

IEA1: Critical Thinking

Spring Term 2024

### Week 3

**Exercises in *Uncreativity*** (from *Uncreative Writing* by Kenneth Goldsmith)

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The only rule is to **borrow and use the work of others.**

The most effective *uncreativity* critiques its source.

*Uncreativity* can be a mode of submission for your Assignments.

These exercises introduce you to *uncreative writing* or *uncreativity* - borrowing the work of others. As you copy the content, you will find you make decisions about how you copy it, its form and shape. You will make decisions about what software you use, what font or typography you use, whether you include headings or not. There is no expectation of producing complex works of uncreative writing at first, the important thing is to practise doing it.

As you practise *uncreativity*, you will find you start to craft different meanings from the copied content. You will find that the new meaning you make is either very different from the original or directly critiques the original. In the lecture we saw how Tracy K Smith's erasure poem *Declaration* critiques (or decolonises) the American Declaration of Independence and how Tracey Moffatt's montaged film *Other* uses romantic scenarios in famous films to address the taboo of forbidden love across race and gender.

#### Exercise 1

Google a term or word.

Open the first result and copy and paste the first sentence into a Word doc or similar.

Open the second result and copy and paste the first sentence.

Do the same with the first five results from your search

You now have five sentences of your own uncreative writing.

Depending on the term you have googled, this content could be uncreative instructions, uncreative information, uncreative poetry, uncreative short stories etc.

It could be the start of a work or a complete work in itself.

#### Exercise 2

Find three or four advertisements online or offline, any kind of adverts, and copy out the content word for word. Mix up the content and re-assemble it to make your own advert. Does it have new meaning? Is there any logic to it? Is it still an advertisement or has it changed?

#### Exercise 3

Find three or four sets of instructions, any kinds of instructions (eg for software, for machines/vehicles/tools, for playing games, for gardening etc) online or offline. Copy them out word for word. Mix up the content and re-assemble it to make one complex and (seemingly) illogical set of instructions.

#### Exercise 4

Copy out one whole page of a book you are reading or have read recently. Copy every word, including page numbers, image titles, footnotes etc. You will find there is quite a difference between reading and writing, between reading the page and writing it out. What might those differences be?

#### Exercise 5

Go out and buy a newspaper or magazine (you will have to search for these but they are still around). Cut it up. Re-assemble and paste together the cut up pieces of words and letters in different ways to make different meanings.

#### Exercise 6

Find some audio online - song, spoken word, drama, interview - anything. Listen carefully and copy it out word for word (literally and phonetically, a bit like Vanessa Place's *Miss Scarlett*). This can be a slow process as you may need to return again and again to get the wording exactly right. Include pauses, coughs etc in the transcription. Read the transcription aloud. What changes seem to have taken place during the process of listening and copying it out and reading aloud?

#### Exercise 7

Read some writing aloud and record your voice, either as audio or video. The writing could be a whole text such as a short book, a chapter from a book or a poem, or it could be selected excerpts.

What is the difference between silent reading and reading aloud? Does your external voice sound differently from your private internal voice?

#### Exercise 8

Erasure Poetry: Find a secondhand book and try erasure poetry by blocking out parts of the text to create new meaning. Do this page by page. Try different ways of erasing the original - block out, strikethrough, colour in etc.

#### Exercise 9

Erasure poetry: Find some online writing. Copy and paste it into a Word document or similar. Select a single word such as 'and'. Erase or strikethrough all the text except instances of the word 'and'.

Then read all the 'ands' aloud. How does it sound? What seems to be suggested through this repetition, both written and sonic? Do the same again with 'if', 'when', 'but'.

#### Exercise 10

Find a photograph you like online. Try and recreate it exactly in a photograph of your own. This is harder than it sounds! This is a form of *uncreative photography*. Do the same with a painting, a drawing, a scene from a film or performance etc