



## SAMPLE ASSIGNMENT SEQUENCES

OSUN Teaching Resources

### Example 1

#### First-Year Writing/Composition Course

##### Digital Essay Assignment

For the final paper of this semester, I would like for you to select one poem to investigate at great length. Your paper will take the form of an extended critical close reading. In order to further explore the visual and auditory possibilities a poem holds, you will also be composing a “digital essay” on the same piece.

*What is a “digital essay”?*

A digital essay (in the context of this course) is a piece of work that uses audio, video, text, and/or images. Your goal for this project should be to create a short film that essentially illustrates the thesis of your paper visually. Your digital essay should be short...no more than two to four minutes long.

*How do I do this? I don't have a camera! I don't have the right software!*

Video Cameras: You may borrow a Hitachi camcorder from the Newman Library. All you need to do is go to the Circulation Desk on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor and request one. You are permitted to borrow it for three days, with the possibility of renewal.

##### Production Information:

1. As you know, a movie is a short video or film that includes actors and has some semblance of a narrative or plot. To do this successfully you might want to ask some friends to help you out and draft a “script” or choreograph what will happen when and where.

2. Select the tools you will use to create, edit, and share your project. We will review these tools in class. The tools that are available are all free and user friendly, so do not worry if this is your first digital project!
3. I would encourage you to do this project in small groups (no more than 3 people per group). This does not mean that your final papers have to be on the same poem, but rather that you are interested in a similar argument or idea.
4. You will post your “digital essay” on our blog. I suggest that you do this by creating a youtube account (if you don’t already have one) and then embed the video on our site.
5. Make sure that you use the “digital essay” category when posting your video to our course site.

Please come to class on April 27 (the Wednesday after Spring Break) with some idea of what you plan to do. These ideas should be posted to the blog by Friday, April 22, 2011.

Project Proposal Due: Monday, May 2

FINAL DUE DATE: MONDAY, MAY 16!!

This means that all projects must be posted to the blog before class meets that morning!

NO EXCUSES!

### **Paper #3: An Investigation!**

#### Step One:

For your final paper of the semester I would like you to select one specific poem by one of the authors we’ve read or will read in class. If you would like to pursue something not on this list, please let me know and be prepared to convince me why you should write a paper on this topic or individual.

#### Step Two:

You must do some research on your chosen topic (person or poem). Visit the library, search JSTOR and other databases, find at least one article or source on your writer or poem. What do these “critical” sources tell you about your topic? What thesis is proven in these sources? Do you agree or disagree with the point of view presented? Why or why not?

#### Step Three:

What made you pick the poem you've chosen to write about? The answer to this question should help you to formulate a thesis or opinion about the work, an argument that makes an opinionated statement about your chosen subject.

Keep in mind that this assignment is purposely vague—I wanted our last paper of the semester to really give you some room to explore a topic of your own choosing. That said, please make sure that your paper is specific and opinion-driven. You should think about how to use the research you've done in order to support your own ideas.

It is not acceptable to think of a thesis as a statement like: “Anne Waldman is one of the best living poets because her work is strong and powerful.” A more successful thesis might be something like: “Anne Waldman’s *Fast Speaking Woman* is a poem that has stood the test of time, presenting a litany-esque critique of women’s roles (in all their variousness) in society—an open form that is timeless in its assertions of gender equality and a poem that should be a mantra for all women growing up in American society.”

#### Cover Letters:

At this point in the semester, I think you know what I expect of cover letters. Each draft must have one. Each cover letter should serve as an opportunity for you to tell the reader what you think you achieved in the paper and what you need help with.

ROUGH DRAFT DUE: Wednesday, May 4 (5-7 pages, bring 3 copies to class)

FINAL DRAFT DUE: Wednesday, May 11 (5-7 pages typed)

#### **Final Project Prep**

It is hard to believe that we have only a month left of the semester! And, I know you might feel a little bit overwhelmed by all the work that is expected of you. If you follow the steps and assignments outlined here, hopefully the process of completing both the digital project and paper 3 will be a breeze.

