Digital Humanities Curricular Development   Faculty Development

Composing For Public Audiences

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English 2V
Project 3 Assignment Sheet

Writing for Public Audiences
4/11 Outline/Storyboard/Rough Draft of Project 3 due
4/23 Revised Project 3 due

The purpose of this assignment is to draw the attention of a public audience to an issue or question that you feel merits their further consideration—something you wish audience members would better understand. To do so you will need to:

1a) Identify a question you think is important to explore further
or
1b) Identify a position you hold that may be misunderstood or contested by others
or
1c) Identify a scholarly finding that you feel deserves the attention of a broader public
and
2) Determine who your target audience is
and
3) What medium or genre you feel would help you to reach this audience best.

The finished piece you produce must represent a significant composition of your own; this might be:

- A video of at least 3 minutes
- A podcast of at least 5 minutes (longer is okay)
- A magazine style article of at least 900 words (longer is okay), which should include visual elements (graphs, charts, illustrations photographs, etc) as well as interactive opportunities (such as hyperlinks to other related texts).
- A presentation of approximately 5 minutes, which would include image as well as text

If you choose to create a genre outside of these, you may need to write an accompanying text (for instance, if you decided to create a poster or infographic of only one page, you would need to accompany that image with a brief explanatory essay, as you did for your map).

Whether you choose 1a, 1b, or 1c, you should work on answering this question: Why should my audience care? So, for instance, how can you help your audience understand what is at stake in the question you are posing (1a), or how can you connect your claim to the beliefs and values of an audience so that they will understand the importance of your message (1b), or why is it important that audience members come to appreciate the scholarship you are drawing upon (1c)? I point this out for 1c, in particular, because it will not be sufficient to simply retell what a scholar has found, but you must make the case for the relevance of that scholarship—you can

either demonstrate that it is important and/or explain what we should do with this knowledge.

How doe this assignment connect to the repurposing activity?
The short answer is—that is up to you. If you choose (1c), the repurposing activity may form the core of your project—the piece of scholarship you wish to share with others. However, you should plan to bring other voices into the mix to help explain *why* that research is relevant/important, to help to connect to your audience's values and interests. Consider, for instance, how the MSNBC article included interviews as well as visuals and charts in addition to retelling the scholarly article, to make the case that audience members should care, because their food options are at stake. Along similar lines, you may choose to bring multiple sources, voices and visuals into your written piece.

A few considerations:
Specifying a target audience for yourself, and coming to know that target audience, increases the likelihood that your message will have impact. At the same time, consider who your piece excludes. Do you want to exclude them? Are there ways of reaching an audience that doesn't already agree with the position you are taking or share your interest in the question. How do we come to know virtual audiences? How do we signal our respect for our audience members, even those who may not understand where we are coming from? Does the anonymity of online platforms affect the rhetorical tools we might utilize in this context? Should it?

In class we will talk about the differences between expression and rhetoric/persuasion. This project assumes that you have something you want to communicate, and that you are thinking about how to do this rhetorically. (You cannot be the only target audience for your piece.)

We also will talk about the difference between summary and utilizing source material to help you make a point, even if that point is that we should listen more closely to what you are summarizing. The project should include your "voice"—whether that is expressed through the choices you make in synthesizing information, perspectives, whether it is present in the structure and organization of your piece, whether it is the framing you provide (the paramap), etc.