

WRITING FOR THE PUBLIC: DIGITAL CONTEXTS

EngCmp 0420, Spring 2013, University of Pittsburgh, Class #12104

Prof. Annette Vee

Meeting time: Th 6-8:30pm

Meeting place: 349 Cathedral of Learning

Course website: <https://writingforthepublic2013.wordpress.com/>

Course Twitter hashtag: #engcmp0420

Prof. Vee's contact information:

Office: 628 C Cathedral of Learning

Email: adv17@pitt.edu (preferred)

Twitter: @profvee

Office Hours: Thursdays, 3-5pm, and gladly by appointment

Course Description

Pitt's Writing for the Public course is designed to allow students to explore the theory and practice of writing that serves the public interest. Public writing is crucial in the nonprofit and government sector, serving every kind of cause: safety and health, political activism, the environment, policy education, animal and human rights, and the arts. Increasingly, these sectors rely on digital communication to get their messages out to the public. This section of the course focuses on writing for the public interest with digital genres.

You will have the opportunity to delve into an issue you are passionate about and compose a variety of documents to express the complexities of that issue. You can expect to report on events you attend, interview people, and identify and regularly read many sources of information about the issue you choose: professional journals, media outlets, websites, research studies, or other materials.

We will explore typography, writing style, and visual and audio design in order to create complex textual/digital documents on issues pertinent to the public interest. Along with text-centered proposals, editorials and articles, you will also create a website, write for a blog, use the social media platform Twitter and compose an audio piece suitable for podcasting. We'll use examples of public writing, theoretical articles, and the work of students in the class to inform our discussion.

The first half of the course will focus on an introduction to the theory and practice of writing for the public in digital contexts. You will practice the writing and revision process, identify public issues, conduct research, and explore the range of genres that constitute digital writing in the nonprofit and governmental sectors. The second half of the course will be driven by your public interest project. Your final project will be a website that includes audio, visual, textual and social media elements.

Goals for Pitt's Writing for the Public Course

Writing for the Public is a writing-intensive course that focuses on helping students learn about and use specific forms of reading and writing that are common in the nonprofit and government sectors of American life. It is a core course in Pitt's Public and Professional Writing (PPW) Certificate Program. The course enables students to do the following:

Learn how persuasive writing functions in both nonprofit and government contexts. Students will learn about standards for writing and the range of genres that constitute writing in the public interest, and they will learn how to identify and research public issues.

Learn how to engage with the contexts and goals of writing in the public interest, including ways of satisfying the needs of their readers and what is at stake in writing a document that is published by an agency or nonprofit.

Compose sustained arguments supported by research (including interviewing) to persuade a particular audience to take a particular action. Students will choose a social issue or problem to research and write about and will narrow their focus to create a project that can be completed during the course.

Address the rhetorical and technical challenges of using images, captions, tables, charts, and other design elements to advance an argument and persuade an audience.

Craft language with attention to both style and precision. The course will allow students to better edit their own writing and to provide useful feedback on their colleagues' writing.

Students who earn a C or above in Writing for the Public have substantially progressed toward fulfilling the goals listed above.

Course Requirements

To succeed in this course, you will need to stay on top of assignments, participate actively in online and in-class discussions, and respect your peers in conversation and reviews of their work. You will need to complete course readings and submit your work—both drafts and final projects—on time. There are no long essays for this course; instead, there are many smaller projects and short writings that will be compiled into your final website. Because there are so many smaller elements to this course, it is imperative that you stay organized. Use a calendar to remind you of drafts, assignments, and short digital writings on the blog and Twitter.

Because part of your work in the course is to offer useful and intelligent feedback to your colleagues in class, your attendance and participation is mandatory.

If, at any time, you have questions or concerns about your ability to fulfill the expectations for this course, please contact me. I aim to help you succeed in the course, and together we can resolve most issues that may come up.

Course Readings

Readings will be available online through CourseWeb unless otherwise noted. Readings for each week are listed on the course calendar (see below) by the day they are due to be read. Throughout the semester, you will also be reading and commenting on your peers' work.

Grading

The Proposal, Press Release, Visual Argument, Infographics, Audio Interview/Argument, and White Paper will all be graded at their 2nd draft. As long as the drafts are turned in on time, each of these assignments may be turned in one additional time to Prof. Vee for re-grading. Unless otherwise noted in the calendar below, I will accept assignments for re-grading up until March 8 (the day before spring break).

Digital participation (Twitter, class blog, Wikipedia)	5 points (assigned March 30)
In-class participation (including peer review)	10 points (assigned March 30)
Blog posts on your own site	10 points (5 assigned March 30, 5 assigned at the end)
Twitter posts on your site	10 points (5 assigned March 30, 5 assigned at the end)
Proposal	5 points
Social Media Release	5 points
Visual Arguments	10 points
Infographics	10 points
Audio Interview/Argument	10 points
White Paper	10 points
Website design & organization	10 points
Final reflection letter (pass/fail)	5 points
TOTAL	100 points

A	= 92 – 100 points
A-	= 90 – 92 points
B+	= 88 – 89 points
B	= 83 – 87 points
B-	= 80 – 82 points
C+	= 78 – 79 points
C	= 73 – 77 points
C-	= 70 – 72 points
D	= 60 – 69 points
F	= below 60 points

Late work—including late or incomplete drafts on workshop days—will be docked one letter grade per day it is late, unless prior arrangements are made with me for extensions, etc. I offer extensions only in extreme circumstances, but please contact me if this applies to you.

Participation

Participation in the class consists of short writings in class and on the course blog and Twitter, peer review, discussion, and your general contribution to the work we do together.

Someone with an excellent (A to B) participation grade:

- will have attended class and appeared engaged without fail;
- will have offered timely, insightful comments to his peers;
- will have always brought her readings or other materials to class;
- will have contributed regularly and thoughtfully to class discussions both online and offline.
- will engage in conversation on the course blog and Twitter, over and above required minimums

Some people are more likely to speak up than others and some are more comfortable sharing ideas after they have had more time to process them; for these reasons, I offer both online (that is, written and not time-sensitive) and offline (that is, vocal and real-time) venues in which to participate in the class. It's normal to be more comfortable in one space than another, but your work as a professional communicator requires that you be proficient in sharing your ideas in real-time, asynchronous, written and face-to-face contexts. Please see me if you have questions about how to participate more actively in any area of the class.

Policies and Procedures

Attendance

Regular attendance in this course is required. If you miss more than two weeks total of this course (2 class meetings), you will not pass the course.

It is your responsibility to get the assignments, class notes, and course changes from a classmate if you do miss a class. It is also your responsibility to complete the missing work. In-class work cannot be made up.

