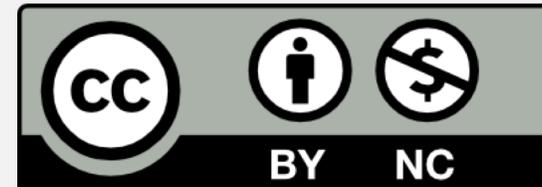# VIDEO ESSAYS IN THE CURRICULUM:
## Collaboration across the university to develop multimodal learning and digital media skills

Antonio Lopez
Kwame Phillips
John Cabot University

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# WORKSHOP OUTLINE

I.    A short **introduction** to the history and form of video essays.

II.   An exploration of how they are **assigned** in our courses

III.  A **showcase** of some student works

IV.   An overview of the required **resources** to assign video essays

V.    A hands-on **activity** in which participants can plan and organize a video essay project

VI.   **Discussion**

# VIDEO ESSAYS: (BRIEF) HISTORY AND FORM

A video essay is a short video that illustrates a topic, **expresses an opinion** and develops a thesis statement based on research through editing video, sound and image.

Video essay production is a valid academic activity that affords **multimodal assessment** of research, critical thinking and digital media skills.

They can be made by students with little or no background in mediamaking.

# Three main elements

1. Image (filmed footage and found footage)
2. Sound (music and audio)
3. Words (spoken and written)

All linked to your own voice and argument.

**Write with video.**

# WHAT IS A VIDEO ESSAY ASSIGNMENT?

A "video essay" is just one type of video editing assignment. Other common projects include:

- Digital Stories
- Remix Videos
- Fan Vids
- Video Mash-ups
- Video Diaries.

Video essays have many of the elements as written ones:

- Students need to have an **argument**.
- Students need to put their ideas in conversation with **theoretical concepts**.
- Students need to include/analyze **evidence**.
- Students need to credit **sources**.
- Students need to consider effective **arrangement and communication strategies**.

## WANT MORE INFORMATION?

Try doing a web search for:
- Cinema Journal Teaching Dossier: The Video Essay Assignment Vol. 1(2)
- Center for Digital Storytelling
- REFRAME's The Audiovisual Essay: Theory & Practice

(Source: Katherine Morrissey, Rochester Institute of Technology)

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# VIDEO ESSAYS: ASSIGNMENT PROMPTS

A video essay is a piece of video content that, much like a written essay, **advances an argument**. Video essays take advantage of the structure and language of film to advance their arguments.

While the medium has its roots in academia, it has grown dramatically in popularity with the advent of the internet and video sharing platforms like YouTube and Vimeo.

(From "'What is a video essay?' Creators grapple with a definition")

# VIDEO ESSAYS: ASSIGNMENT PROMPTS

COM 480: Senior Capstone

Goal: Assess Department of Communications learning outcomes

LOS 1: ==Apply multidisciplinary theoretical perspectives== to identify the major debates, controversies, dilemmas and conflicts in media studies ==by critically assessing institutional and individual media practices==.

LOS 2: ==Apply professional standards and ethics in research and media practice==, and critically evaluate the ethics of institutional and individual media practices.

LOS 3: ==Interpret representation in media texts and demonstrate competency in media literacy== (information, visual, technological, and textual).

LOS 4: ==Communicate effectively in a variety of formats== (oral, written and multimedia) and develop self-reflective media practice through the creation of a professional portfolio.

LOS 5: ==Perform graduate level academic work==.

# VIDEO ESSAYS: ASSIGNMENT PROMPTS

COM 480

Midterm assignment: 3-5 minute video essay based on topic developed in previously assigned literature reviews and rough draft of research design for final project.

Midterm video essay is a test-run/rough draft of data analysis and research design.

Final research project: Extend midterm video essay to 8-10 minutes (with 10-page paper) or write a 20-25 page research paper.

EXP 1005: Video Essay Workshop (one-credit)

Open to all students, but also supports seniors who want more experience. Projects are more open-ended.

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# Grading rubric

| | Deep | Good | Basic | Minimal | Insufficient |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Clarity<br>(research design, thesis stated and supported, context, take-home message, title) | | | | | |
| Organization<br>(structured argument, theoretical framework, definitions, transitions, length) | | | | | |
| Understanding terms and grasp of concepts | | | | | |
| Adherence to assignment guidelines<br>(follows instructions, covers topic) | | | | | |
| Creativity and originality of concept | | | | | |
| Demonstrates research and analysis<br>(diverse, academic sources) | | | | | |
| Technical<br>(edits, images, transitions) | | | | | |
| Audio<br>(clear, enunciated, good mix) | | | | | |
| Written text<br>(well-written script, grammar, spelling, typos, sentence structure) | | | | | |
| Aesthetic choices<br>(look, feel, readable) | | | | | |
| Music<br>(appropriate, copyright free) | | | | | |
| Fair use<br>(video, images, sounds, words, attribution) | | | | | |
| Style<br>(flow, makes sense, creative, academic, command of English) | | | | | |
| Effort, passion, interest | | | | | |

