

Unit 3: The Multimodal Project



Unit Overview

Unit Three builds off of the information literacy and persuasion skills of Unit Two to hitting writing goals on a deadline and being independent. This Unit provides the most freedom in the semester in terms of content and style decisions—the emphasis, here, is on revision and rhetorical decision-making. Our focus for this unit is on producing multimodal texts in the model of the essays or videos we’ve seen throughout the semester. After the pretty highly scaffolded, skills-based opening months, this unit is a chance for you to engage with writing on your own terms. While the other two units in the course are dedicated to more traditional and recognizable academic skills, this unit is more about effort and intention assessment—this is your opportunity to take chances and loosen up a little bit!

Weekly Questions for Students

Week Eleven: Can you plan according to rhetorical situations? Can you outline a project?

Week Twelve: Do you have strategies for writing with (a) style, voice, and tone?

Week Thirteen: Do you have strategies for providing useful peer feedback? Can you develop original content?

Week Fourteen: Do you have strategies for revising existing writing for clarity?

Week Fifteen: Thanksgiving

Week Sixteen: Can I create a finished product on deadline?

Goals for this Unit

Students should spend some time during this unit working on the following skills:

- Developing a self-directed goal for writing
- Making rhetorical decisions to enact this goal
- Developing and maintaining consistent/strategic style
- Determining appropriate support structures
- Workshopping material
- Composing a text using multiple modes of communication

Major Assignments

“Opportunities to think and compose multimodally can help us develop an increasingly complex and accurate understanding of writing, composition instruction, and text.”

—Dr. Cynthia Selfe, Ohio State University

How do different media offer different affordances? Does the medium change the message? How can multiple modalities be employed to make a more effective text? These are the questions that we’ll be considering as you write your multimodal essay.

We have, to this point, read a series of essays on a series of topics that appeared in a series of mediums—text book excerpts, *The New York Times*, *Prezis*, *The Undeclared*, etc. These texts roughly make up the genre of the expository essay, or writing that works to explain or explore something about the world. The writers have sought to help the reader understand the issues and emotions surrounding national monuments by working through specific examples and engaging in a series of logical maneuvers (explaining, refuting, complicating, applying, conceptualizing, etc.). They have also made thoughtful decisions about style and tone, some including images and diagrams, others relying on audio.

Your task in this assignment is to write a multimodal essay proposing a monument or memorial to a deserving person or event here in Louisville utilizing multiple modes of communication available to you. You’ll do light research to identify some-one/where/thing of cultural significance to the greater Louisville metro area that you believe is deserving of a memorial. It is important to consider why this topic is

important to you, how you might make a case for it to be important to others, the community that a memorial about this subject would represent, and how you might creatively pay tribute to this subject. It is also significant where you propose the monument should be, so be ready to explain why the location you're suggesting is appropriate.

The modalities you can include (but are not limited to): text, audio, video, and images, as well as diagrams, layout and design, etc. In order to harness these options, we will be composing these essays using [Adobe Spark](#), a catch-all program that can be used for all sorts of documents (newsletters, blogs, website design, presentations). This means a few things. First, you have a lot of options as a content creator—your essay can rely heavily on photographs, it can be made up entirely of video, it can be mostly a written text with a few images to enhance the material. Second, you will be practicing a little bit of visual design in addition to more traditional writing practices—we will have readings that support you in this regard.

This project is about exploring the affordances of different media, especially in terms of interactivity with your audience. Prepare yourself to try a few different versions of things that won't work—when something isn't working, trash it and try again a different way. This type of composing really requires a trial and error approach so be patient with yourself. You should also imagine your audience as extending beyond our class to include publication online. In other words, imagine that you will share this project in a public venue and not just to your peers and professor.

Unit 3: The Multimodal Project

25% of course grade

Answering: Propose a monument or memorial that should be created. Why? Where?

- Proposal & Work Outline 1-2 pages (3%)
- Drafts (7%)
 - Rough draft/Outline
 - Workshop Draft
 - Conference Draft
- Project 5-6 pages (10%)
- Reflection 2-3 pages (5%)

Project Proposal, Work Outline, & Project Outline

Before you get started on your project, you'll first submit a project proposal and outline to me for approval. This is to help make sure you're approaching the project with the proper goals and a solid plan.

Length: 1-2 pages, each

Project Proposal

You'll explain to me the following in your proposal:

1. **Purpose:** First and foremost, the essay has to have a clear purpose. While this doesn't have to be stated in the introduction, there should be a centralized goal for your writing. Essays remain focused, even when going on a tangent, by consistently returning to some guiding idea. As you write your proposal to me, this purpose will ground your explanation about why and how you crafted the essay as you have. The questions to answer are:
 - a. What is the purpose of your essay?
 - b. Why is this purpose important (to you, to society, to a particular group)?
2. **Rhetorical Awareness:** Rhetoric has been described, classically, by Aristotle as the "The faculty of observing, in any given case, the available means of persuasion." This means that, of the many options a writer has to make their point to an audience, the decisions on what makes the page have been made in a strategic and informed fashion. As you write this piece, put your ability to make these decisions on display by using various rhetorical elements: telling stories, offering up logical appeals, taking on naysayers, considering the potential meaning of terms, taking up examples of actual past fact, taking on the claims or actions of others, amusing, enticing, challenging, creating networks across texts. The point is to move from simply articulating your opinion or purpose to writing a piece that engages the reader to think through the ideas and concepts with you, push them to make the jump to second-level thinking about the points that you are making, and to give them material that they can work through. The questions to answer are:
 - a. What is the overall strategy behind composing the essay (did you divide it into sections? Organize it into a problem/solution structure? Use examples that were real or hypothetical?)
 - b. What is the reasoning behind your content decisions (ideally using the language we have drawn on in class periods...appeals, warrants, etc.)?
 - c. What are the strengths and weaknesses of these content decisions as you reflect on them?
3. **Voice/Tone/Style:** There are a series of stylistic decisions a writer must make about how they present themselves (as writer) and the material. The key to voice is to build credibility for the figure the reader perceives as the writer (i.e. the