I understand that things happen and you may need to miss a class because you're sick, you've missed your flight back to campus, or you have pressing personal or family issues. The policy above allows for such absences without penalty. If you need to be absent for some extraordinary reason—because of a severe accident or illness, a family emergency or death, a religious holiday or jury duty—please let me know, and we will work something out. For such absences, either prior notification or subsequent documentation will be required.

Academic Integrity

The University asks us to include in our course descriptions this quotation from Pitt's Senate Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom (February 1974):

The integrity of the academic process requires fair and impartial evaluation on the part of faculty and honest academic conduct on the part of students. To this end, students are expected to conduct themselves at a high level of responsibility in the fulfillment of the course of their study. It is the corresponding responsibility of faculty to make clear to students those standards by which students will be evaluated, and the resources permissible for use by students during the course of their study and evaluation. The educational process is perceived as a joint faculty-student enterprise which will perforce involve professional judgment by faculty and may involve—without penalty—reasoned exception by students to the data or views offered by faculty.

Plagiarism hurts the relationships and scholarship we construct during this class. Assignments for this course are designed to be relevant to your specific contexts and are therefore nearly impossible to plagiarize in full. More commonly, students plagiarize by improperly quoting and documenting their sources. We will review how to properly document sources in class and I am happy to answer questions about how you can ensure that work you do for the class is your own. Additionally, please visit the English Department's site defining plagiarism and explaining how to properly document sources: http://www.englishlit.pitt.edu/lit_plagiarism.html.

Should you plagiarize, consequences are severe: students suspected of violating the University of Pittsburgh Policy on Academic Integrity, noted above, will be required to participate in the outlined procedural process that I initiate. **A minimum sanction of a failing grade for the paper or project will be imposed.**

Disability Resources

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, please inform me and the Office of Disability Resources and Services as early as possible in the term. You can reach DRS at (412) 648-7890 or (412) 383-7355 (TTY) and you can visit their office at 216 William Pitt Union. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center is a free tutorial service for Pitt students. Writing Center consultants can help you learn how to generate ideas, organize your writing, and understand assignments. They can help you understand and deal

with any sentence-level problems that you have, too. It's a great place to go in order to have a reader respond to your work so that you can do some intensive work on your writing. You can call for an appointment at (412) 624-6556 or schedule one online: <http://www.rich36.com/pitt/>

The writing center is located in 317B O'Hara St. Student Center. Visit the Writing Center website at <http://www.composition.pitt.edu/writingcenter/index.html> for hours, how to prepare for an appointment, and more information.

Technology etiquette

Please turn off your cell phone **before** class begins and keep it inside your book bag, purse, etc.—do *not* keep it on your desk during class. I allow and encourage the use of computers, netbooks, tablets, etc. in class for those who want to take notes digitally during class. These devices are *not* for socializing during class, however; studies show that these activities are distracting to your ability to learn and participate. You may visit our blog, Wikipedia or dictionary sites, etc. to help you understand a concept we're discussing in class. If you are socializing online or on your phone (including texting) during class, then you will be considered absent for that class period. Please contact me if you have specific questions about this policy.

Calendar summary

Assignment	Draft #1 due date (in class workshop)	Draft #2 due date (due on CW 11:59 for Prof. Vee to assign points)	Points
Issue Proposal	Thurs, Jan 24	Mon, Jan 28	5 points
Visual arguments (2)	Thurs, Feb 7	Mon, Feb. 11	10 points
Social Media Release	Thurs, Feb 14	Mon, Feb 18	5 points
Audio interview	Thurs, Feb 21	Mon, Mar 4 (optional regrading Mar 25)	10 points
White paper	Thurs, Mar 7	Mon, Mar 18 (optional regrading Mar 30)	10 points
Infographics (2)	Thurs, Mar 28	Mon, Apr 1 (optional regrading Apr 15)	10 points
Final website	Drafts due beginning of April	Thurs, Apr 25. FINAL.	10 points

Not included here are tweets, blog posts, readings, and other smaller assignments.

As long as the drafts were turned in on time, each of these assignments may be turned in one additional time to Prof. Vee for re-grading. Unless otherwise noted above, I will accept assignments for re-grading up until March 8 (the day before spring break).

Course Schedule

Life is complicated; consequently, this schedule is subject to change.

Week 1 (Jan 10): introduction

Intro to Course

What's a public issue? (work with newspapers)

Why do digital work? <http://www.poynter.org/how-tos/career-development/198780/10-ways-journalists-can-make-themselves-more-marketable/>

<http://www.post-gazette.com/stories/business/news/facebook-other-social-media-transforming-activist-groups-632546/>

DUE MON, JAN 14:

Register for the class blog at <https://writingforthepublic2013.wordpress.com/> and post an introductory post with your goals for the class.

Week 2 (Jan 17): digital writing // rhetoric // researching a public issue

Reading

- Simmons, W, Michele and Jeffrey T Grabill. "Toward a Civic Rhetoric for Technologically and Scientifically Complex Places." *College Composition and Communication*; Feb 2007; 58(3), 419-448.
- Bowdon, Melody and J. Blake Scott. "Chapter 3: A Rhetorical Toolbox for Technical and Professional Communication." *Service Learning in Technical and Professional Communication*. Longman, 2003.

In class

BRING TO CLASS: A printed brochure OR a website (bring your computer) for a public interest organization at Pitt or a local or national public interest organization. You will discuss this in groups. BE PREPARED TO discuss rhetorical terms from Bowden & Scott: kairos (Gorgias), exigence (Bitzer), audience, discourse community, "available means of persuasion" (Aristotle), genres as social action (C. Miller), ethos, pathos, logos (Aristotle). How do these rhetorical contexts change in digital contexts? BE PREPARED TO discuss "civic rhetoric"

DUE MON, JAN 21: Launch a twitter account (use a pseudonym or a name related to your public issue), follow me (@profvee) and tweet at me. Once I get everyone's usernames, I'll send out an email with them so that you can follow everyone else in the class. Then begin tweeting about public issues you're interested in! (hashtag #engcmp0420)

BLOG -- Post an answer to Prof. Vee's question on the blog or post your own question or answer a peer's question.

Week 3 (Jan 24): writing style // proposal workshop

Reading

- Williams, Joseph. "Actions."
- "Memos." Purdue OWL: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/590/1/>
- Tips for Interviewing: <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~sponder/j641/Interview.htm>

Writing

- Issue Proposal (memo format, 500-750 words), Draft #1 due in class for workshopping. Bring three copies for peer review and discussion. See example memo at the Purdue OWL: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/590/04/>
- Make list of potential interviewees for the audio assignment.

In class

Workshop Issue Proposals; discuss writing style and how to find additional research on a topic, how to find interviewees, writing style

DUE MON, JAN 28: Issue Proposal, Draft #2 uploaded to CourseWeb by 11:59pm.