#### Preparation # 1

Select one poet or poem that you are particularly enthusiastic about and use this freewrite to figure out why.

What is it about this work that you like? How does the poet do what he/she does? What feelings does it evoke? What purpose does a poem serve?

(Think of this as a space to begin your brainstorming for the final paper.)

**In class:** Wednesday, April 13

### Preparation # 2

On Wednesday, April 27, we will be lucky enough to have the wonderful Luke Waltzer visit our class to help us understand how we'll actually create our digital essays. Please post or comment some kind response to the assignment (i.e. What are you thinking about in terms of the digital essay? What questions do you have?). I'd suggest that you make use of our blog more and more as we near the close of the semester. Any questions or problems you have, your colleagues will probably have as well! Help each other!

**Due:** Please post to the blog no later than Friday, April 22

*\*\*Continue to post ideas and questions as your projects develop!!\*\**

### Rough Draft #3 Cover Letter

For Rough Draft #3, please write a letter, addressed to your readers, in which you answer the following questions and address any other concerns that you have. Think of your draft letter as an opportunity to request exactly the kind of feedback you need. All cover letters should be typed and about one page long.

- What are the biggest problems you are having at this point in the writing process?
- What's the number one question about your essay—its thesis, structure, use of evidence, persuasiveness, style, etc.—that you'd like your readers to answer for you?
- What do you envision your final step towards revision for the Final Draft to look like?

**Due:** Wednesday, May 4 (5-7 pages, bring 3 copies to class)

### Final Draft #3

Please bring in your final draft (5-7 pages with a Works Cited page). It must be stapled with your final draft cover letter attached to the front. Also, please include your previous 2 drafts and cover letters. Submit the entire packet bound with a paperclip.

### Paper # 3--Final Draft Cover Letter

For your Paper #3 Final Draft, please write a letter, addressed to your readers, in which you answer the following questions and address any other concerns that you have. Think of your draft letter as an opportunity to share how you feel you have improved your paper. All cover letters should be typed and about one page long.

- What is your thesis? What are you hoping to achieve in this paper?
- What are some problems you faced when writing and how did you try to or succeed in resolving them?
- What idea or point do you feel you've made the most successfully? Least successfully?
- Do you consider this draft to really be your "Final Draft?" Why? Did you do anything while revising that could be described as a "re-seeing" of the paper?
- What grade do you think you deserve on this paper and why?
- How do you imagine this paper connects to and enhances your digital essay?

**Due:** Wednesday, May 11 (5-7 pages with a Works Cited page)

## Example 2

### ED 502: Issues in Teaching & Learning (MAT Program)

#### *Multimodal Essay in Miniature*

Compose a draft of an essay (a form of considering, questioning, musing, puzzling, conjecturing, arguing by means of the act of writing), drawing from your work in ED502: Issues in Teaching and Learning. You have 90 minutes to do this.

Do the following in an order that makes sense to you:

1. Look over the texts that you've read (along with the writing you've been doing). Note passages that you find to be of particular interest in relation to what you now consider the most significant ideas about learning or learners in the texts that you've been reading. In other words, what are some things that you are learning about learning or about learners through the work done in ED 502?
2. Choose one or two passages and consider the following:
  - a. Why is this important to your thinking about learning today?
  - b. How does it relate to the various other texts we've read? Why do I care about this?
  - c. Why should others care about this?
3. Frame a question (ideally: a surprising, intriguing, even playful—seriously playful—question) with which you'll title and begin your essay.
  - a. Identify portions of the texts that help you think about your question.
  - b. Note other potential sources (to be consulted later or referenced in your draft from memory) that might contribute to your thinking.
4. Elements and Constraints:
  - a. Draft an essay in two or, at most, three pages.
  - b. Begin with your question.
  - c. Use material from texts you've been reading. Include direct quotations. At least one of these quotations should come from Elbow's essay.
  - d. Use material from your notes on class discussions. End with a new question or cluster of questions.
  - e. The draft that you will share should be multimodal. This means that you should think carefully about the form it takes and include some of the following: audio recording, video, images, music, links, annotations, sound, etc.