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# STUDENT WORK EXAMPLES (EXCERPTS)

- Elena Ruggiero: The Use of Color in Schindler's List (COM 210: Intro to Cinema)
- Giulia Facciolongo: Colors (EXP 1005: Video Essay Workshop)
- Francesca Da Smet: Vegan Food Activism on Instagram (COM 480: Senior Capstone)
- Sabrina Mancini: Love at First Voice excerpt (COM 480: Senior Capstone)

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# PROCESS OF MAKING A VIDEO ESSAY

1. Plan
2. Collect
3. Edit
4. Review
5. Exhibit

# LIBRARY/FACULTY/TECHNOLOGIST COLLABORATION AND RESOURCES TO ASSIGN VIDEO ESSAYS

**Faculty**: Assigns and assesses student work

**Library**: Helps collects resources and offers in-class instruction ([library research guide](#))

**Technologists**: Digital media lab provides equipment, tutorials, and resources to complete projects

**Collaboration Issues:**

- Sharing resources/common site for resources
- Copyright (different professional cultures, different laws)
- Equipment
- Access to resources
- Technical know-how

# RESOURCES: BACKGROUND

Background:

- [What is a Video Essay](#)? Creators Grapple with a Definition (Paula Bernstein)
- [The Video Essay As Art](#): 11 Ways to Make a Video Essay (Conor Bateman)
- Sight & Sound: [The Essay Film](#)
- [Video essay: The essay film – some thoughts of discontent](#)

Scholarly websites about video essays:

- [Audiovisualcy](#)
- [[In]Transition: A media commons](#)

How-to:

- [How-to video essays](#) by Greer Fyfe and Miriam Ross
- Tufts Library [has a very nice guide](#) for the various stages of making a video essay.

Sample "professional" video essays:

- [Best video essays of 2018](#) (BFI)

- [Best video essays of 2017](#) (BFI)

Copyright and Fair Use:

- [Fair Use Evaluator](#)
- [YouTube's Fair Use channel](#) (very helpful)
- Society for Cinema & Media Studies' "[Fair Use policies](#)"

# RESOURCES: TEMPLATES

Storyboarding:

[This page features](#) a very useful video and template for how to storyboard with PowerPoint.

Video script template:

https://www.dropbox.com/s/ov3buvsluf4hrdh/two-column-script-template.doc?dl=0

# RESOURCES: SOFTWARE AND HOW-TO

Screencasting:

- Quicktime (cross-platform)
- OBS Studio (open source, cross-platform)
- Flashback Express (PC only)

Downloading and ripping video:

- Downloading and Converting video: Downloading-Converting.pdf
- Legal justification and how-to DVD ripping for educational purposes
- Savefrom allows up to 720p downloads of full video, 1080p downloads of video only (no audio). Select "download video in browser" on the site.
- Y2mate allows up to 1080p video downloads
- Note: Try to to ensure that you download in 720p resolution or higher. Your minimum level of quality should be 480p. If searching on YouTube, you can filter the search results to only show HD or 4K results.

# RESOURCES: SOFTWARE AND HOW-TO

Free editing software options:

- iMovie (Mac only)
- Videopad (cross-platform)
- Openshot (open source, cross-platform)
- Shotcut (open source, cross-platform)
- Hitfilm Express (cross-platform)

Music:

- Copyright free music: Free Music Archive
- YouTube Audio Library
- Soundcloud Creative Commons Music / We Are Creative Commons

Creating credits:

- For best practices, use the guidelines on this link for creating credits.

# Video essay issues

Common technical problems:

- Poor audio (recorded and mixing)
- Low quality of videos
- Over-reliance on text
- Too much kinetic text, too many different fonts
- Poor transitions

[Best practices](Best practices)

# HANDS-ON ACTIVITY:
# ORGANIZE A VIDEO ESSAY PROJECT

Activity:

- Design a video essay assignment for a course

- Identify how to collaborate with other departments

- Summarize resources they need to make the assignment work at their institution

# Example worksheet

1. Based on viewing the examples posted on the course web site, a video essay usually has…

2. Describe in one sentence the main idea you want to explore in your video essay.

3. What are you trying to explain?

4. What is the point of your analysis? Why should the audience care?

5. Describe how you will demonstrate this.

6. What technical issues are you concerned with?

7. Are there any copyright issues you should be concerned about?

8. Make a tentative list of sounds, clips and images you might want to use (use the back sheet)

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# DISCUSSION