BLOG -- Post a progress report on your research and a question or challenge you've found. *Additionally*, offer a substantive comment on someone else's post.

Week 4 (Jan 31): visual / image / typography design*Reading*

- Faigley, et al. "Picturing texts," in *Picturing Texts*, Norton, 2004.
- Park, "Redesign," *Looking Good in Print*, 2006
- Optional resource: Robin Williams's *Non-designer's Design Book* (2008) is online through PittCat.

Writing

- Contact potential interviewees for your audio project

In class

Discuss blog and progress on research; look at examples of visual design and redesign; discuss principles of unity, pattern, balance, etc., in visual design, redesign book cover
Discuss use of images, creative commons, introduction to copyright law, fair use
Workshop in Photoshop

DUE MON, FEB 4: BLOG – Topic TBA**Week 5 (Feb 7): composing for re-delivery and circulation***Reading*

- Ridolfo & DeVoss, "Composing for Recomposition: Rhetorical Velocity and Delivery, *Kairos*, http://www.technorhetoric.net/13.2/topoi/ridolfo_devoss/intro.html
- How to Write a Social Media Release <http://www.inc.com/guides/2010/11/how-to-write-a-social-media-press-release.html>

Writing

- TWO Visual Arguments (Draft #1) for your issue, workshop in class
- Bring TWO press or social media releases to class (preferably related to your issue)

In class

Class critique of visual work; discuss how audio can work for the rhetorical strategies of pathos and ethos and the canon of memory, examine press releases and think about their re-delivery, or "rhetorical velocity."

More on reuse and fair use of images

DUE MON, FEB 11: TWO Visual Arguments, Draft #2 uploaded to CourseWeb by 11:59pm.

BLOG – Topic TBA

Week 6 (Feb 14): social media and press releases*Reading*

- Williams, Lesson 7, "Concision"

- Zinsser, *On Writing Well*, 1-12
- Audio info packet
- Listen to audio interviews online
- Review: Tips for Interviewing: <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~sponder/j641/Interview.htm>
- Optional: *New Yorker* reading, “Neverland,” (Dec 10, 2012) demonstrating good interview work

Writing

Social Media Release Draft 1 due for peer review.

In class

Peer review of releases;
Audio design workshop in Audacity

DUE MON, FEB 18: Social Media Release due on CourseWeb by 11:59pm.

BLOG – Analyze a professional blogger’s style, reflect on what works, and your own blogging.

Week 7 (Feb 21): composing audio

Reading

Catch up on anything you missed

Writing

- Draft #1 of Audio argument/interview due for peer review and discussion in class. Bring headphones & laptop to class.

In class

Class critique of audio work; discuss delivery and velocity

No blog post due this week, but think about what you’ll post next week on your own site.

Week 8 (Feb 28): composing for the web

Reading

- Tidwell, Jennifer, “Aesthetics,” (Chap 9) *Designing Interfaces*, OReilly. Read 269-289, skim examples afterward.
- Tidwell, “Page layout” (Chap 4)

Writing

- Start Wordpress site & choose basic layout.
- Post your first entry as an introduction to your issue. (From here on, post something about your issue every week and comment on another student’s blog.)

In class

Dynamic nature of web compositions; intro to writing for the web; basic html & linking; look at several web sites for elements of composition.

More discussion on writing for the web, including design and code elements, Wordpress widgets, etc;

DUE MON, MAR 4: BLOG -- First blog post on your own Wordpress site by 11:59pm, plus comment on a peer’s blog. (Hereafter, do this about once per week, in addition to commenting on someone else’s blog.)

DUE MON, MAR 4: Audio argument/interview uploaded to CourseWeb by 11:59pm.

Week 9 (Mar 7): researching your issue

Reading

- Using the “Google is your friend” method of researching information, answer three questions: How do you find out the popularity of websites? How is Wikipedia written and edited? How do you see the code that runs websites?

Writing

- Draft #1 of 750-1000 word white paper for workshopping

In class

Workshop white papers; discuss Wikipedia editing; visit websites with good infographics and discuss what makes them good; look at metadata on websites and site analytics on Alexa and Google Analytics.

DUE FRI, MAR 8: optional re-grading of the proposal, visual argument, social media release or audio composition IF turned in to CW by 11:59pm AND IF your drafts were on time.

Week X (Mar 14): spring break!

DUE MON, MAR 18: White Paper, Draft # 2 uploaded to CourseWeb by 11:59pm.

Week 10 (Mar 21): metadata // data // graphics

Reading

- Visit sites with good information graphics such as Information is Beautiful, GOOD, Ben Fry, NYTimes.

Writing

By classtime: Post links to TWO examples of good infographics on class blog, with an explanation for why you think they’re good.

In class

Discuss infographics. Watch this on data visualization:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=Q9RWwKntuXg

Intro to Wikipedia editing, kickstarter appeals

how to inform and persuade people to get involved or donate

Week 11 (Mar 28): publicizing your issue with web 2.0: wikipedia and kickstarter

Reading

- Shirky, Clay. “Gin, Television and the Cognitive Surplus,” *Cognitive Surplus*.
- Spend 30min reading articles relevant to your public issue on Wikipedia.
- Spend 30min reading kickstarter proposals: <http://www.kickstarter.com/> , in particular, check out projects for social good: <http://mashable.com/2012/01/11/kickstarter-social-good/> , <http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/825049873/girls-helping-girls?ref=live> , <http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/laughingmotherfarms/laughing-mother-farms?ref=live> , <http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/fishveggies/urban-harvest-kc-indoor-aquaponics-garden-project?ref=live>
- indiegogo

Writing

Bring in reading journal of what you read online

Draft #1 TWO Infographics on your issue to be workshopped in class.

In class

Digital peer review of infographics; discuss alternative ways of getting the word out about your issue.
Discuss reading journals of Wikipedia articles

DUE MON, APR 1: Infographics uploaded to CourseWeb by 11:59pm.

Week 12 (April 4): social media*Reading*

- Read on the web about your public issue, including Facebook fan pages you're connected to or related to your issue

Writing

Edit or create at least one Wikipedia page to reflect some research you've done on your issue.
Write a kickstarter proposal (for use in class, optionally for your website)

In class

Review Wikipedia entries
“fund” kickstarter projects with fake money

Week 13 (Apr 11): workshop

HTML/CSS workshop with grad student, Trisha.

Week 14 (Apr 18): workshop / wrap-up / presentations

Have a full draft of your website up and available for workshoping in class.

DUE THURS, APR 25, 11:59 on CW: FINAL WEBSITE, plus Reflection on writing for your public issue online and discussion of plans for the future of your website.