At 3:30PM, regardless of where you are, you will share your “essay” by uploading it to our Google Drive.

### Example 3

#### IDEA 125: Getting Schooled in America (Undergraduate Course)

##### The Essay-Film

This assignment is intended to allow for an opportunity to reflect on the various writings we've done and consider the following question: **What can be conveyed in visual language that is not evoked in verbal language?**

You will then create a video essay / essay film in which you ask a question revisiting a theme from your previous writing that needs to be (or become) visible. **Your video should be 3-5 minutes in length.**

Essay-films are described as “based in reality, using words, images, and sounds to convey a message.” As Phillip Lopate suggests, a successful essay-film includes the following:

- **Must have words:** read, spoken, or subtitled (this means you must do some writing and planning ahead of time)
- **Represent a single voice** (needs to be more than a collage of media, should have a clear idea or claim that is investigated)
- **Must represent the speaker's attempt to work out some reasoned line of discourse on a problem or question** (there should be a purpose or reason behind why this film was created/crafted)
- **Composition** (must be well-written, planned thoughtfully, use images and sound/music in a way that is intentional and compelling)

##### Suggested Steps:

- You might begin by thinking about an idea or question that has been on your mind throughout the semester, or an element that you find yourself returning to repeatedly in your reading logs and comments.
  - How might you better explore this topic through the use of image and sound (or elements of film)? What can you say filmically that cannot be said in writing?
- **Plan Carefully and Thoroughly:** You will need to write any text you intend to include ahead of time and plan out the essay-film in the same way that movies are planned—via storyboarding (planning out via writing or drawing the sequence of scenes/frames that the film will include).



- **Tools Needed:** How will you make your project? What technological tools will you need in order to do so? Software? Where do you think you might need help?

**A note on copyright:** For any media (film or music) you use that you do not create yourself, we suggest that you familiarize yourself with fair use and copyright laws. And, always cite your sources (list your “credits”).

**For more information regarding fair use and copyright laws:**

- [Fair Use Checklist](#)
- [US Copyright Office](#)

Databases of fair use media:

- [Creative Commons](#)
- [The Public Domain Project](#)

**Proposal/Plan:** As a first step, you will post a proposal/plan for your project, which we will work with in class. You might think of this step as an opportunity to share what you are planning to do and ask for any help you anticipate needing—this could be technical help or content help. In other words, your plan should include:

- the question you hope to explore through this project
- how you plan to go about answering this project (what resources and sources will you use?)
- what you hope your essay-film will enable your audience to understand regarding your thinking about schooling in America.

**DUE: Tuesday, December 3 (1-2 pages typed)**

- Please post this to our course site using the “essay-film” category and bring 2 hard copies to class

**FINAL PROJECT DUE: Tuesday, December 17, by 4:00PM**

- **Post** your essay-film to the course site, using either youtube or vimeo. If you’d like to keep the video private, feel free to password protect it.
- Along with the actual essay-film, you will also post a **process note** detailing and reflecting on the journey that led to your project—how and why you created what you did. Some questions to consider:
  - How did you come to settle on the project you ended up pursuing?
  - What do you hope your essay-film accomplishes or shows your audience?
  - What are you most proud of?

- What challenges did you encounter?
- What surprised you?

Please make sure to tag this post using the “essay-film” category.

