

# Composing a Photo Essay

*Using A Powerful Web 2.0 Tool*



**~ Presenters ~**

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## COMPOSING A PHOTO ESSAY

Multimedia genres like photo essays and Web pages are creating new kinds of narratives. You will, in this assignment, create a photo essay designed to instruct an audience about a moment of importance in our current world. Inform your essay with research conducted using the Internet, the library, and interviews. Select **at least eight images** that allow you to convey important information about your topic, and then incorporate those images into Web pages and add captions and explanations that allow you to tell a story about your topic.

### WHO IS MY AUDIENCE?

**Your audience is a group of adults (over 30 years old) who are skeptical of your authority and credibility. How will you establish common ground with them? How will you invite them into your essay to engage your ideas? What appeals to emotions, values, logic will you make and when? All of these are important questions to consider and answer before you begin.**

### HOW DO I CHOOSE A TOPIC?

As you consider some element of contemporary culture, you should choose a topic that interests you. **IF YOU AREN'T INTERESTED IN WHAT YOU WRITE, NO ONE ELSE WILL BE.** You might look at an activity, like NASCAR and why and how that is the fastest growing sport in the U.S. or you might explore a cultural issue such as the fascination we have with celebrity in this country. Don't forget that this is an election year: what about some element of this election?

### WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SAY ABOUT YOUR TOPIC?

Because the **purpose** of your photo essay is to provide information about the topic, research should drive the process of developing your essay. To begin, you must gravitate toward a topic and then focus your thinking into a **research question**. For instance, you might ask "What is the role of music in the lives of soldiers in Iraq?" or "What beliefs do NASCAR fans share about political issues?" Developing a research question often requires that you conduct some initial investigation to get a feel for a topic.

### WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

Next, conduct more extensive research. You have three options:

- 1. Library research.** Begin by exploring the indexes and abstract of the library, conduction keyword searcher to locate information. Download articles or locate materials on the shelves. Explore your materials, selecting the most relevant sources and taking notes. (Be sure to keep track of the publication information for your Works Cited page.)
- 2. Internet research.** Conduct keyword searches on the Net. Be sure to let your research question guide you so that you can focus your keyword searches to locate relevant materials. **Evaluate the sources you discover.** Keep track of valuable materials, reading and taking notes to develop information.

**3. Personal interviews.** Identify individuals who can inform your exploration of your topic. Divide your research question into a number of sub-questions to pose to an interview subject. Phrase questions so that they let subjects respond in open-ended terms—for example, instead of saying "Why are NASCAR fans always so right-winged?" say, "What are your thoughts on the political positions of NASCAR fans?" Take careful notes, and be sure to tell the subject that you will be using the interview for your essay. You may want to take a digital picture or videotape your subject as well.

You may use any or all of these three options. Just be sure to have a wide array of research sources to support your project.

### **HOW WILL YOU DO IT?**

Because its components combine elements of different media, you may find that your composing process for this project is more complicated than for a traditional essay. Here are some tips to get you started. First, locate **images** that will allow you to inform readers about your topic and your research. Images should not be selected randomly. Rather, each image should allow you to make points about your topic. Select at least eight images for the project. You will get help in this area from Mrs. Pritchard from the IT Department. She will be an integral part of your work in the computer lab as you design our photo essays.

Next, compose a Web project that has an opening page, pages for each of the images, and a page for a conclusion. Create a **navigational and design scheme** for the pages. We will be using Weebly.com for this project, so don't worry about having web expertise. Again, Mrs. Pritchard and the staff in the computer lab will help you with all of this work.

Next, develop an **essay page** for each image. The page should have three components:

- 1. The image.** Think about the order in which you arrange the images in your essay. Be sure to crop or size the images for maximum effect.
- 2. A caption.** Compose a caption of not more than one sentence that emphasizes the key concerns of the image and situates the image within the structure of the essay.
- 3. An explanation.** Compose several sentences explaining the significance of the image. Your explanation might discuss aspects of the image in more detail. **It should also integrate your research information whenever possible.** The explanation should make your topic meaningful to readers.

