

## Designing, Scaffolding, and Evaluating Multimodal Assignments

This worksheet is provided in connection with a prerecorded presentation for the 2020 Innovations in Teaching and Learning conference at George Mason University. Please use this worksheet to design or redesign a multimodal assignment for your class. These questions are offered to help you think through some of the decisions you might make in designing multimodal assignments.

### WHY

- 1) What are the pedagogical reasons you want to assign multimodal work in your class?
- 2) What are some discipline-specific contexts for multimodal work in your field?
- 3) What industry, academic, or personal examples of this kind of multimodal work can you find?
- 4) How can/does multimodal work *add value* to a discourse? (and not simply replicate what can be achieved with more traditional types of projects)

### WHAT

You have many options for incorporating multimodal work into your classes. Use the questions below to generate ideas for multimodal *process*, *project*, and *feedback* work.

- 1) In what ways could students use multimodal genres to do “process” work for a given assignment? (e.g. mindmaps, video pitches, physical models, data visualizations like word clouds, etc.)
- 2) What existing or new *minor* projects might you design for your class with multimodality in mind? (this can include “mini” projects and responses)
- 3) What existing or new *major* projects might you design for your class with multimodality in mind?
- 4) In what ways could you incorporate multimodal *feedback* in your classes? (this can include feedback students give one another, feedback they receive from you, and/or feedback they receive from community members).

### HOW

These questions are offered to help you think through some of the particulars of designing and scaffolding multimodal assignments.

- 1) Do you want to design a class-wide project (e.g. a class podcast w/ central theme), group projects, or individual projects? (generate ideas for each type and/or reflect on why you might choose one type over the others)

- 2) Do you want to offer students a single genre option (e.g. a podcast), provide a list of genre choices (e.g. podcast, blog, poster), or let them pitch a genre to you based on all available options and the specific needs of their topics/projects?
- 3) Do you want students to have the choice of a *digital* OR *analog* multimodal project (or ask them to combine the two as for a hand-drawn Zine with a QR code to a website?)
- 4) What scaffolding might you offer students for this/these project(s)? (e.g. analyzing examples of this type of project, tool/platform fluency, genre conventions and best practices, rhetorical situations and persuasive modes, translation strategies (to avoid simple transcription from one mode to another), processes such as pitching, drafting, etc. See attached “Project Planning Worksheet” that I use with my own students)
- 5) What output(s) are you expecting from students? (A stable file and/or a link? A “presentation” to the class, peer group, you, and/or community or public audiences?)
- 6) What tools/platforms will you offer students for their projects (Internal, university-supported tools/platforms only? External tools/platforms? Let students choose and/or pitch tools/platforms that they prefer to use?)

## EVALUATION

How to assess multimodal work can be a challenge for instructors who are not used to assigning or producing multimodal work. Use the questions below to help you think through different criteria for assessment and different approaches to the same.

- 1) How will your assessment of the multimodal work remain *the same* as for a comparable non-multimodal project in your class? (e.g. use of viable sources, meeting genre conventions, applying feedback, creativity/originality of approach and/or argument, presentation, etc.)
- 2) How do you think your assessment of the multimodal work will *differ* from that of a comparable non-multimodal project in your class?
- 3) How might you use examples, conventions, and best practices to shape your assessment criteria?
- 4) How might you involve students in the creation of assessment criteria for their projects?
- 5) Will you include reflection / metacognitive responses from students of their own processes and projects (which themselves could be multimodal) in your assessment?
- 6) What “new” assessment criteria might you consider including for a multimodal project (e.g. accessibility of the project in terms of captions/transcripts and alt text, ethical use of media, etc. See attached Resources)



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## Multimodal Project Plan

*I use this project plan to help students think through some of the decisions they need to make for their multimodal project in my class. This plan also offers an opportunity to manage expectations such as what will be produced for rough draft work and to invite questions about the assignment in the process/drafting stage.*

Your Name:

What is your research topic?

What new research are you proposing?

What genre did you choose?

Why did you choose this genre / modalit(ies)? How does it fit well with the content of your research, your own author-personality, and with your target audience?

