UNIV 200: VISUAL LITERACIES IN A DIGITAL AGE

Mann and Sherwood, Spring 2017

DIGITAL ESSAY: THE REST OF THE STORY

Over the next month and a half, you will create a digital essay. Each component of the essay will be addressed in class, including the technological competencies you will need in order to complete the assignment. Your digital essay should be approximately 2 minutes long (or about one double-spaced typed page). That means your argument will need to be concise.

You are accustomed to reading texts critically; you've done so your entire educational career. You are less critical when listening to and viewing a work; we watch movies, television, and commercials without thinking about the various elements that impact our experience. And yet we are no longer a text-based culture; we are a visual culture. This digital essay assignment will help you develop your ability to think critically about multi-modal work by understanding how image and sound help impact our experience. In making choices to strengthen your written/spoken argument through the incorporation of images and sound, you will begin to understand how others use such stimuli in order to impact your experience and understanding.

As per many of our discussions this semester, there often is a disconnect between the curated image or online identity and the underlying influences or story that lead to the representation. In this essay, we ask you to think critically and personally about how the visual representations of us and our lives as shared on social media and elsewhere often gloss over the stories that make those moments interesting or impactful. Your essay should explore these concepts by telling us "The Rest of the Story" behind an image. Last Thursday, we took two approaches to this issue: one through in-class writing based on topics of identity raised in *Dorian Gray* and the other through the image exercise.

You may start with the ideas generated last week, or begin a new idea. A draft (no more than 1 page, typed, double-spaced) of your script idea is due in-class on Thursday, March 2. Please keep in mind that these essays are intended to have a public audience; they will be shared in-class.

If you have any questions, feel free to ask them in class or contact us by e-mail. If you need to arrange another time for us to meet, please email me so we can set up an appointment.

Brianna Derr is our Digital Pedagogy and Scholarship Specialist focused on video. You can reach her by email at bh022@bucknell.edu. Multi-media consultants staff the video lab (Bertrand 018) Sunday thru Thursday from 3:00pm–11:00pm; you are welcome to drop-in and ask them questions about audio or video editing, as well.

Important Due Dates:

2/23: Image Exercise (in-class)

3/2: **Written Draft of Script Due** / Peer Review Workshop (in-class)

3/9: **Storyboard Draft Due** / Peer Review Workshop (in-class)

3/22 & 3/23: Attend Audio Booth Training Session (Bertrand Library) Sign-up: goo.gl/szPpJA

3/28: **Edited Narration Draft Due**; Peer Review Workshop (in-class); Editing Training (*O'Leary 202*)

4/6: **Draft of Digital Essay Due** / Peer Review Workshop (in-class)

4/13: **Final Digital Essay Due**

We will evaluate your digital essays according to the five criteria below. These five criteria are an effort to help you see the elements that go into making an effective digital essay. We will rate each of the criteria on a scale of 1–8, 8 being high. You will also receive up to 10 points total for the various stages of the process: completing the image exercise, each draft due (script, storyboard, audio, and essay draft) and the feedback you give your colleagues in each of the four peer review workshops. Giving points for the various stages of the process underlines their importance. The score that results from this rating will translate into a letter grade as follows:

46–50	A	30–33	B-	14–17	D+
42–45	A-	26–29	C+	10–13	D
38–41	B+	22–25	C	6–10	D-
34–37	B	18–21	C-	0–6	F

Responsiveness: Your digital essay must respond appropriately to the assignment. It must show that you have understood that the assignment asks you to think critically and personally about how the visual representations of us and our lives as shared on social media and elsewhere often gloss over the stories that make those moments interesting or impactful. Please keep in mind that while you are welcome to be creative in your approach to the subject, "The Rest of the Story," you are expected to present a cohesive narrative, regardless if your essay takes a creative approach or not.

Thesis: Does your digital essay have a clear conceptual argument, narrative thread, or thesis? Is that thesis/claim/narrative specific and clear to your viewers? Do your visuals and audio further your thesis or detract from it? Are there any moments where it is difficult to understand the point being made? If so, is it the argument, audio, visuals, or a combination that need work?

Audio: Is your narration clear? Is your pacing appropriate for the argument? Do you take necessary pauses? Conversely, are there places where the breaks are too long? Are there any glitches or spots where it is difficult to understand the audio? Does your narration adequately tell your story or unpack the ideas stated in your thesis? Is there purpose behind your use of other audio elements? Do you adjust the levels for your various audio tracts, as needed? Are the audio transitions gradual or are there any unintentional abrupt shifts? Do the sound effects or a style of music complement the essay or detract from it?

Visuals: Do your visuals help tell the story/thesis/claim of your narration? Do *all* visuals further your point, whether directly or metaphorically? Have you included visuals with high enough resolution so that they are clear and legible? Or are any of your visuals pixelated and blurry? How is the balance between narration and visuals? Do you have enough visuals to adequately tell the story/make your argument? Do any of your visuals detract from the overall concept? Do you successfully move beyond literal image selection and incorporate images or video that help make your argument in other ways?

Presentation: How well have you edited your essay? Are the transitions clear? Do the effects you've included further your argument and complement the overall theme of your essay or are they distracting? Have you included the title of your essay and your name in the video (preferably in the opening title sequence or closing credits)? Do you have credits at the end where you list your sources? Do you feel confident in the presentation that this essay could be shared publicly?

Image Exercise (1) Script Draft (1) Storyboard (1) Audio (1) Essay Draft (2) Peer Review Workshops (4 x 1)