

## APPENDIX A

### Audio Literacy Narrative Assignment

*This assignment is adapted from Cynthia Selfe's assignment given in 2004 while I was a graduate student at the University of Louisville.*

#### Assignment

Compose an audio literacy narrative in which you examine and reflect on your past and/or present experiences with writing, composing, language, literacy and/or education and consider how these experiences have shaped your values, beliefs, identity, and views. Your literacy narrative should be a *compelling* personal story; it should also help listeners reflect on what they are hearing. Your literacy narrative should be between 3 to 5 minutes in its final edited form. You will upload your final project to the Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives (<http://daln.osu.edu/>), a web-based, public archive of literacy narratives. Other than these requirements, the assignment is wide open—and purposefully so, I want you to exercise your own creativity in the service of teaching us something.



#### Goals

- To tell a compelling personal story that helps members of the class reflect on what they are hearing and gain additional insight on literacy, writing, composing, multimodality, education, narrative, etc.
- To reflect on a range of literacies you have developed over your life; the practices, understandings, and values that make up your literacies; where these practices, understandings, and values came from; how you have developed them; and who has helped you become literate.
- To explore and effectively use the affordances (capabilities) of sound as a medium.
- To be instructive, inventive, insightful, and reflective.

#### What Is a Literacy Narrative?

If we think of “literacy” as the range of practices and experiences, as well as the values attached to those practices and experiences, you really have a lot of liberty in how you construct your text. In simple terms, a literacy narrative is one that describes, explores, and reflects on experiences with language, literacy, reading, and composing. This can be “reading” in a broad sense, that of reading/analyzing texts and “composing” in a broad sense, too. You can also think of “text” in broad terms where it doesn’t only concern print texts but also online, digital, multimodal, and analog ones. The story can be about any topic having to do with “reading” or “composing” (broadly conceived). Choose a narrative that is compelling to you, that has some significance within your life, and on which you can productively reflect. You can choose one story or you can choose a range of stories. You should also read the “What Is a Literacy Narrative?” document from the DALN.

#### Artist’s Statement

You will be asked to compose an 1-page, single-spaced “artist’s statement” and distribute it to class members when we workshop your literacy narrative. In this statement, you will describe, explain, and justify what you are attempting to achieve through the piece. You may also choose to provide some contextual information that will shape listeners’ understanding of your text. Consider the following questions:

- How did you devise your audio literacy narrative? How did you come up with the topic and your approach to the topic?
- Who is your intended audience for the piece? How do you think your audio literacy narrative reaches this audience? What kind of effect do you hope to have on your audience (your purpose)? Where did you imagine this piece being broadcast/distributed?

- Which specific choices did you make while constructing your audio composition? How and why did you make these choices, and how did they affect your composition?
- What struck you as the most meaningful aspect(s) of this assignment in terms of how you think of yourself as a writer/rhetorician/composer? What specifically do you think contributed to your success or lack of success?

### Hints for Success

- **listen** to several audio essays, including ones we listen to in class and ones available on the DALN.
- **take advantages of the affordances of audio:** Make sure your sound project effectively takes advantage of the specific affordances (capabilities) of the medium. What can sound capture best (tone, emotion, accent)? What escapes the affordances of sound (wink, gesture, facial expression)?
- **plan:** Plan for your sound project. Writing will help you here.
  - Keep a log of what sounds/people/activities you have recorded and what sounds/people/activities you will record.
  - Keep a production log of the time you spend on your project and what you spend your time doing. Careful written documentation will help me understand how much work you have put into your project.
  - Take the “Audio Checklist” with you when you record sounds and/or interview people.
  - Before you edit, draw a visual “storyboard” of how you want the essay to be structured. Look at “Planning Audio Essays” from *Multimodal Composition for Teachers* for an example. Your storyboard can include information about: what anecdotes go where, where you are going to include soundmarks, signal sounds, keynote sounds, silence, music, narration, etc. Identify when and where you are going to *layer* these sounds to create a rich texture for your project.
- **reflect in the text:** Provide a focused reflective frame for your audio essay—some way of helping listeners understand what they are hearing, why it is significant, and what you are trying to convey.
- **edit and condense text:** Select/edit/winnow. Compose your essay tightly and effectively. Cut everything that doesn't directly contribute to your intended message.
- **know how to use equipment:** Know how to use your recording equipment! Read the documentation that comes with the digital sound recorders. Always wear isolating headphones when recording to hear what is being captured. Whenever possible, connect the audio recorder to a power source with an adapter; batteries fail at the worst possible times. Have fresh batteries in your mic. Make sure you aren't recording unwanted sounds (e.g., air conditioner, lawn mower, ambient noise in a room, a nearby source of electrical power) that will obscure or contaminate the sounds you want to capture. Check the volume (gain) levels before starting.
- **manage your time well:** Schedule more time that you think you need for editing with Audacity—it always takes *much much* longer than the original recording!! Before you begin editing, be sure to go through the Audacity tutorial.
- **follow intellectual property guidelines:** Record citations for the audio clips you download from the web and maintain a careful approach to citation, documentation, and copyright. Get consent if you use someone's voice or audio.
- **back up your work: Back up your work, backup your work, back up your work.**
- **save often: SAVE OFTEN, SAVE OFTEN, SAVE OFTEN!!!**

### Evaluation

Your audio literacy narrative should:

- have a specific focus or theme (create a dominant impression of the subject) and be organized around an appropriate controlling idea that is clear to listeners.
- employ the affordances (capabilities) of the medium and mode(s) in effective rhetorical ways.
- reveal the writer's attitude toward the subject and offer an interpretation of it.
- identify a specific audience—either explicitly or implicitly—and pay attention to their needs.
- convey a specific purpose.
- employ a tone consistent with the designated purpose and audience.
- show evidence of careful planning.
- be reflective/have a reflective focus.
- anticipate contexts of circulation and the systems of distribution within which the text will be read and used by others.