Class Projects

Blog

Writing for blogs is a requirement for the course. For the first half of the course, you'll write blog posts and comments on the class blog: <https://writingforthepublic2013.wordpress.com/> . For the second half of the course (beginning in March), you will be posting on your own issue blog. Blog entries are due on Monday nights, 11:59pm, and you'll have 6 posts on the course blog, plus at least 6 posts on your own site. You are welcome and encouraged to post more.

On our course blog, you'll be expected to ask questions pertinent to the research and writing project and you'll comment on others' posts and questions. The blog is designed to be a relatively casual discussion space, but you should practice good blog writing on it: compelling titles, clear sentences and vibrant words—all the stuff you'll learn from Williams's *Style*.

On your own site, you are expected to come up with your own topics to post on, but you can ask the class for help with invention or get ideas from other students' issue blogs. You'll comment on your peers' blogs as well, to help them stay lively and conversational.

Twitter

You're required to launch a Twitter account as part of the course. If you already have a personal Twitter account, you should launch a new account specifically for this course. You'll follow @profvee and all other students in the course and you can use your Twitter account to communicate with @profvee or other students about the course. In the beginning of the course, you'll learn to write for Twitter: in concise, 140 character bits, often with links. As the course progresses, you should be tweeting about your chosen public issue. You should have at least 50 tweets by the end of the semester, but you'll be more successful using Twitter if you don't think about it in terms of quantity. Integrate it into your research habits on your issue, tweet when you encounter a good web source, when you're on the bus and think about something related to your issue, etc. There are no due dates for tweets, but you should post at least on at least a weekly basis.

Proposal

In a 500-750 word memo, your proposal will outline the basic history of your public issue, who is affected by it, what is causing it, which aspects of it you would like to address, and why intervention and attention to the issue is important.

Visual Arguments

Juxtapose an image you have found or made with text to make an argument about your issue. You will do this digitally, using the digital image software you prefer. You'll make two different visual arguments; you must include at least one on your final website.

Audio Argument/Interview

This project requires that you find people who are willing to let you interview them about your issue. You can interview several people, but you should find at least one who is willing to let you take an audio recording of their voice and put it into your audio essay and your website. Your 3-6 minute audio essay will include music or some kind of non-verbal sound, plus the voice of your interviewee. You will probably want to narrate some aspect of your audio piece as well. As a whole, the piece should make an argument pertinent to your issue.

Social Media Release

A press release is often sent to media outlets by non-profits and businesses when some event occurs, but nowadays, press releases are written to accommodate social media like Twitter and Facebook. For this assignment, you'll compose a "social media release" related to your issue, paying particular attention to how the information you provide will be used online. Your one-page press release will be primarily text, but should also include an image or links to relevant websites. It will be included on your full website.

White Paper

Non-profits and businesses will sometimes issue "white papers" to convey information to the public about a particular issue. Your 100-1250 word (3-4 page) white paper will consolidate some of the research you've conducted over the semester in order to make a concise argument about your issue.

Infographic

Using good design principles, you'll create two infographics reflecting some of the research you've found on your issue. You must include one of them on your full website, but you may include both.

Website & Reflection letter (Elements due throughout the semester; final due Apr 25)

Your website will be make a general argument on your issue through the collected individual compositions from the class. It must include at least one visual argument, one infographic, your audio interview/argument, your press release, and your white paper. It will also include at least 6 blog posts, a Twitter feed section, and various elements such as an "About" page. Excellent websites will have a unique design and other elements to promote

and educate. You'll have the last few weeks of the term to get feedback from me and your peers. You'll link to the website in a formal letter addressed to Prof. Vee. This letter is a chance for you to reflect on your trajectory though the semester and although the format should be formal, your tone can be informal.

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 Jan 17, 2013

Researching a Public Issue

This course calls for your sustained engagement with a public issue. Your final website and smaller assignments throughout the semester ask you, as you compose, to draw on the knowledge you gain from research on your public issue. So you had better make it something you're interested in! Start your research now.

What is a public issue?

- Affects a lot of people on a national or local level (or both)
- Has longevity and history
- The implications go beyond just the parties involved (e.g., not just a disease, but how it affects communities)
- Can be affected or changed by human effort or other resources

How do you find a public issue?

Think about what affects you and your friends and family. Are there connections from problems in your lives to larger environmental, social and health issues? Do these issues affect other people as well? Then it might be a good place to start.

What you're being asked to do with your public issue is *interpretive reporting*. This is different from editorials, and simply releasing facts. It's an old tradition, although we're doing it in a digital context. Interpretive reporting, according to Prof. Curtis MacDougall in 1938, meets a "demand on the part of an intelligent reader to not only know what is happening, but why it is happening, and how what transpires fits into the general political and social pattern" (as cited in Griffen et al, *Interpreting Public Issues*, Ames: Iowa State UP, 1991, p. 14) You need facts and background information to talk about your public issue, and you'll find them through interviews, public data, other (reliable) publications, primary reporting, and other research.

Successful projects will go beyond the surface of the issue. In other words, you'll *learn* a lot from your research and your project will *teach* others. Good projects will be respectful of the communities experiencing the issue and will push toward some kind of change. They will marshal many different kinds of sources to tell a story about the issue and will tell the story in a convincing, thought-provoking way.

Questions to ask as you move toward your research on this issue:

- Who are the people involved? Who is causing the issue, and who is affected by it? (And, can you talk to them? Can you go to where they are?)
- Are certain groups of people more severely affected than others, and what does that mean about the issue?
- Where does the issue occur? To what degree does the geography affect whether people are interested in and/or affected by the issue?
- What is the history of this issue? Did it stem from policies, people, geography, economics, biology, etc.?

- What might help to alleviate the issue? What kinds of human effort or resources could be directed toward it?
- Who are you addressing your reporting to? Who is likely to be able to provide assistance? Who is interested?

