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ENGL 102

Secs. 041, 082, 201

17 September 2023 (updated 4 December 2024)

Multimodal Project and Statement of Design Choices (MMPSDC)

**Your task in this assignment is to compose a multimodal text and a document of at least 2000 words (the statement of design choices) that defends the argument in the multimodal text by discussing the design choices involved in composing it. It is generally advisable to complete the multimodal text before composing the statement of design choices as the latter is a reflective piece more so than argumentative essay. You must create something for this project, it is *not* sufficient to simply identify an unaltered object or text as multimodal.**

Rationale for multimodality

The popularity and ubiquity of the internet has caused a shift in the requirements of literacy. The workforce expects that the 21st century worker will be able to work to convey meaning using not just words but also images, sound, and space.

Argument based

Even though this assignment is unlike a traditional paper it still requires an argument. Your design choices should emphasize that argument. The argument for an assignment like this works best if it attempts to resolve an ongoing problem. Think of your project as reflecting the rhetorical situation of whatever problem you are addressing (exigence, audience, constraints).

Audience

A project that addresses a problem usually has a specific audience. When working on this project, consider who the audience is beyond the instructor. Which people would you want to see your project if you could share it? Think about this question even if your project is not digital (and therefore would be harder to share with others).

What must I create?

It is not necessary to create or harvest the original materials for your project. In other words, if you do a painting you can buy paints and a canvas. Your work is considered original if you alter the original materials that you purchased by using them to compose a new text. To return to the example of a painting, you purchase the paints and canvas, so they are not original things created by the composer but the painting, which is made by the composer, is original and counts as multimodal for the purposes of this project. The key is to avoid simply identifying existing materials or objects as multimodal. This project is about production more so than analysis, though the statement of design choices asks you to analyze the rhetorical effects of your project.

Some key terms

**Discourses** refer to “socially constructed knowledges of (some aspect of) reality” (Kress and Van Leeuwen 4). Discourses are never the product of a single person’s imagination but instead they come from “specific social contexts, and in ways which are appropriate to the interests of social actors in these contexts” (Kress and Van Leeuwen 4). Discourses can be general or specific, but they are always the product of interaction with the ideas and experiences among other people. Sometimes knowledge of discourses comes from adherence to subconscious (or at least not often recognized) social conditioning.

**Remediation** refers to when a composer takes an existing work and changes it into a new medium. Whenever remediation occurs, the composer brings new affordances to the existing work while losing existing ones, because remediation requires a change in the number of modes present in the remediated text. For example, the adaptation of a novel into a film is remediation, and when this occurs, the film conveys gestural and visual modes. Gestural and visual modes are not usually present in a printed essay, but they are always present in a film.

**Remix** refers to when a project utilizes objects not created by the composer and presents them in an original text. An example of remix is a diorama model, which consists of manipulating objects in a new format and thus new context. Remixes can sometimes also be remediations.

A **mode** is a way of conveying information that is linked with the senses. Here’s a list of some common types of modes and the sense they are linked with:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| TYPE OF MODE | SENSE |
| Visual – How does the project depict things using images?  Spatial – How does the project use blank space?  Gestural – How does the project use gestures or emotions?  Linguistic – How does the project use written language?  Color – How does the project use color to convey emotion or to contribute to the argument? | Sight |
| Auditory – How does the project use sound? | Hearing |
| Tactile – How does the project use texture? | Touch |
| Olfactory – How does the project use aromatics or scents? | Smell |
| Gustatory – How does the project use flavor? | Taste |

