**Creative Nonfiction Digital Vignettes Project**

Broadly defined, this major assignment is a digital storytelling project. We’ll talk about what “digital storytelling” means in class, and you'll read the Digital Storytelling Cookbook to become even more familiar with the genre.

Specifically for this project, I’m asking you to compose a series of nonfictional digital vignettes in which you offer readers a dominant impression of you through which they might glean a larger significance. In order to do so, you’ll reflect on and practice implementing the concept of rhetorical ethos by making some careful decisions on what version of yourself you’d like to share with an audience of your peers.

So, start thinking:

*What version of self would lend itself to a specific dominant impression of you—one that might point toward a larger significance worth sharing with a larger public?*

Stories might not seem to have much to do with traditional oratory, but they are often didactic since they teach audiences something of value. A linear story ordinarily does so by following something of an arc in which readers find some expository information, rising action, climax and resolution. Vignettes rely, instead, on fractured approaches to storytelling; they make use of absences as well as presences, and that which is left unsaid carries as much deliberate weight as that which is bluntly articulated.

Vignettes, of course, are brief illustrations of persons, places or events. They are often evocative and take on an episodic quality as they attempt to “show” rather than “tell” something significant to the audience. Moreover, vignettes are offered to audiences in groupings, and these collections are thematically related. When considered as a menagerie of sorts, vignette projects work by accretion. That is, the details pile up and suffuse the visual/auditory/imaginative fields of viewers and leave them with a particular dominant impression. That impression often points toward something beyond itself—that larger significance.

As we discussed in class, the term ethos is quite broad, but in the most general sense of the term, it refers to a speaker or writer’s *credibility*. When writers are in rhetorical situations—when they wish for a particular audience to think or act differently on a particular issue—they rely on appeals to ethos when they tacitly or overtly suggest something about themselves in relation to the issue at hand. Part of becoming a proficient college writer is deciding what aspects of your personal identity might be most useful to deploy as appeals to ethos in various rhetorical situations. This project is meant to help you to hone that skill in a creative space.

I am, thus, asking you to compose 3 to 5 vignettes after carefully considering the following steps:

Step One: Invent

· Quickly jot down a list of your most vivid memories. Sort these into categories that make sense to you.

· Describe how friends and family members see you, and weigh in on how well these descriptions compare to how you see yourself.

· Which

o Moments

o Objects

o People

o Places

o Events

most impact(ed) your sense of self?

· Look over your results with a peer or two and help each other identify themes that run through your collection of responses.

· In Jennifer Finney Boylan’s essay “My Life in Bikes,” the author uses a semi-linear approach to revealing something important about herself via synecdoche. That is, she uses the description of the various bikes she’s owned to stand in for larger experiences and dispositions; she shows readers something about herself without actually coming out and telling them to understand her that way. As well, as we discussed in class, critical readers understand that the most impactful take away from her narrative is not really about bikes at all. If you were to describe yourself through similar techniques, what object would work, what specific instances of that object would make it into your collection, and why? If you were to adapt Boylan’s technique to something other than an object (say, a series of places such as bathrooms or a series of people such as best friends) what would that look like?

Step Two: Plan

· Your project, of course, cannot offer an exhaustive portrait of you as a person. Instead, it will offer one version of self you’re willing to share with the rest of us in order to render a particular impression toward a larger significance. When you sketch out that idea, what is the dominant impression? What might be the larger significance?

· Based on your work in step one, compose a sentence that describes the version of self we’ll understand by the time we are finished screening your vignettes.

· Even if you won’t be employing Boylan’s technique, decide which moments, objects, people, places and/or events will help audiences to understand this version of self you’re attempting to craft, and articulate the dominant impression/larger significance.

· Review the resources module in Canvas thoroughly, paying particular attention to “Creative Commons” and “Copyright.”

Step Three: Collect & Compose a Script; Arrange (Workshop on Storyboards is on November 5th)

Your vignettes will, first, need to be written, shared, revised and storyboarded. To begin, write out a few vignette ideas. Bring these vignette drafts to class with you and be prepared to share them with the rest of us.

