Unit 4: Research Project and Final
Reflective Memo

Purposes of Unit 4 Research Project and Final Reflective Memo
 ● Develop a well-researched project that cultivates complexity and purpose
 ● Engagement with multimodal strategies of textual production
 ● Clear and consistent citation practices appropriate for the text produced
 ● Revision and reflection

Readings for this Unit
● Exigency: What Makes My Message Indispensable to My Reader (article)
Optional Readings:
 ● Annoying Ways People Use Sources (article)

Assignment Description for Research Project

Purpose
Your project should use your research and voice to come to a purposeful conclusion for your research question, keeping in mind your project should move readers to do, think, or believe in a new way.

Audience
Your project should be a public-facing, research-based, and geared toward a specific local audience interested in or related to your specific topic. This means, you must have a clear but imagined idea of who you are presenting your research to. This concept of audience may be different from other college classes when the default audience is often imagined to be your instructor, the other students in the class, or some variation of an audience that expects an academic in tone essay written in Standard American English. While we (as in the class) are certainly part of your secondary audience, your primary audience should consider the purpose
of your project and who it is specifically composed for (and what stake they have in it).

Context
Largely, your audience and purpose for writing should inform both the medium and genre of your research project. You will want to consider the context in which your audience engages with your research project and what medium would best engage their interest and attention in your project: for example, you could create a webpage, a video, a podcast, a comic, an interactive poster, a webpage/website, a microblog, a scrapbook, a photo essay, a printed newspaper, an informational brochure, a documentary, a card game, a board game, a zine, a chapbook, etc. Please keep in mind though that your context should be informed by the purpose of your project as well: for example, it wouldn’t make sense to make a scrapbook if your project
wasn’t largely visual or image-based (since scrapbooks depend on images).

Research
Whatever form your project takes, it should be well-researched, folding in both peer-reviewed scholarly sources along with other sources from your annotated bibliography: for instance, your other sources could include books, personal interviews, personal observation, online sources, social media, forums, videos, podcasts, etc. You are engaged to use practices of lateral reading (what we did during unit 2) in order to continue to identify sources. Your project you should cite
a minimum of 8 sources, but, please, don’t get to hung up on that number! I think the best projects will probably use more, but I hate it when essays have that feeling of "squeezing in exactly the required minimum of sources and that's absolutely it." Don't let that limit hamper your creativity.

You should, however, have at least 3 peer-reviewed sources and 1 of those sources should be a primary source, meaning it stands out as one of the major sources your work within your project.

Ethos
You will want to cultivate an ethical ethos, meaning that you treat others (even those you disagree with) in fairness and respect, you ensure your project is inclusive by not using terminology that may be offensive—especially to marginalized identities, and you give credit to others who created the sources you used to develop your ideas. In other words, cite your sources and make it crystal clear where and when you got information from another source. You’ll want to be very thoughtful about this to avoid plagiarism issues as well. For example, even if you compose a more experimental text, you will want to follow it up with a list of your sources.

Voice
As a reminder: your essay doesn’t need to be just in a super-objective sounding ‘academic voice.’ Some of the most interesting projects weave in personal narrative or experiences with more credible forms of research. Your voice, too, should be informed by the audience you are writing for!

Critical Thinking
It’s often easy to develop an argumentative-based project that relies on binaries or thinking that sees things as good versus bad or black versus white. However, with this project, you will want to move beyond such reductive forms of argument in order to develop a purpose that folds in many perspectives and unique ideas. You're not just here to list facts. (We can read Wikipedia for that after all!) Instead, compose to help readers see why you've personally come to see things the way you do, in hopes that they’ll listen and your research will have some form of impact.

Length

The length of this project should be the equivalent to completing 5-8 pages of writing. Maybe this means you write a traditional 5-8 page essay with figures and charts included, or you create a15 minute podcast with sound effects. Maybe this means creating a scrapbook that is 18 pages, with large images supplementing parts of it. Perhaps this means you create a short Youtube video (8 minutes or so). Obviously, since you get to choose your medium, length will be less important than you putting in quality work!

Final Checklist for Research Project:

✅ Must work to answer your research question by articulating a clear purpose

✅ Chosen medium must logical (explained in final reflection memo) align with the audience you are choosing to address

✅ Includes a minimum of 8 sources

✅ 2 of the primary sources (sources used the most often) must be scholarly and align with the Argument or Method section of the BEAM framework

✅ All sources, including images, are ethically cited, following a particular format of your choice. You must be consistent about whatever citation choices you make.

✅ Project must be critically-engaged and thoughtful (in other words, it shouldn’t rely on binary thinking or ‘us’ versus ‘them’ forms of argumentation)

✅ Project should be the equivalent to the work of 5-8 pages of academic writing. (You will be notified whether or not you are hitting this mark via instructor feedback and peer feedback)

✅ Project must go through the drafting stages and demonstrate evidence of substantial revision (not just editing and proofreading)

Assignment Description for Memo

Your final assignment is to compose a reflection that helps me as your instructor understand what you learned from the class and how it shaped your choices around your composing and research for your final project. First, this should be written in first-person (I). This memo should be no more than 1 page single spaced, and DOES NOT count toward the 5-8 pages of researched writing.

Begin by explaining your research project:

● What medium did you choose for your final research project? Describe how this was an intentional choice guided by the purpose of your research project?

● What ways did you organize your final project? Why did you make those choices?

● How did you use your sources? What was the most challenging part about integrating
your sources? How did you find a solution through your revision process?

You are also invited to describe what you intend to take with you as you move forward to read/compose/research in the future. Here are some questions to get you started, but don’t think you need to answer everything. This should be a moment to look back and see how much you’ve transformed as a writer/designer/researcher and describe why you made the choices you did in your final project? Above all, be thoughtful and honest.

● What developments have you noted in yourself, in your composing, in how you read and relate to others, in how you create an environment for yourself to learn in?
● What were some of the most influential learning moments for you? What mattered to you or impacted you about the class? Why was this so meaningful? Who was involved?
● In what ways do you hope the learning from our class will transfer to other areas of your life (personal, academic, professional)?
● What were some challenges you had this year and how did you overcome them?
● What skills and habits do you hope to continue to hone as you move forward as a writer?

Learning Outcomes
(What you should aim to learn/accomplish with this unit)

The Research Project will:

● Maintain a purpose by...
 ○ Identify the complexity of your topic and how you are entering the conversation
 on it.
 ○ Articulate the significance of the topic for you and your audience.
 ○ Demonstrating how your thinking about your topic has deepened as a result of
 your preliminary research.

● Identify appropriate evidence by...
 ○ Including accurate and effective summaries of the sources being explored.
 ○ Incorporate direct quotes effectively as specific ideas to explore and respond to.
 ○ Making significant connections between sources that provide new insight.

● Demonstrates control of style by...
 ○ Demonstrating clarity and organization.
 ○ Making purposeful grammar and mechanics choices that convey a generalized
 academic ethos.
 ○ Incorporate direct quotes and/or paraphrases effectively and accurately
 ○ Making consistent and appropriate choices for citation.

Your Reflective Memo will:
 ○ Discusses how your rhetorical situation influenced the evolution of your research
 project through multiple revisions.
 ○ Examine and justify your writing choices as well as your modalities for
 composing; explain what kind of feedback was most helpful in shaping them.
 ○ Demonstrates clarity and organization.
 ○ Makes purposeful grammar and mechanics choices that enhance the reader’s
 understanding.