The **medium** is the format of your multimodal project. What is your project as a genre? What sort of thing is it? Your answer to these questions constitutes the medium of your project. Multimodal projects are not necessarily digital, so the use of digital technology is not required for your multimodal project (though you still have to write your statement of design choices). Your projects do not need to use just one medium. Here’s a table listing some possible mediums for multimodal projects, together with the modes involved in each medium.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Possible Medium of Project | Definition of Medium | Modes Potentially Used in Medium |
| Diorama or model | A collection of altered and/ or unaltered objects housed in an enclosure that together convey meaning | Visual  Spatial  Linguistic  Tactile  Olfactory  Gustatory  Color |
| Assemblage | A collection of altered and/or unaltered objects that together convey meaning | Visual  Spatial  Linguistic  Tactile  Olfactory  Color |
| Collage | A generally 2D text that consists of 2D images placed next to each other in close proximity, in which the spacing helps to convey meaning | Visual  Spatial  Linguistic  Color |
| Video | A series of moving pictures that is usually recorded and edited digitally and is often (though not necessarily always) uploaded to sharing websites like *YouTube*. | Auditory  Visual  Spatial  Gestural  Linguistic  Color |
| Website | A 2D digital text that is created and accessed through the internet. | Visual  Spatial  Auditory  Linguistic |
| Informative poster | A 2D genre that is similar to a collage except that the spacing is usually less dense. | Visual  Spatial  Linguistic  Color |
| Audio File | A usually digital file consisting of sounds that combine prose, words, and music, the latter of which does not necessarily have to be an original composition of the creator and that can be uploaded to sharing websites like *YouTube*. | Auditory  Linguistic |
| Textile | Either a piece of clothing crafted by the composer (scarf, hat, etc.) or a modification made to an existing piece of clothing in which the modification conveys meaning that did not exist in the original text (the unaltered piece of clothing). | Visual  Spatial  Tactile  Linguistic  Color |
| Photo Essay | A series of photos taken by the composer about a common theme. The photos can be collected on a poster or else on a website. | Visual  Spatial  Gestural  Linguistic  Color |

Statement of Design Choices

In this document of at least 2000 words, address the following questions about your multimodal project:

* What is your argument?
* What discourses are you drawing upon?
* What modes did you use?
* Why did you use those modes?
* Who is your ideal audience?
* How do the features of your project work to convey your argument?
* What would you redo about this project if you had more time to work on it?
* What parts of the project worked well and what parts didn’t work well in conveying your argument?
* What was the most difficult part of completing this project?
* What was the least difficult part of completing this project?
* What rhetorical terms are evident in your project (refer to the Visual Rhetorical Analysis assignment prompt for a list of these)?
* Which ideas inherent in your project reflect what Kress and Van Leeuwen have to say about multimodality in *Multimodal Discourse*?

Format and Conferences

The statement of design choices should be in MLA format. The document must engage with the ideas, theories or examples found in *Multimodal Discourse* by either quoting or paraphrasing. The citation format for *Multimodal Discourse* is:

Kress, Gunther, and Theo Van Leeuwen. *Multimodal Discourse*. Hodder, 2001.

There is no need for a first draft of the statement of design choices because the statement can only be written once the multimodal project has been completed.

Multimodal Resources

My website on Vaporwave music and art (<http://scalar.usc.edu/works/understanding-vaporwave/index>) is an example of a multimodal text that uses spatial, linguistic, visual, and auditory modes within the medium of a website. It’s worth nothing that with one exception (an image), the images and audio tracks from my website are all sourced (and cited) from elsewhere on the internet.

Dr. Jody Shipka’s website (<https://web.archive.org/web/20210510195210/http://remediatethis.com/student/index.html>) includes both photos of multimodal projects completed by her students as well as excerpts of student writing that explains the rationale, argument, and design choices behind their multimodal texts.

My professional website ([www.marinowriter.com/multimodal-composition-student-showcase.html](http://www.marinowriter.com/multimodal-composition-student-showcase.html)) archives examples of past student multimodal projects. Students will have the chance to have their work shared on this website publicly if they wish either anonymously or with their name attached. Not sharing their work on my website will have no effect on their grade on the multimodal project assignment or their overall course grade. This short clip from the 2003 film *Love Actually* is a means of introducing multimodality (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cfNzZre-sIU>). This short clip from a 2003, season 11 episode of *Frasier* (“The Placeholder”) is an example of a discourse (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FuwPSvQMbm8>). Finally, the opening sequence of the 1994 season 7 episode “Masks” of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=swIUlh_JeW8>) touches on multimodality.

Project Presentations

Students will have the opportunity to present their projects in informal 3-5 minute presentations during the final week of class (2 December – 6 December 2024). Students that present their projects will receive five (5) extra credit points extra credit towards their overall course grade.

For digital projects, please include a link to the project in the statement of design choices, which should be handed in on Moodle regardless of whether you did a digital or non-digital project.

All students must turn in their physical projects (if applicable) by 15:00 CST on 6 December 2024 to the instructor’s office in HLG 341.

Due Dates

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| SECTION | ROUGH DRAFT | FINAL DRAFT (NON-DIGITAL PROJECT) | FINAL DRAFT (ESSAY) |
| 041 | 25 November 2024 | 6 December 2024 | 9 December 2024 |
| 082 | 25 November 2024 | 6 December 2024 | 9 December 2024 |
| 201 | 26 November 2024 | 6 December 2024 | 9 December 2024 |