Example Web sites for organizations focused on public issues:

<http://codeforamerica.org/>
<http://bike-pgh.org/>
<http://www.kiva.org/>

Example newspaper writing on a public issue:

Deep Divisions (on coal, from the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Nov 2010):
<http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/10325/1105009-28.stm>

Places to research public issues, by category:

Health issues:

Kaiser Family Foundation: <http://www.kff.org/>
 The Commonwealth Fund: <http://www.commonwealthfund.org/>

Information politics:

Creative Commons
 Electronic Frontier Foundation
 Pew Internet and American Life Project
 Code For America <http://codeforamerica.org/>
 Center for the Study of the Public Domain (Duke Law): <http://www.law.duke.edu/cspd/>

Social justice / human rights:

Southern Poverty Law Center: <http://www.splcenter.org/>
 Human Rights Campaign: <http://www.hrc.org/>
 Amnesty International: <http://www.amnesty.org/>
 Disability Rights Network of Pennsylvania: <http://drnpa.org/>
 Kiva (corporation): <http://www.kiva.org/>

Environmental issues:

Sierra Club: <http://www.sierraclub.org/>
 Greenpeace: <http://www.greenpeace.org/usa/en/>
 Monterey Bay Aquarium: <http://www.montereybayaquarium.org/>

Animal rights/defense:

PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals): <http://www.peta.org/>
 ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) <http://www.asPCA.org/>
 IDA (In Defense of Animals): <http://www.idausa.org/>

Local Pittsburgh issues:

Marcellus Shale Protest: <http://www.marcellusprotest.org/>
 Neighborhood organizations: <http://www.lunited.org/> (Lawrenceville United); <http://www.onlyinoakland.org/> (Oakland); Bloomfield-Garfield Corp <http://bloomfield-garfield.org/> ; East Liberty: <http://www.eastliberty.org/>
 Public transportation, Pgh Port authority: <http://www.portauthority.org/paac/default.aspx>
 Bike Pittsburgh: <http://bike-pgh.org/>

Writing for the Public Interest
 EngCmp 0420, Spring 2013
 Prof. Annette Vee
 Jan 17, 2013

Writing a Memo/Proposal on a Public Issue

The immediate purpose of your memo/proposal is to convince me (ADV) that your project is on a public issue of consequence, that you have the potential to carry out the project, and that you have specific plans for your project. You will need to exercise your rhetorical skills to write your memo/proposal successfully.

You may want to visit the “Invention Questions” of The Rhetorical Toolbox chapter (p. 38) to help you think through what you want to say about your issue. You will also want to refer to the “Researching a Public Issue” handout.

Refer to the formatting guidelines on the Purdue OWL: header, title, headings, etc.
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/590/1/>

Your memo should include all of the following four sections in order, but it may be broken down under different headings— for example, you may want to combine sections 1 & 2 under one heading. Make your headings specific (in other words, not “Background” but “A History of Litter in Schenley Park”).

Your memo will be 500-750 words (roughly 2-3 pages) long. Bring 3 copies of it to class for workshopping on Thurs, Jan 24. Draft #2 is due to me (ADV) on CourseWeb at 11:59pm, Monday, Jan 28 for 5 points.

1. Background of issue

Begin by outlining the background of your public issue. Whom does it affect? How long has it been going on? Why has there been recent interest in it? Where does the issue occur? What are the stakes of it?

Rhetorical considerations in this section:

Exigence
 Rhetorical situation
 Audience
 Subject
 Kairos

If your issue is consequential and important then it should be fairly easy for you to transition to the next section.

2. Proposed intervention

Your proposed intervention is an informational/advocacy website, according to the terms of the class. But in your proposal, you should make a case that this website will be of some use to people: to learn about the issue, to take action about the issue, to prevent the issue, etc. Who is your website for? What will it do?

Rhetorical considerations in this section:

Rhetorical situation
 Audience
 Available means

3. Plan

In this section, you will describe how you will undertake your project: what resources you already have and what you plan to learn and do to accomplish the project.

Where will you look for research on your issue? (Logos)

Know some specific websites, databases, institutions, and people you can access (including on Twitter!) to find out more. You may want to talk to a librarian for help on this.

How are you qualified to do this research? (Ethos)

How will you convince your readers that you are a credible source on your public issue? (See “A Rhetorical Toolbox, p. 40-1.) You do not need to have specific qualifications or a background on the issue, but if you already know some things about it or have a personal connection to the issue, you should outline how it will help you. Examples: if you are concerned about research funding for sickle-cell anemia and your family has been affected by it; if you are the product of public schools and want to say something about them; if you live in a neighborhood with a trash problem and want to talk about litter as a public issue.

What kinds of information do you plan to make available on your website? (Message, Logos)

You don’t need to know exact answers to this, but you should be able to think and talk through the scope and type of information you plan to present.

In what ways will you present this information? (Delivery; “genres as social action”)

The answers to this are partly built into the class (blog posts, infographics, etc), but you should make some justification for why these genres and types of information will be useful for your audience and beneficial to your public issue.

4. Conclusion/Consequences

In your conclusion, you should describe what the ideal outcome will be from your website on your public issue. Who will respond? What will the website enable them to do? Where will the website go in the future?

Writing for the Public Interest
EngCmp 0420, Spring 2011
Prof. Annette Vee
Jan 31, 2013

Visual Arguments

DUE Thurs, Feb 7, in class: Draft #1 for peer review. Either on your computer, or uploaded to the blog. (You don't need to print it out.)

DUE Mon, Feb 11, 11:59pm: Draft #2 uploaded to CourseWeb for grade (in jpg or gif format), along with REFLECTION.

At least one of your Visual Arguments will also be a part of your final website.

For this assignment, you will use both words and images to convey an argument or fact about your issue. You will make **TWO** visual arguments. Both will contain an image and text.

You can use any image you like—one you've found, or one you've made. If it's an image you've found, make sure that you have permission to use it and that you have attributed it properly. How do you know if you have permission to use it? If it's yours or from a friend who has given you permission, then you have permission. If you've found it through Creative Commons and you're following the license properly, then you have permission. (Creative Commons search: <http://search.creativecommons.org>). **CITE YOUR IMAGES IN YOUR REFLECTION LETTER AND ON THE BLOG.** Include the person who created the image, the title, and the URL where you found it, if you found it online.

Your visual arguments must each include at least one word each.

The readings from Jan 31 about visual design will be helpful to you.

Finally, write a **250-500 word reflection** on your composition of the visual arguments—explaining what choices you made, what inspired you, what changes you made during your drafts, what you elected not to include, and the argument you are trying to convey. (This is due to Prof. Vee; you do not need to bring it to the class workshop on Feb 7.)

Bring your image on your computer or upload it to the blog so that you can access it for workshopping on Feb 7.

Writing for the Public Interest
 EngCmp 0420, Spring 2013
 Prof. Annette Vee
 Feb 7, 2013

Social Media / Press Release on a Public Issue

DUE Weds, Feb 14, in class: Draft #1 (printed) for peer review
DUE Mon, Feb 18, 11:59pm, on CourseWeb, WITH EXPLANATORY PARAGRAPH.

The Press Release *will not* be a part of your final website. It is worth 5 points.

In class on Feb 7, we talked about the principles of rhetorical velocity and how to compose for re-delivery. In your Social Media / Press Release, you'll practice those principles.

Your Press Release should be 250-500 words, including headings, contact info, everything.

Format your press release in block paragraphs, no indent, single-spaced. All media links should be active in your document (in other words, when I click on them, they should take me the place you want me to go.) You can format your Release in Word or in another program if you're more familiar with it and it will support links. If you're feeling adventurous, you can do the whole thing in html, which is the format this kind of document would circulate in, anyway.