**Examples of Essay-Films** (many of these are much longer than what you will make, but useful in how the films work):

- Moyra Davey, [“Notes on Blue”](#) (2016)
- Claudia Rankine + John Lucas, [“Situation 9”](#) (2015)
- Hito Steyerl, [“How Not To Be Seen”](#) (2013)
- Nas, [“I Can”](#) (2002)
- Dead Prez, [“They Schools”](#) (2000)
- Chris Marker, [“Sans Soleil”](#) (1983)
- Chris Marker, [“La Jetée”](#) (1962)

**Examples of past student films:**

- [“Nature Multimedia Project”](#)
- [“A Midsummer Multimodal Tunetrace”](#)
- [“Literacy Through Film”](#)
- [“The Question”](#)
- [“What One Name”](#)

**Additional Helpful Links:**

- [Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives](#) (archive of multimodal literacy narratives)
- [“Elements of the Essay Film”](#) (8 minute video)
- [“Framing the Video Essay as Argument”](#) (blog post on teaching, but offers useful ways of thinking about what an essay-film should do)
- [“The Video Essay Process”](#) (resource from a library that offers a series of different pages outlining a range of “how to” questions one may encounter when creating an essay-film)

## Narratives of Schooling: Multimodal Project

Cynthia Selfe and Pamela Takayoshi define multimodal projects as “texts that exceed the alphabetic and may include still and moving images, animations, color, words, music and sound.”

Given that we’ve investigated a range of visual texts (film, music videos, images, etc.) over the course of the semester, this project invites you to create your own visual/aural/digital text that is in dialogue with the work you do investigating narratives of schooling.

### Multimodal Project Proposal/Plan (1-page typed)

Please post your plan for your multimodal project to the course site, using the “Multimodal Project” category. **The deadline to post these is 9AM, Tuesday, November 21. Please also bring a hard copy of your proposal to class.**

### Questions to Consider:

- What kind of multimodal project are you planning to make? (i.e. short film, soundscape, podcast)
- How will this genre help you to complicate and expand the questions you’ve asked through your various narratives of schooling?
- What will you need to do (literally) in order to create your multimodal project?
  - How much time will each step take? (You might want to draft a storyboard or an outline of the project.)
- What questions do you have? What tools might you need to learn how to use?
- What do you hope your project will enable your audience to understand regarding your thinking about schooling in America?

### MultiModal Project

- **All projects should include a process note** describing and reflecting on the journey that led to your project—how and why you created what you did. Please feel free to include images and even a slideshow documenting your project’s evolution. Some questions to consider:
  - How did you come to settle on the project you ended up pursuing?
  - What was the relationship between your digital project and your written schooling narratives? Did the two help each other, work in tandem, inform each other, etc.?
  - What do you hope that this digital project accomplishes or shows your audience?
  - What challenges did you encounter?
  - What surprised you?
- **Projects are due by 9AM on Tuesday, December 14. Please post your project (using the Multimodal Project category) along with your process note.**

## **Formal Options**

### **Audio Essay:**

For this option you will make a podcast/audio essay, which means that you will be focusing on listening and listeners.

- What is your own relationship to listening or learning aurally? You will want to think carefully about how to structure your narrative so that listeners are engaged (particularly without the text in front of them).
- You might want to explore ways to use sound effects, music, and silence to establish a mood or theme, represent transitions, etc.
- You will also want to make sure you have a script of your audio essay in order to plan what kinds of effects you will integrate into your narrative.
- **The essay should be no longer than 4 minutes.** Please upload your mp3 file to Soundcloud (<https://soundcloud.com/>). Soundcloud links are easy to embed in the course site.

### ***Helpful Links:***

- “This I Believe”: <http://thisibelieve.org/guidelines/>
- DS106 (Crowd-sourced Audio Essay Assignments): <http://assignments.ds106.us/types/AudioAssignments/>
- **Digital Writing 101:** How to Record and Edit Audio <http://digitalwriting101.net/content/category/how-to-record-edit-audio/>  
**Audacity** (a free tool for recording and editing audio): <http://www.audacityteam.org/>

### **Digital Story:**

For this option, you will make a short film (that involves any combination of moving images, still images, sound, and text).