Finally, compose an introduction and a conclusion. You may wish to use images on these pages as well. Be sure to include a properly formatted list of sources in your conclusion.

### **HOW WELL DOES IT WORK?**

Proofread the text you have written, sharpening the language. (You should have approximately a 400-500 word essay here.) Check that the **order and organization of the images** make sense. Revise the project, updating the Web pages as needed. As you

refine and polish your project, look at some of the sample photo essays on our class website.

**WHAT IS OUR TIME LINE FOR THE PROJECT?**

**You'll get all of this information in class.**

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### Add Content

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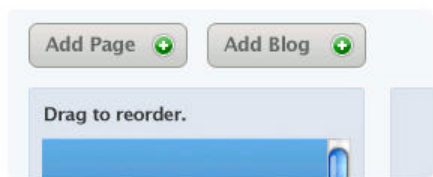
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### Customize Your Content

Once elements have been added to your page, customize everything just by double-clicking. Double-click a picture to upload a new one, double-click text to change it, or double-click a map to set the address. Rearrange the elements by dragging them into a new order.



### Easily Manage Your Pages

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## THE CRITICAL REFLECTION FOR THE PHOTO ESSAY

When you have completed an essay, you will write a critical assessment of your work with the entire process. Your purpose in every reflection is to examine what you learned about yourself as a writer.

**Your Purpose for the Photo Essay Reflection:** Identify and explain what you have learned about writing in this entire process that will better facilitate your development as an independent thinker and writer. *EAA* must figure prominently in this essay.

**Your Audience:** I am the audience for this informal essay. Consider the following, but understand that you are not confined to these questions alone:

1. Identify the number of proposals you needed.
2. Identify the number of conferences you had with me and at what stages in the process.
3. How well did you apply the material of *EAA*, Chapters 1-6 and 14? Of course, Toulmin is important here, but so is your understanding and application of the entire rhetorical situation. This answer will probably require a good deal of writing.
4. What appeals did you find yourself best able to use in this essay? What appeals were harder for you to understand and use?
5. How did you make decisions on the structure of this essay? Chapter 14 of *EAA* is important here, of course, but so are the other chapters. Don't forget them. You should include a discussion of your choices of templates, colors, fonts, as well as the organization of your photos here.
6. What was easy for you in this entire process? Some people, for example, find an idea rather quickly, and get the proposal accepted immediately.
7. What was difficult for you? Some people, for example, don't realize that they have no support to offer until they have written an entire draft.
8. How satisfied are you with your agility with language? How much did you work on finding the right word to communicate your exact denotative and connotative meaning? How much on sentence variety and rhythm?

**Several of these questions will require references to different parts of the writing process. This will function as supporting evidence for your claims.**

**These questions are simply a guideline. As you get more comfortable with the process, you will rely less and less on this set of questions. You will find yourself naturally reflecting on the process of writing.**

**REMEMBER VIRGINIA WOOLF: THE ACT OF WRITING HAS FOR BACKBONE A FIERCE ATTACHMENT TO AN IDEA.**

## PHOTO ESSAY PEER REVIEW

**AUTHOR:** \_\_\_\_\_

**REVIEWER:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **PART ONE—The Web Photo Essay**

**Read the essays on our website before the authors give their talks in class.**

1. What is the thesis in this essay? On what page can you find it?
2. What appeals does the author make in the introduction? How well do the photos and the written text work together to make those appeals? Be specific here by referring to the actual photos and words.
3. Does the author offer ample evidence for the thesis? IF so, what did you find to be the most powerful piece of evidence in the piece? On what page can we find that?
4. AS YOU ARE READING THE ESSAY, pay particular attention to the logical coherence of the piece. Comment on that. If you see a small breakdown in coherence, identify the page(s).
5. Look at the conclusion carefully. Does it bring the piece to closure without a simple summary? What appeals does the author use here?

**PART TWO: Presentation in Class**

1. Has the author engaged the audience from start to finish? HOW? Be specific here.
2. How does the talk differ from the web essay? Be specific.
3. Was the conclusion effective? How?
4. What else do you want to say to the author?