The theme of the Press Release should be some current issue/event related to your chosen public issue.

Examples might be: current legislation or meetings; statistics released by some organization and your / your interviewee's comment on them; a news item related to your issue, etc. You can make anything an "event" if you write about it in the right way. An example: "The YYYYYY Center Urges Young Women to Get Tested for STDs," or "Congressman Richards Backs New Approach to Regulating WWWW."'

This event can be something you make up (a charity ball to benefit your cause), or something put on by another organization that you think deserves publicity (a special film screening of the movie *Gasland*). DO NOT make up statistics or other government legislation. Essentially, you can make up stuff that will probably not affect your issue, but don't fabricate stuff that would affect your issue.

The Press Release can be issued from an organization that you make up or a real organization related to your issue. You can provide fake contact information and titles for yourself if you wish.

Your Press Release should include the following components:

- Descriptive title
- Place & date
- Contact info for individual and institution (Contact info might include Twitter handles or physical address, or email address. Can be fake.)
- Intro paragraph that says what the release is about.
- Quote(s) from someone. If you're using a real person, only use real quotes. If you're fabricating a person, you can fabricate a quote as well.
- Style: short paragraphs, straightforward sentences, no transitions, etc.
- Multimedia links to at least one related image, video, or audio (you don't have to compose these).
- Link(s) to related articles, or other places to get more information
- Sharing options. These do not have to be active links, but should resemble "like" buttons. Think carefully about which platforms you want your audience to share the event through. Consider including a hashtag.

Your explanatory paragraph (under 250 words) should tell me what you fabricated about the release, why you chose to highlight this event, these other media resources, and these platforms for sharing—plus anything else I should know about the Release. Put this paragraph AFTER your press release, on a new page.

Writing for the Public Interest
 EngCmp 0420, Spring 2013
 Prof. Annette Vee
 Feb. 21, 2013

White Paper on a Public Issue

DUE Weds, Mar 7, in class: Draft #1 (printed) for peer review
DUE Mon, Mar 18, 11:59: Draft #2 to be graded, turned in on CW.

The white paper will also be a part of your final website.

Requirements:

- 1000-1500 words
- Outside research (use ****APA citation**** for your references. Check out the U-Wisc Writing Center for help on parenthetical and reference list citations: <http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/DocAPA.html>)
- A short abstract (>150 words) as your intro (included in your total word count)

You can think of this assignment as the next and final step in the sequence of more traditional, professional-writing texts you've produced for this class—the memo, the press release, and now the white paper. You are welcome and encouraged to pull from your memo and press release (as well as your blog posts) to compose your white paper.

The “white paper” is a genre of writing commonly produced by nonprofit organizations, institutions, and businesses. These same organizations produce press releases; however, while the press release is directed at the press, the audience for the white paper is generally policymakers and academics—people who want to see good research to help them make decisions or do additional research.

Your goal is to convince your audience of a particular perspective of some aspect of your issue. You will probably not be able to tackle the issue as a whole. Instead, think of a bite-sized chunk of it: the benefits of solar panels on houses rather than environmental issues more generally; benefits of rating schemes for media, rather than media and violence more generally, etc. You can think of the white paper as a kind of researched, persuasive essay, written from the perspective of your persona on your website.

You will need to draw on the **research** you've already done to complete this assignment. You will also need to do some **additional research**. (This additional research may also be helpful to you as you think about accruing blog posts for your final website.) This assignment does not include a minimum number of sources, but **I'd suggest drawing from at least 3-5 solid, reliable sources**. Scholarly sources such as peer-reviewed articles in medical journals will tend to be more persuasive to an audience than newspaper articles. For some of you, official documentation from organization such as the police, the EPA, or Congress will be more relevant than academic articles.

I provide some examples of white papers for you to skim below. I suspect that all of the white papers you'll find online will be longer than the one you're writing for the class. I made the assignment short to keep it manageable in the timeframe you have to write it. You will not need the “Executive Summary,” and you may not need the multiple sections that these papers often have. (I've required a short “abstract” in place of the summary.) But you should still think of this white paper as a document read by busy people—that is, it should have an abstract or summary at the top (which could be bullet points), some headings, and accessible language. **As a target audience, think of busy politicians who might be able to affect your issue.**

Example white papers:

“The Importance of Teaching” by the UK Dept. for Education:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/CM%207980>

This is very long, but it has a nice exec summary and serves as a long model for what you’re asked to do here.

“Stop Sprawl: New Research on Population, Suburban Sprawl and Smart Growth” by the Sierra Club

<http://www.sierraclub.org/sprawl/whitepaper.asp>

This white paper is closer to the length I’m asking you to write. Note their use of research to make their point.

“Solar Energy Permitting Fees in the San Diego Region--A Comparative Study with Recommendations” by UCAN (Utility Consumers’ Action Network)

http://www.ucan.org/energy/electricity/solar_panel_permitting_fee_white_paper

This white paper includes original research, which you are not required to do. But it provides a good example of successful argumentation on its issue.

Google “white paper” and some key terms for your public issue to find examples of white papers that will provide you with good models for this assignment.

USE THESE AS MODELS ONLY. YOUR COMPOSITION SHOULD BE ORIGINAL. DO NOT BASE YOUR WHITE PAPER ON AN ALREADY EXISTING WHITE PAPER ON YOUR TOPIC.

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 EngCmp 0420, Spring 2013
 Prof. Annette Vee
 Feb 28, 2013

Audio Essay / Interview on a Public Issue

DUE Thurs, Feb 21, in class: Draft #1 (in mp3 format) for peer review

DUE Mon, ~~Feb 25~~, Mar 4, 11:59pm: Draft #2 (in mp3 format) AND TRANSCRIPT & REFLECTION uploaded to CW; optional regrade due Mar 18, 11:59pm on CW.

The Audio Essay will also be a part of your final website.

You will upload TWO files to CourseWeb: 1) an mp3 file of your audio essay; 2) a doc/pdf/docx of your transcript AND reflection.

Transcript

A written transcript of your 3-6min audio. You do NOT need a transcript of your whole interview.

Reflection

Your 250-500 word reflection of the process of your audio composition should include your thoughts on your challenges and triumphs in the composition. In particular, I want to know about the choices you made in composing your audio essay: why you used this music/sound in that place, how you chose to introduce your interview, why you structured the audio composition with the beginning, middle and ending you choose; etc. What couldn't you do that you wanted to do? What would you revise or do differently next time?

Audio essay/interview

One of the best ways to learn about public issues is by talking to someone. In this assignment, you'll use a recorded interview that you've conducted to compose a 3-6min audio essay about your public issue.