“you” on the page) without letting that figure get in the way of the message. The key to tone is to select the appropriate one for the issue at hand and audience being addressed—being snarky and light about genocide might not be the best choice, for example. Finally, the key to style is to remain consistent throughout or create strategic shifts in style (so, if drawing out pity, the style might be heavily descriptive only to shift into objective writing to drive home the logical nature of the response to this pity). If there isn’t a reason for the style shift, it simply disorients the reader. For this section of the proposal, describe:

- a. The reasoning behind your style decisions (ideally using the language we have drawn on in class periods...voice, tone, affordances, etc.)
- b. Why words and images? Why video? Why those images? Those words? Why that tone?

Work Outline

This outline will help you get organized before you even begin composing. Each week of the unit (there are six) should appear as a header and you’ll set down goals for each week. Week 1 will be dedicated to determining your topic and writing both your proposal and outline.

Project Outline

This outline is just a loose structure of how you envision the project will look. You should include the purpose/thesis, the major supporting points--these might include one point on why this topic is worth memorializing in general (their contribution to a larger role in history), another point explaining their community (why they’re an important figure to a specific demographic), an idea for the type of monument you’re proposing (explaining why this is fitting), and a final point suggesting a location for the monument (and justification of why it is the appropriate place). These are just ideas, they are not the only ways to approach this, but if you’re looking for a guide, they’ll help you organize the project.

Due: Sunday 11/1 by midnight

Note: You will be able to revise and resubmit after receiving feedback from me.

Drafts

This project, like our Unit 2 assignment, will utilize drafting, peer review, and conferencing. In order to familiarize yourself with your writing process, you need to keep to our drafting schedule. Do not expect to write this the night before it's due—that won't work for this project. I expect you to meet these draft criteria alongside your classmates so that peer review can work optimally. **Submitting these drafts collectively comprises 7% of your Multimodal Project grade.**

Due Dates:

Workshop Draft	2-3 pages	11/8
Conference Draft	3-4 pages	11/15
Final Draft	5-6 pages (or equivalent)	12/2
Reflection & Production Rationale	2-3 pages	12/2

Multimodal Project

In this project, I want you to envision your topic using a variety of semiotic modes (sound, video, audio files, and alphabetic text) and presented in the medium of the Web using Spark to aggregate whatever technologies you wish to explore. Consider the various affordances of the medium: techniques, audiences, language use, etc. that may or may not be available to you in a page-based medium. How can you more effectively persuade your audience to support your new memorial than just using a text-based essay?

This assignment focuses on your decision-making as a writer and that extends to the way that length will be factored into the grading criterion. Effectively, it is effort, not length, that is being graded here. So, approximately 1500 words with limited images or a lengthy video, or a handful of short videos, or a thoughtful photo essay with 750 words can all suffice for getting a quality grade. The quality of these elements is more important, then, than reaching a particular length.

Requirements:

1. Compose a Spark page with content that is equivalent to 5-6 pages
2. Incorporate at least three modalities in your text

I want to challenge you to expand your ideas about what a memorial or monument is for this project. Don't think only in terms of walls with names on them or statues in traffic circles—go modern. Digital projections on buildings, flash mob dance crews,

annual picnics with themed events, graffiti art, art festivals, plays, concerts, and many other things that pay tribute to your subject can be considered memorials and monuments of honor. We tend to be wowed by the new, by the creative, by the inspirational—I'm hoping to see some creative ideas for these monuments!

Due: 12/2 by midnight

Reflection & Production Rationale

While the essay is particularly important, part of your grade will depend on how well you can explain the reasoning behind your stylistic and content decisions. This class is about both your ability to produce quality writing and your ability to develop as a writer. You will not be graded on your use of technology as much as your resourcefulness: how did you find images, choose the tech, get help, and write about your rhetorical choices, successes, and failures in your reflective essay? This reflection helps to answer these questions. It should be two-three pages, double-space, and should address the following:

- Demonstrate that **you understand the importance of rhetorical considerations** for any communicative act: the audience, purpose, genre, medium, and explain your thinking about your rhetorical situation and choices for this project. Describe how and why you chose to portray your part of the project in the way you did (i.e., which images you chose and why; or which website layout you choose and why, or the dates/style/format of the model you chose and why)
- Discuss **your choice of mode and medium** to use depending on your rhetorical situation. Remember:
 - mode = a way of creating and communicating using signs and symbol systems such as sound, photography, video and film, illustrations, art, and alphabetic text
 - multimodal = creating and communicating using a combination of modes
 - media = ways of creating, delivering, and consuming multimodal symbol systems
- Discuss **affordances and constraints of various technologies and media** you choose (i.e. the time involved with learning new technologies, the glitches often involved with open source platforms, privacy issues with sharing your work online, style choices for website design).
- Describe in **detail the changes you made** to your project after getting feedback.

- Demonstrate an understanding of the implications of sharing your work in a public venue beyond the classroom. **Where would you publish or share it?** Is it ready for public view? How do you know? Is it not ready? Explain your production and revision process and what revisions you would want or need to make before publishing or sharing this piece with a wider audience. (Your grade is not dependent upon your decision to publish or not—just your rhetorical awareness in making the decision.)

Due: 12/2 by midnight