

Unit II: Audio Essay Project

Length of audio: min. 4 minutes, max. 7 minutes

Rough Draft of Audio Text Due: February 17th

See below for supporting documents*

Final Recording/Project Due: February 24th

*Text should be double-spaced with one-inch margins, in Times New Roman, 12 pt. font. See sample paper on Canvas.

You have just written a carefully constructed personal narrative about a moment of significance in your life. Now, you will convert that narrative into an audio essay after conducting an analysis of the genre. You will keep the same central moment of your narrative, but you will need to add and/or subtract other elements to fit the requirements of the new genre. You will write a text and record an audio narrative, which will display your awareness of the audio essay genre conventions and your ability to consider the needs of a particular audience.

Stage 1: Genre Analysis (due 2/12)

Use Anis Bawarshi's "Guidelines for Analyzing Genres" (on Canvas) to analyze at least two samples of the audio essay genre. Write a summary of your findings in the form of a 1-2 page genre analysis. In your analysis, describe the scene/situation in which the genre is used, identify the genre's organizational and performance patterns, and explain what the genre's textual patterns reveal about the context, participants, and their values (see Bawarshi handout on Canvas). Make sure you select audio essay samples, not podcasts, interviews, or traditional reporting. Include excerpts from the samples that you analyze in your memo to illustrate your claims about the genre.

Stage 2: Drafting the Text (rough draft of audio essay text due 2/17)

Next, you will draft the text for your audio essay. Be aware that you cannot simply take a selection verbatim from your longer narrative. You will need to re-conceptualize and re-frame your original narrative for the new medium and audience. Consider the reading we have done, the examples you have heard, and the genre conventions you have identified. You will want to continue thinking of the text in terms of scenes and details, but consider how organization and structure must change. Also, include some element of reflection, or the Big Picture, as Ira Glass calls it.

Before bringing your text to peer review, I highly recommend that you have read it aloud at least 2-3 times, preferably to an audience. It could be beautifully written, but how does it sound when read aloud? Is your audience able to follow your narrative? Also, make sure your narrative fits within the time limit (4-7 minutes).

Stage 3: Recording the Essay (recording days 2/19 & 2/22 [subject to change based on room availability])

Finally, you will take your text and record the audio essay. You will sign up for a recording session in the soundproof video booth on the ground floor of Moody Library, using one of the microphones that can be checked out at the Tech Point. There will be an in-class training session on Audacity, a free downloadable audio computer program, so you will need access to a laptop computer. You also may use Garage Band, if you are more familiar with that program. All projects must eventually be saved as .mp3 files.

When recording, you should record multiple "drafts" of your text. Take your time and really work on the nuances of vocal presentation, as we discussed in class. Pay special attention to pacing, pauses, and framing. Consider your audience and how to be conversational with them. You are welcome to bring another person into the booth to "talk to," as long as that person's presence is not made known on your recording.

You may need to do some light editing. You may include other tracks if you wish (i.e. sound effects or music), but this is not a required component of this assignment. Make sure any additions enhance your narrative, instead of distract from your story. If you use other tracks, you must use them legally, i.e. use free sound effects and public domain music.

Stage 4: Turning in the Project (final audio recording and supporting documents due 2/24)

Once the audio is complete, you will complete a cover letter/reflection discussing your writing process for this unit (it does not need to be in letter format, though it can be if you prefer).

Consider the following questions:

1. What considerations were key for this project?
2. Did you have any previous experience with the genre or any of the technology used on this project?
3. Who was your audience, and what was your purpose for them? Did your audience change from the Unit I essay to this project? How were you looking to affect and/or persuade them? How was that revealed in the text?
4. What was your process for approaching this genre and converting your original narrative?
5. What additions did you make to your original narrative? What deletions?
6. What are the benefits of composing for an audio genre? What are some challenges?
7. How might skills developed in this unit be valuable to you in future work?

You will turn in this cover letter in class on the day that the project is due, along with a hard copy of the final text of the essay, your outline from your conference with me, any peer review drafts/worksheets, your initial genre analysis, and your Unit I essay. All written assignments must be in MLA style (in terms of margins, font, page numbers, and spacing).

Lastly, upload your audio essay to Canvas before class. It must be in an .mp3 file.

Note: if you do use any other audio files (i.e. music, sound effects, etc.), you must include a works cited page with your project. You will lose significant points if I hear a sound that did not emanate from your own voice box and you did not include a works cited page.

Stage 5: Presentation of Audio Essays (2/24-26)

We will have informal presentation in-class days for these audio essays. On these days, you will need to bring both headphones and a laptop. You will listen to a number of your classmates' audio essays, approaching them as a listener who has just tuned in. You will be evaluating your peers' work, the evaluation which will be a component of both your grade and your peers' grades. You will evaluate your peers on elements of the audio essay genre, such as clarity, cohesiveness, and narrative ability. You are expected to attend both days, and you will lose significant points on your Unit II project if you do not do so.

FINAL UNIT II PROJECT CHECKLIST

Canvas upload: Audio essay mp3 file

Paper copy in class:

- Cover letter
- Final text of the essay
- Outline
- Peer review drafts/worksheet
- Genre analysis
- Unit I essay
- (Works cited, if needed)*