Your Audio Essay should make some important statement or argument about your issue—in other words, it can't just be an anecdote about one person's life or experience. It does not have to cover the entire issue, but may highlight some small aspect of it.

Your **3-6 min** Audio Essay will include:

- the voice of at least one person you personally interviewed (it could contain more)
- at least one clip of music or other sound effect

The audio essay *may* include your voice to introduce the speaker or the issue, but it doesn't have to. It may include the voices of more than one interviewee. You do not need to use the interviewee's real name in the Audio Essay, but you do have to use their real voice. (See the consent form to get permission from them.)

To conduct a productive interview, review the Tips for Interviewing here:

<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~sponder/j641/Interview.htm> Ask questions about the person's experiences and expertise, ask how and why questions, and be sure to let them know how much you appreciate their time.

When you conduct your interview, make sure to capture the highest quality audio you can (see tips below). This will make your composition sound much better, and it will make your job of composing much easier.

Your audio essay should have a clear beginning, middle, and end—just like textual essays. You may find it helpful to begin with an anecdote from your interviewee to get your listener's attention. Watch Ira Glass on storytelling for more details on composing for the ear: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=loxJ3FtCJJA>

You are encouraged (though not required) to use the free program Audacity to compose your Audio Essay. We will have a workshop on Audacity in class on Feb 14.

TIPS FOR GETTING GOOD AUDIO

- Have a primary AND a backup recording device for the interview. (Check out an audio recorder from CIDDE)
- Interview the person in a quiet place without a lot of background noise.
- Place the microphone close enough to the person to capture his/her voice well.
- Test your recording and microphone placement before launching into the interview.
- Do not drag the interview on too long; doing so disrespects the time of your interviewee, plus it makes your editing job more difficult.
- If you're recording the interview over skype, your audio will not be as good. But you can record using outside programs such as Jing or Audacity or Garage Band, and/or using an external recorder.

WRITING FOR THE EAR

Geoffrey Nunberg's Principles (via Jonah G. Willihnganz, Stanford University)

Below is a set of principles for writing for writing audio essays of any length, offered by the Stanford linguist and radio-essayist Geoffrey Nunberg.

1. Fix the listener in a particular time and place
2. Use concrete examples as often as possible, especially those that encourage identification
3. Signpost regularly: replace visual cues with aural cues, esp. with voice
4. Quote others sparingly, but use actualities (taped interviews, performances) freely
5. Be informal, conversational, but not flippant or careless—every word must count toward the point you are developing
6. Posit an “ideal listener” for your piece
7. Use short sentences and lists
8. Vary your inflection

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Infographics on a Public Issue

DUE Thurs, Mar 28, in class: Draft #1 (printed or on your computer) for peer review

DUE Mon, Apr 1, 11:59pm on CW

At least one of the infographics should also be a part of your final website.

Requirements:

- TWO Infographics that are digitized and that rely on research you've done (e.g., statistics from the Labor Dept. or a newspaper source, or an institution connected to your issue)
- Infographics must include a caption and citations for where you got your info from, OR this info needs to be in your reflection. (On your website, the info must be cited in caption or the image itself)
- A 250-500 word reflection to help me understand your design choices (this will not be on your final website)

What is an “infographic?” It is an image that conveys statistics or other information in a striking, visual way. It generally includes clean images as well as text as labels to guide the interpretation of the infographic. The emphasis is on clean design, visuals, and a coherent color palette.

Here are some sites to visit to see excellent examples of infographics:

Cool Infographics: <http://www.coolinfographics.com/>

Information is Beautiful: <http://www.informationisbeautiful.net/>

Good Magazine: <http://www.good.is/infographics>

These sites have very sophisticated graphics. Yours do not have to be quite so sophisticated, dynamic, or polished. BUT...I expect you to use principles of good visual design in your infographic, and to create something compelling and polished. You cannot make a pie chart and expect your readers to find it interesting and/or informative! Additionally, you should use the “rhetorical velocity” concept to think of how your infographic might be tweeted, reused, or linked to elsewhere.

Google “infographic” or “infoviz” or “information visualization” and key words for your public issue if you want to see more specific examples to your project. Many good examples are now available on our course blog.

You must make TWO separate infographics. They can be totally unrelated to each other, or they can be two very different visualizations of the same information. However, they should NOT be similar to each other (for instance, the same infographic done in different colors).

REFLECTION

Once you're done with making the infographics, you can write your reflection. What did you intend to convey here? What inspired you to convey this particular information? What were the principles behind your design? What challenges did you face?

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Crowdsourcing Info and Funding for a Public Issue

DUE Thurs, April 4, in class

Completion of this assignment will count towards your participation grade.

The World Wide Web provides new and important venues for information and funding about social issues. One of these venues, Wikipedia, is often people's first-choice source for basic information about topics. The venues of Kickstarter and IndieGoGo allow for people to make pitches and get funding for projects, some of which are related to public issues. Your goal for this assignment is to engage with these crowdsourcing venues.

Wikipedia

Make a substantive edit (e.g., not just fixing grammar) to a Wikipedia page related to your public issue, or start a new page if one doesn't exist. You do not need to start an account with Wikipedia in order to do this, but you are welcome to. You may want to add references (for example, from your white paper), new information, or correct misinformation on a page. Make sure that you read the "talk" page before you edit, and review some of the history of the page. Check back the next day, or a few days later to see if your edit "sticks!"

How do you edit Wikipedia? Wikipedia uses its own form of markup, which isn't html. If you look at a page, then look at its edit page, you can figure out how the syntax of this markup works. For example, Pet Adoption:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pet_adoption &
http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Pet_adoption&action=edit

You can get help by clicking on "help" on an edit page, or by going to the Wikipedia Editing Tutorial here:
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Tutorial/Editing>

You do not have to bring anything to class for this, but on April 4, we'll discuss your experiences editing Wikipedia. Your edit does not have to "stick" to get credit for the activity, but you have to have tried to make a good edit.

IndieGoGo/Kickstarter Appeal

Bring to class a brief pitch related to your public issue that is written in the style of a typical Kickstarter or IndieGoGo appeal. You may want to pitch a creative project, a charity project, a social benefit event, whatever. Just choose something that might be appropriate for these crowdsourcing venues, and write a compelling pitch. You're welcome to use images, videos, etc. to sweeten your pitch. Bring your pitch to class on your computer, iPad, or printed out.

In class on April 4, you'll arrange your pitches around the room and you'll each read all of them. Everyone will have a budget of fake bills to allocate, and the most "successful" pitch will get the most funding. The "winning" pitches won't get extra credit, but they will get bragging rights!

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 March 28, 2013

Website on a Public Issue

DRAFT DUE: Thurs, April 18 in class for presentations

FINAL DUE: Thurs, April 25, 11:59pm. Reflection with website link due to CourseWeb.