- You will want to begin by creating a storyboard—carefully planning out what kinds of media you will use and when.
- Because of the way digital stories make use of multiple forms of media, many teachers use them to appeal to different learning types (multiple intelligences). So, as you revise your own narrative, take into account your own relationship to learning visually as well as aurally.
- **Your digital stories should be no longer than 4 Minutes.** Please upload them to YouTube, which embeds easily into our course site.

### ***Helpful Links:***

- **Educational Uses of Digital Storytelling:** <http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu/page.cfm?id=27&cid=27>
- **Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives:** <http://daln.osu.edu/>

### **Multi-Modal Adolescent Literacy Narrative**

For this assignment you will reflect on your own experiences as a middle and secondary school student with respect to learning, language, and literacy. Think of the literacy narrative as an opportunity to revisit and “re-read” your adolescence and literacy experiences. You will do this first through writing, and then you will revise your narrative in order to take into account your own experience with digital media, as well as visual and auditory literacies.

#### **Part One: 6-8 pages typed. Due Tuesday, March 7 (Week Six)**

For the first part of this assignment, you will compose a (written) literacy narrative that either explores how you learned to read or write (or learned to teach reading and/or writing).

#### ***Some Suggested Steps:***

Begin by selecting 1-2 “literacy episodes” that you see as particularly significant to your own education. Describe, narrate, or tell these “episodes” as fully as possible, providing details and specific descriptions. Feel free to draw on and revise the episodes you’ve already written about in your reading logs.

Once you’ve done this, you might want to reflect on how these “episodes” help you to define literacy for yourself. In other words, you should be able to use your “episodes” as a way to instantiate, interrogate, and craft some kind of working definition of literacy (or literacies). Draw on the readings we’ve done, class discussions, dictionary definitions, etc. in order to support your definition.

Finally, try to push your own thinking (and analysis) a bit further to consider how your definition of literacy compares to those you might have read about. Some questions to consider: In uncovering and telling your own stories, how are in and out of school episodes related? Do these “episodes” suggest a coherent analytic framework, or do they illuminate through contradiction? What struggles have taken place among the personal, cultural, and academic sources of your literacies?

**Remember:** The goal of this assignment is to craft a compelling essay that reflectively examines a specific moment (or moments) in your own literacy education. Your reader should be able to visualize the importance of the “episode(s)” you retell, as well as leave the essay thinking about how one might go about defining “literacy.”

## **Part Two: Multimodal/Digital Project**

For the second part of your assignment, you will revisit Part One of your literacy narrative and think about how and why you might revise it in order to (1) incorporate your experience navigating multiple literacies; and (2) transform the essay into a piece that works as either an audio essay (podcast) or digital story (short video).

### **Multimodal Project Proposal/Plan Due (by 5PM on March 12)**

***(please post this to the course site, using the 'digital literacy project' category)***

Please **post your plan for the** “multimodal” part of this assignment:

- What kind of multimodal project are you planning to make?
- How will this *genre* help you to expand and complicate your original literacy narrative?
- What will you need to do (*literally*) in order to create your multimodal project? How much time will each step take? (You might want to draft a storyboard or an outline of the project.)
- What questions do you have? What tools might you need to learn how to use?

### **Multimodal/Digital Final Project. Due Tuesday, May 9 (Week Fifteen)**

**\*\*All Projects should be posted to the Course Site by 12PM on May 8.**

**All projects should include a process note** describing and reflecting on the journey that led to your project—how and why you created what you did. Please feel free to include images and even a slideshow documenting your project’s evolution. Some questions to consider: How did you come to settle on the project you ended up pursuing? What was the relationship between your digital project and your written literacy narrative? Did the two help each other, work in tandem, inform each other, etc.? What do you hope that this digital project accomplishes or shows your audience? What challenges did you encounter? What surprised you? What did you need to do in order to revise your initial Literacy Narrative for this medium?