What conventions will you use and what will they look like (e.g. podcast name, logo for youtube channel, blog profile, QR code in presentation, etc.)?

Who is your target audience?

Why did you choose this audience?

What strategies will you implement to reach and persuade this target audience (refer to your forum post from Wednesday and/or the posts of your peers for ideas)?

What tools / platforms will you use to make your multimodal proposal?

How are you going to make your project accessible (alt text, captions, etc.)?

Will you use found media (images, sounds, text) and/or make your own media to include?

How will you integrate the research into your multimodal project?

What will you provide us for the rough draft (it need not be the complete composition, but it should give us a good idea of what you will make—a storyboard of your video, a script of your podcast, etc.)?

Do you have any questions about this project so far?



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# Resources for Accessibility and Ethics for Multimodal Projects

## Accessibility

### Audio

One of the most interesting developments in the world of media technology is the rise of voice-over captioning. The vast majority of people who use voice-over captions don't have limited sight, but are people who want to "see/hear" a video while doing other things like washing dishes or walking the dog. Recently, Netflix faced criticism for not having voice-over captioning on one of its only shows featuring a blind main character. In response, they added voice-over captioning. Listen to this [voice-over captioning](#) in Netflix's Daredevil series.

In audio content, you need to consider how the composition can be alternatively experienced. Captions and transcripts are good options here.

You can create a transcript for your audio file as a companion composition; just make sure your transcript document also conforms to [accessibility standards for written work](#)

Here is a list of [screen capture, transcription, and captioning tools](#).

Assistive Technologies Initiative at GMU has [ample resources](#) to help you design accessible courses and course content

For more excellent information on this topic, read the linked articles below and this book: [Disability and New Media](#) by Katie Ellis and Mike Kent (PDF)

### Visual

Most likely, we've all been frustrated encountering a clunky website or a page that isn't mobile-friendly. Imagine how much more frustrated someone is when they rely on screen readers to be able to experience digital content. If you aren't sure what a screen reader is or how it connects with your course design, our own ATI has amazing [advice, support, and resources](#) for helping you create accessible course content for students with vision impairment. For our purposes we are going to cover some tips we give students to think about how they might make their visual compositions more accessible.

- Alt Text for images - Alt Text is designed to provide folks who are using screen readers to read images with a description of the image. Many different platforms allow you to add alt text before inserting a photo - the more descriptive you can be, the better! Alt text can even act like a mini-transcript for images which involve words. You could also mention to students that having Alt Text can boost their content's SEO rating.

- Simplified URLs - a person with a screen reader who comes across a hyperlink has to hear the entire web address --- not ideal when the URL is a million random characters. You might consider using a url-shortener like [bitly](#).
- Check your work (WAVE) - you can check your website for accessibility issues by plugging its url into [WAVE](#)
- Headings - whenever software offers you the option of using headings, do it! Screen readers have a hard time with tables, for example, if the heading words aren't coded as headings.
- Color/Contrast - This [Accessibility Basics](#) webpage is a great resource for thinking through visual experience of digital content

## Ethics

I urge students to think broadly about ethics when they conduct research and produce projects for my class. This includes respecting their privacy concerns when developing an assignment AND having them respect privacy and attribution standards for others. For instance, [using digital content from marginalized individuals or groups without their consent](#). Here are some additional resources that I offer students for multimodal projects:

- [Creative Commons Image Search](#) (once you search for an image, you can click on it and then click on its license to see exactly what you are allowed to do with it and whether you need to provide attribution to the person who created it)
- [Wikimedia Commons](#) (because of Wikipedia's strict standards regarding legal use of images, their commons is an excellent resource for reusable images)
- [Smithsonian Image Gallery](#) (these images are not subject to copyright, although they do have handy citations for each one)
- [Google Images](#) (once you search for something, a tool bar will appear under the search box, click "tools," then "usage rights" and select "labeled for reuse.")
- Here is also a link to [fair use audio files](#) as well as recommendations for crafting transcripts for [podcasts](#).

Using Legally/Ethically sourced media is a significant criteria of any project that I assign. You might also welcome/encourage students to create their own media to use (snap their own photos, create their own graphics/memes/etc.)



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