The final website is worth 10 points.

Blogs and tweets will also be assessed along with this website, 5points each, for 10points total.

In other words, the whole website + blogs + tweets will be worth 20 points.

Minimum requirements:

- Twitter feed, with your tweets related to the public issue, on the front page (at least 50 tweets)
- At least 7 substantive blog posts, NOT INCLUDING short posts that contextualize other elements of the site, such as your audio essay, infographic, visual argument, etc.
- One visual argument that includes at least one word of text
- One infographic that is digitized and that relies on research you've done (cited!)
- Your white paper (can be slightly altered to fit the web context)
- Your audio essay/interview (with some written context to introduce it)
- An "About" page that explains the site and the issue. *Optionally*, you can also explain who you are, either "a student at Pitt" or your real name, or some reflection of your identity. You do NOT have to use your name.

By April 25, you will upload to CourseWeb a 750-1000 word reflection letter to contextualize and accompany your site. Uploading your reflection letter with a link to your site will count as "turning in" your site.

Notes on elements of the site

All of the above elements of the site must comply with the assignment for which they were originally drafted. That is, the visual argument must include at least one word; the white paper must be researched and cited in APA format; your audio essay must be 3-6min and include an interview, etc. If you choose to eliminate some aspect the assignment (for instance, deleting the abstract for your white paper in order to make it a blog post), then make sure you have a sound rhetorical and design-based reason for it, and explain that reason in your reflection letter.

Your social media press release is NOT required on the site. Add it if it makes sense to do so. Leave it out if you made up details about yourself or an event in order to complete the assignment. You could, if you wished, write a new press release announcing the presence of your site!

Blog posts and Tweets

You should have at least 7 substantive blog posts that are focused on different aspects of your public issue. If you want to do shorter blogs posts, that's fine, too—I figure that 2 shorter blog posts are roughly the same amount of work/writing/thinking as 1 substantive one, so you can think of that as a rule of thumb. Some posts work really well with the visual argument or infographic embedded. However, these posts DO NOT count towards your 7 total minimum posts. A substantive post explaining the issue behind your infographic (for

example) will, count as a bonus or extra post, and will help your move beyond the *minimum* requirements for the site.

As you now know, good blog posts tend to be about a specific event or aspect of an issue and they often incorporate some visual element (either one you've made or one you find elsewhere and cite). They go beyond just a description of the event; they introduce some deeper questions about the public issue. They use short paragraphs, have good, vibrant titles, and clear, crisp writing. They are proofread and free of surface errors in the text. Embedded YouTube videos are great because they include the citation (a link back to the original video on YouTube). If you take images from elsewhere, they don't necessarily need to be licensed Creative Commons, but you should include a credit/citation and a link back to the original source.

Tweets aren't evaluated individually, but as a whole. A good twitter feed will: span most of the semester; often post links to resources or news stories related to your public issue; retweet other tweets that are related to your issue; be professional, even if casual. Your account should have an avatar that represents your issue in some way, and include a description of what/who you are on your home page (example twitter feeds: Danny: <https://twitter.com/protectOURparks> ; Chris: https://twitter.com/cp_baseballHOF ; Michael: <https://twitter.com/PA1schoolfunds>)

To illustrate what I'm saying, here are some examples of what I think are successful posts:

Good intro posts:

Mike, "A Funding Intro" <http://pa1schoolfunds.wordpress.com/2013/02/28/afundingintro/>

Jennifer, "Extra, Extra, Read all About it!"

<http://thinkhealthybehealthy.wordpress.com/2013/02/27/extra-extra-read-all-about-it/>

A good, clever and causal post: Alison, "The Urban Dictionary of College Pricing"

<http://paying4collegeblog.wordpress.com/2013/03/24/the-urbandictionary-of-college-pricing/>

Good posts personalizing the issue:

Sheila, "Not so Happy Anniversary,"

<http://gunprotection.wordpress.com/2013/03/26/not-so-happy-anniversary/>

Raechelle, "How Somali Refugees Celebrate Birthdays"

<http://refugeestoday.wordpress.com/2013/03/04/how-somali-refugees-celebrate-birthdays/>

Good posts analyzing the issue

Mary, "Greater Satisfaction in Peace" (with good discussion, besides!):

<http://abolishthedeathpenalty.wordpress.com/2013/03/04/greater-satisfaction-in-peace/>

Natalie, "Religion and Repro Rights are Not Enemies" (nice use of headings & images!):

<http://reprorightsnow.wordpress.com/2013/03/13/religion-and-repro-rights-are-not-enemies/>

Brian, "Meds vs. Therapy: Which is Best?"

<http://mentalhealthdetection.wordpress.com/2013/03/15/meds-vs-therapy-which-is-best/>

Chris, "The System is Part of the Problem"

<http://sportscheaters.wordpress.com/2013/03/20/the-system-is-part-of-the-problem/>

Good use of images:

Anna, "Oh, How Times have Changed"

<http://akk45.wordpress.com/2013/03/12/oh-how-times-have-changed/>

Assessment

The goal here shouldn't be to just check off the required elements for the site. You should make sure they're all there, but you should also make sure they're working together to create a coherent, exciting, informative, and interesting site on your public issue.

An “A” site will

- include all of the required aspects of the site
- work all elements seamlessly together as a coherent whole that professionally represents your issue
- include extra elements like resources, videos, images, news stories on related current events, etc.
- be polished and professional in terms of design, language, and proofreading
- have a design that reflects the public issue in some way
- *probably* include more than the required number of blog posts, or blog posts will be particularly thought-provoking and smart
- *probably* include more than the minimum number of tweets, and spread across a longer timeline

A “B” site will

- include all of the required aspects of the site
- work elements of the site together well
- include some extra elements like resources and videos
- have good blog posts related to the issue
- be polished and professional

A “C” site may

- Have elements of the site present, but not working together very well
- Include the required elements and little to no more
- Have some unpolished aspects
- May have some required elements falling short (blog posts not substantive, etc.) but will otherwise include all of the required elements of the site.

A “D” site will not include all required elements. Please don't make me give any D's on this assignment!!

A “F” site means you did not turn it in or complete the assignment.

Reflection Letter

In a 750-1000 word letter addressed to Prof. Vee and Trisha, you'll describe some of what you've learned from researching your issue and writing on the web.

Although the format should be formal, your tone can be informal. You should explain your major design and rhetorical decisions for your site. You should see the reflection letter as a chance to lead us through your site—to “present” it to us in writing. You should also discuss what plans you have for your website in the future. This letter is also a chance for you to reflect on your trajectory though the course this semester.

The reflection letter will be assessed on a pass/fail basis, so if you upload a letter that does these things, you won't “fail” the letter.