### **Formal Options**

#### **Audio Essay:**

For this option you will make a podcast/audio essay, which means that you will be revising your narrative in such a way that it will be geared towards listeners. What is your own relationship to listening or learning aurally? You will want to think carefully about how to structure your narrative so that listeners are engaged (particularly without the text in front of them). You might want to explore ways to use sound effects, music, and silence to establish a mood or theme, represent transitions, etc. You will also want to make sure you have a script of your audio essay in order to plan what kinds of effects you will integrate into your narrative. **The essay should be no longer than 4 minutes.** Please upload your mp3 file to Soundcloud (<https://soundcloud.com/>). Soundcloud links are easy to embed in the course site.

### **Helpful Links:**

- “This I Believe”: <http://thisibelieve.org/guidelines/>
- **DS106** (Crowd-sourced Audio Essay Assignments):  
<http://assignments.ds106.us/types/AudioAssignments/>
- **Digital Writing 101**: How to Record and Edit Audio  
<http://digitalwriting101.net/content/category/how-to-record-edit-audio/>
- **Audacity** (a free tool for recording and editing audio): <http://www.audacityteam.org/>

### **Digital Story:**

For this option, you will make a short film (that involves any combination of moving images, still images, sound, and text). You will want to turn your narrative into a storyboard—carefully planning out what kinds of media you will use and when. Because of the way digital stories make use of multiple forms of media, many teachers use them to appeal to different learning types (multiple intelligences). So, as you revise your own narrative, take into account your own relationship to learning visually as well as aurally. **Your digital stories should be no longer than 4 Minutes.** Please upload them to YouTube, which embeds easily into our course site.

### **Helpful Links:**

- **Educational Uses of Digital Storytelling:**  
<http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu/page.cfm?id=27&cid=27>
- **Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives:** <http://daln.osu.edu/>

**\*\* Additional technical help will be provided during the semester. \*\***

## **Unit 2: Write for Radio**

For this assignment, you'll plan, write, produce, and record a short Audio-Essay. Length is variable: three to four minutes should be long enough, though your clip can be longer. You should imagine your Audio-Essay being played on web radio; it should appeal to a broad audience of web radio listeners. Your Audio-Essay may be complete, or you may imagine it as part of a potentially longer Audio-Essay.

You may choose to work alone or in pairs. Pairs will submit one collective proposal and post one audio-essay, but each individual will write his or her own Reflective Essay.

At the end of the unit, we will broadcast some of your Audio-Essays live on web radio station DS106. We will decide together which ones to include in the broadcast.

### **Due Dates:**

- **Oct 2:** Audio-Essay Proposal due. In a post on our course blog, outline your plan for your Audio-Essay. You may choose to write your proposal in the form of a storyboard (see a definition of storyboards here <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Storyboard> and find templates by googling "storyboard templates"). Questions to consider in your proposal: Once you're recording, who will do the talking? Draft an outline of the script. Will you be interviewing anyone? Draft the interview questions. How much time will you spend on each element of your Audio-Essay? Estimate the number of seconds per segment. Where will you be broadcasting from? Someone's home? The street? What equipment, hardware, software, and other materials/props will you be using? Do you have access to everything you think you'll need? What questions do you have? What do you need help with? We'll discuss and develop these proposals in class from Oct 3-10.
- **Oct 15:** Post your completed Audio-Essay draft to our course blog, along with a Cover Letter (described below). We will workshop these first drafts in class from Oct 15-22 and you will have the opportunity to refine your Audio-Essay based on feedback.
- **Oct 23, by 10 pm:** Your fully edited and finished Audio-Essays are due to the class blog.
- **Oct 24:** Reflective Essay due (described below). Please bring a hard copy of your Reflective Essay to class.



- **Oct 24:** We will broadcast some of our work live from class.

### **Possible Topics**

Most of the suggested topics listed below are inspired by the *This American Life* episodes (and other materials) we're discussing in class. These topics are also gathered from the DS (Digital Storytelling) 106 site under "audio assignments." Search <http://assignments.ds106.us/types/AudioAssignments/> for ideas and, in some cases, samples of what other students have done. Keep in mind: Not all of the assignments in the DS 106 assignment bank will lend themselves to what I'm asking you to do: to create an Audio-Essay with a purpose/point/message. Still, you may be inspired by the DS 106 site and you should check it out. You're also free to come up with another idea, not listed below, that you think would work well for an Audio-Essay designed to be broadcast on web radio.