Once you’ve gotten feedback on your written vignettes, make appropriate revisions, paying attention to what your peers had to say about your piece in these three areas:

· Quality of narration (show versus tell)

· Dominant impression

· Larger significance

What have you learned about the strengths and weaknesses of your written versions from sharing your drafts, and what will you change? Make careful revisions, reading your work out loud as you go. Once you’ve prepared your revision, take a 48 hour break from your work. Return to your writing, read it out loud, and make final changes.

Next, decide what images, sounds and videos might go well with these written vignettes. Remember that your careful curation will include mostly still images with a few well-chosen videos. Cut your writing up into discrete sections. Pair each section with an image or set of images or video. You might want to use one of the digital storytelling templates available in the Canvas resources module to get this part done. Consider how the author of the digital literacy narrative “Almost Pretty” pairs what she is saying with particular images to get ideas. You’ll probably have to dig into your personal archives of photos and videos; you might want to put a call in to your parents to have them scan any older photos you’d like to include or to take some fresh shots of important scenes from home. Shoot for 10 to 15 good images. Use videos sparingly and deliberately.

Step Four: Execute

Using sound recording, moviemaking and other relevant applications (such as Garageband and iMovie or Widows Sound Recorder and Windows MovieMaker), put your vignettes drafts together. This sounds like a quick step, but it is not! You’ll likely record your voice several times before you are happy with the sound. Consider using a microphone as opposed to speaking directly into your laptop or smartphone microphone. You could very well move images and videos around (and replace some) in this process. Make use of the myriad resources on our Canvas site for composing digital stories. Perhaps you’ll want to make a few versions of your project, pairing different images, incorporating different background music, using different title slides, etc. Take the time to enjoy the process of working on your video’s creation so that you’ll have something to share with the rest of us that makes you feel proud.

We will work on this in class as well, so bring what you have on your device along to relevant class meetings.

Step Five: Give and Get Feedback

Once your video project is fully drafted, work with a peer or two outside of classtime in order to get an interested audience’s first impressions of your project. Ask them to comment on things that especially stand out to them, things they are wondering about, what they believe the dominant impression is, what they’d say is the larger significance, etc. We'll go over peer review guidelines in more detail during class, but expect to use the project rubric to assess your peers’ work so far and to offer written and spoken commentary to justify your scoring.

Step Six: Revise

Take some time to let your peers’ feedback steep before making changes to your project, and don't be afraid to start again. Good writers and multimodal composers know that great work doesn’t usually just come out in one fell swoop. Interested audiences give insight into what is working well and what needs work. Working with their feedback and trying to improve upon your drafts is an important step in your recursive and meta-cognitively-driven writing process. Add a final slide to your project where you credit any sources you used to create your project.

Step Seven: Reflect, Blog, Admire (Week Nine)

When you are ready for me to grade your project, upload it to our WordPress site as a new post tagged “CNF Digital Vignettes” (we will go over how to do this in class, but you will want, first, to upload your video to our class’s YouTube channel (sign in with usernamegwrtc103molloy@gmail.com; password: passwordfordigitalstories). Make sure your video is an “unlisted” video. You’ll, then, use the “Share” function to grab the embed code so that you can upload your piece to our WordPress site. Add a written reflection on your process from start to finish. Read through your peers’ work, and offer comments on at least two other writers’ work.

Project must be uploaded to YouTube by December 1.

Variations:

Compose a literacy narrative. Afterward, create a storyboard to match images and sound to your narrative.

Create a digital story focused on your transition to college.

Create a digital story version of your profile project.

Grading Rubric

Writing (5)

Student employs the “show, don’t tell” principle for quality narrative writing, making an effort to suggest certain dispositions through description rather than telling readers how to understand the content of the narrative. Each vignette takes up the theme and the dominant impression with a fresh insight, making it a distinct episodic rendering rather than a continuation of a previous vignette. There is a clear larger significance to which the dominant impression gestures.

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Digital craftsmanship and Media grammar (5)

The use of media is appropriate, supportive of the story, balanced and well considered.

Photos have the following qualities:

· Clear, focused, well-lit

· Compelling composition and shooting angle.

Audio has the following qualities:

· Clear audio

· Well-mixed audio

· Compelling voice pacing and inflection

Music

· Appropriate music choices

· Appropriate role of music

Editing, Transitions, and Titling

· Seamless transitions, unobtrusive effects

· Clear titles

· Clear citations in final slide

Organization

· Effective Structure

· Effective flow pacing