have to describe the theories you then evaluate critically)
- Creativity theories and altered states of consciousness
- Artistic Creativity and its relation to Scientific Creativity (as seen with – for instance David Bohm, or with Immanuel Kant, or also with an artist...)

NEW: For more potential topics see also the questions of our test: Any of them can also serve as the basis for a final paper. Here they are again (Of course you would have to find a shorter version of the question.)

- 1.) Margaret Boden's three kinds of creativity. Description and critical discussion.
- 2.) Graham Wallas' four stages of creative thinking and their relationship to Freud's distinction between conscious and unconscious thought-processes.
- 3.) Rationalist and Romanticist theories of creativity. Discuss two main proponents of each and evaluate their plausibility. (Or perhaps – with Blackburn – the alternative is rather a question of degree. Think for instance of Wallas or Campbell ...)
- 4.) Anton Ehrenzweig's concept of "dedifferentiated" thought: describe and relate to the "Po" concept of de Bono. Similarities and differences. In what sense do these authors challenge our current education-system?

5.) Several authors link creative insights to perceived “aesthetic” qualities such as “harmony”, “beauty”, “wholeness” or “unity”: qualities to be searched or found in scientific theories (among them Bohm, Campbell and the authors he quotes: Mach/Poincare). What is the connection between scientific discovery and aesthetic judgment, according to them?

6.) Discussion of Donald Campbell’s evolutionary (or Darwinist) approach towards creativity, describing it according to the mechanism of “blind variation and selective retention”. (If you pick this one, let me know, as I will recommend a couple of texts regarding the evolutionary theory.)

7.) Give a brief description of what you consider the most pressing or most interesting problem(s) regarding creativity research and give reasons for your points. You might also add what you consider being the biggest *misunderstandings*, prejudices or misconceptions about creativity. Again: Give reasons and/or examples.

8.) The „classical“ thinkers Plato, Kant and Freud have all been influential for contemporary debates on the nature of “creativity”. Briefly mention the chief contributions of each of these three thinkers and explain in what sense all three of them *together* contributed to a quite common idea on how creativity comes into being. What are characteristic traits of this common, “popular” or folk-psychology-notion of creativity?

More: Here is an interesting article on the famous 4-p theory of creativity, namely that creativity regards products, people, processes and press (pressure from the environment).

http://www.creativitypost.com/psychology/the_four_ps_of_creativity

And then, here is more potentially interesting material: Chap 22 of Sawyer, uploaded on UMLearn for you (under Content: SAWYER CHAP 22), deals with the 10 popular beliefs of creativity that we addressed at the beginning of the course and examines their truth and falsity. (Of course, Sawyer is also not infallible, you might not agree with some of his conclusions, but it is still worth double-checking. The chapter also addresses creativity-training strategies, and discusses how to critically deal with popular self-help literature in that domain. – As a whole, this approach is very sociological, so, for those among you who are strongly philosophically oriented this text might not contain much information of interest. – For others though it might.