**Letters:** This assignment is inspired by "Letters." Record yourself (or someone else whose voice you like) reading from letters you wrote (or found, or were written to you). Try to capture the emotion of the moment. Be sure to think of ways you can suggest the purpose/point/message of reading the particular letter(s) you've chosen. Add music and sound effects, as appropriate. You could do this assignment with a diary or journal, comments section on Amazon or any other online venue, the "Missed Connections" section of Craigslist, a series of inter-related tweets... the possibilities are endless, really.

**One Question:** This assignment is inspired by "Superheroes," "50 People, 1 Question," and "What Song are you Listening to?" Take one carefully-constructed question. Ask some people your question. Mix and compile for maximum purpose/point/message and impact.

**Uninteresting Story:** This assignment is inspired by "Stories Pitched by Our Parents." Solicit an uninteresting story from a family member or friend. It is your task to try and make the anecdote as interesting as possible for your listener. When you edit your Audio-Essay based on the story, do everything in your power to make it interesting and to underscore the purpose/point/message.

**A Life in Two (or three or four) Minutes.** This assignment is inspired by "My Life is True." Explain, in your own words, a significant experience or a stubborn problem and shape your story into an Audio-Essay with a clear purpose and desired effect.

You can solicit a story from someone else who you feel has an important experience or problem that you want to explore.

**The City:** NYC captures the imagination of people around the world. Take your city as your subject. What story do you want it to tell, and what purpose/point/message do you want to communicate about NYC through your story?

**Special Requirements** for your Audio-Essay

1. Make sure your Audio-Essay has some purpose, point, or message. Think of the best way to communicate your purpose/point/message. For your Audio-Essay, you *may* be more subtle in communicating your message than you would likely be when writing a traditional academic essay with a thesis; you may choose, for instance, to quietly *suggest* your message through sound-effects, music, or tone. Still, you should be able to articulate what your point is and explain the specific choices you made to get it across.
2. Give careful thought to the effect you want your Audio-Essay to have. Do you want to make listeners think, feel, laugh, shake their heads in dismay? How are you going to achieve your desired effect? As in #1, you should be able to clearly articulate what your desired effect is and explain the specific choices you made to achieve it.
3. Use music and/or sound effects (check out [freesound.org](http://freesound.org)) purposefully (not gratuitously) and effectively.
4. Be creative.
5. Choose two specific pieces of advice from Ira Glass (which you will identify in your draft cover letter) that you think you need to follow and try to follow them as you create your Audio-Essay.

**For your Audio-Essay Draft Cover Letter**, write 2-3 paragraphs and post it along with your Audio-Essay draft. In your cover letter, articulate what your point is and explain the specific choices you made to get your point across to your listeners. Also comment on the effect you are trying to have on listeners. Then, let your readers know which two pieces of Glass advice you've decided to focus on. Quote or paraphrase the advice; be sure to include the episode (Part 1, Part 2, etc) and time into the episode when the advice appears. Explain why you think this advice is important for you in particular and how and where you tried to follow the advice in your Audio-Essay (cite specific instances). Finally, explain the problems you had in drafting your Audio-Essay. What do you think you need to work on further as you edit your project?

**For your Audio-Essay Reflection Essay (in place of your Revision Cover Letter),** write at least two and a half pages, typed and double-spaced, describing your planning (concept development), drafting (audio recording), and revision (editing) processes.

**Question to consider about the planning process:**

How did you decide on your topic? What were your goals as you began work? How (and why) did they change as you worked on your Audio-Essay?

**Questions to consider about the drafting and revision process:**

What problems did you have? Did you anticipate them? How did you address these problems? How was the process of creating your Audio-Essay was different from writing other essays? That is, how was it different to compose with listeners rather than readers in mind? What were the biggest challenges for you in this assignment? How did you overcome them? Finally, discuss what you learned about writing and creativity through the process of creating your Audio-Essay.

BARD COLLEGE, SPRING 2020

First-Year Seminar

Professor E. Kaufman

### **ASSIGNMENT 3: Our Selves in/and Our Worlds**

Despite the unprecedented *odyssey* this semester turned out to be, you've all created a substantial body of writing that investigates how the texts we've read complicate and question the place of the self in the world. For your last assignment of the semester, I invite you to create a text that showcases your voice as writer, reader, thinker, experimenter. Regardless of which of the following options you choose, your project will:

- **Reflect on the journey you've taken this year** (and this semester) as both reader and writer;
- **Include an argument, thesis, or provocation** that will have an impact on your audience;
- **Share an insight or question specific to yourself and/or your world**—this is an idea, curiosity, or passion you've discovered through the texts read in FYSEM and/or the conversations you've had this year.

**Options & Forms:** I encourage you to take this assignment in any direction you want as long as it is grounded in the texts and ideas of the course. Be imaginative. Investigate alternate forms of composing (essay film, podcast, web site). What follows are some possible options for you to choose from. As always, you are more than welcome to go in an entirely different direction, just make sure that this is clear in your proposal so that I can offer you some guidance.

**OPTION ONE:** Rewrite a scene or section of the *Odyssey*. You might choose to completely reimagine the poem for the contemporary world, while keeping the same characters. You might also choose to rewrite a scene from the point of view of another character. You might even choose to introduce a character from another text we've read into Odysseus's story. This option welcomes creative writing of any genre.

**OPTION TWO:** Write a personal essay that uses a specific passage from the *Odyssey* as a springboard for a reflection on an important moment in the formation of your own selfhood or place in the world. The term "springboard" is used deliberately here since the passage may bear an unexpected relationship with the moment you wish to share. I encourage you to return to Daniel Mendelsohn's *An Odyssey*, which you read during L & T, for one example.

**OPTION THREE:** Make something! For this option I invite you to translate your ideas into another medium—painting, series of photographs, video, musical composition, essay film, podcast, short story, dance performance, web site, etc. The only constraints are that you need to be able to share what you create with me electronically accompanied by an artist's statement explaining how your creation relates to the course's theme and texts. The artist's statement should be at least 2-pages long.

**OPTION FOUR:** Write a journalistic opinion piece intended for a publication like *The Atlantic*, *The New Yorker*, or *Slate*. You will take a stance regarding why a particular aspect of Homer's poem may inspire thinking about a current social, cultural, or political question. You are encouraged to think critically—the poem contains both remarkable insights about the timeless aspects of human nature, and shocking beliefs and practices that you may view as antithetical to your modern sensibilities.

**OPTION FIVE:** This prompt is for you to create.

**DEADLINES:**

**Assignment Proposal Due:** Wednesday, May 6 (1-2 pages typed, submitted in Google Classroom)

Your proposal should explain why you have chosen a particular option, topic, or form for this assignment. Please describe what you hope your project will accomplish, how it will engage with the texts and theme of FYSEM, and what question or provocation you hope to pursue.

**Assignment 3 Due:** Friday, May 15 (submitted in Google Classroom)

5 pages typed + cover letter

(OR) if you choose an option that differs from an essay, make sure to include an artist's statement

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**Final Cover Letter:** For your Final Assignment of the semester, please write a letter, addressed to your readers, in which you answer the following questions and address any other concerns that you have. Think of your draft letter as an opportunity to share how you feel you have improved your paper. All cover letters should be typed and about one page long.

- What is your thesis? What are you hoping to achieve in this paper?
- If you pursued a medium other than an essay, how did you try to depict your thesis?
- What are some problems you faced when writing/creating and how did you try to or succeed in resolving them?
- What idea or point do you feel you've made the most successfully? Least successfully?
- What grade do you think you deserve this semester and/or on this project and why?