

“Assignment Sheet: The Podcast: Writing in Sound”

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“Recasting Writing, Voicing Bodies: Podcasts across a Writing Program”

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## The Podcast: Writing **in** Sound

“A composition is an expression of relationships—between parts and parts, between parts and whole, between the visual and the verbal, between text and context, between reader and composer, between what is intended and what is unpacked, between hope and realization. And, ultimately, between human beings.”

—Kathleen Blake Yancey

### **Some Background Info: What exactly am I doing in this project?**

Writers in the 21st century now more than ever have to think about producing writing that communicates across geopolitical, cultural, and linguistic borders. In other words, writing isn't tethered solely to alphabetic text in a Word document. So in this assignment, I'm asking you to compose in audio with text, voice, and lots of research to make a podcast episode that chases after a few good questions related to your issue/topic regarding university life. Podcasts are a research genre, so we're also using the podcast to open up your quarter-long research inquiry and to create the ground for your larger research project to come. Ultimately, in your podcast you're working to construct a new way of seeing your topic/issue that does more than just reproduce the arguments of others; you're composing your own meaning and knowledge here.

The details and assignment rubrics are all below. Remember, we'll be doing lots of this work together in class, and the point is not to produce professional, studio-quality podcasts. The purpose of this assignment is to productively complicate what writing does, and to launch your research inquiries.

### **To get started with your thinking, consider a couple things:**

- You need a focused question (or two) about your topic, which you engage with interesting research (e.g., observations, interviews, our course readings, other texts of various kinds). Remember, this kind of research requires you to make interesting connections between your research question and the sources you're working with. Those connections don't just exist and need to be dusted off; good researchers make connections for their audience.
- Even though podcasting might not look like “writing” to you, you'll still need to implement the writing moves we've been working on this quarter. Think: citation practices, audience awareness, evolving an idea, anticipating listener objection, cohesion strategies, and so forth. Again, you'll need to determine who your audience is and what your angle is. Who do you want to reach with your podcast and how will you make purposeful composing decisions for this audience?
- The podcast assignment is scaffolded in Six Acts. Here we go!

## **Act One: Focus Sentence**

**Due:** Monday, October 3rd

**Grade:** 5 points

Remember, a Focus Sentence frames the structure of your episode. It goes like this: “Someone (character) wants to do so something (activity) because (desire), but... (conflict).”

### **Important things to consider:**

1. The “someone” might be you, the podcast creator.
2. It sounds like the way “plot” is structured because most good research has a kind of plot, or makes a compelling story.
3. The “but,” or the conflict, isn’t necessarily dramatic; rather, it can be nuanced and interesting.

### **In the Focus Sentence Assignment on Canvas, here’s what I expect to see:**

- One original and one revised Focus Sentence with a brief revision explanation.
- A short paragraph that tells me what specific changes you made to your revised sentence (e.g., word choice, different conflict, word order, slightly re-worded “desire”) and why. I want to know the reasons you made the changes you did.
- Based on this Focus Sentence, please also tell me what your next steps are.

**Important note:** You may not know exactly what your overall ideas for the podcast are just yet. That’s okay—remember, you don’t want to take theories to your topic and then try to prove your idea. Right now, you need to know what this project is basically about and why it matters.

**Focus Sentence Rubric (all or nothing): To earn all 5 points, your assignment must meet my 3 expectations above.**

## **Act Two: Interview & Resource Finding Plan (IRFP)**

**Due:** Wednesday, October 5th

**Grade:** 5 points

**Length:** 400–500 words

Keep in mind this is informal, but it needs to be specific. That is, do your best to tell me exactly what you plan to do and **why**. Of course things will change as you interview people and look through documents, but making a plan early will help you along the way.

### **Here’s what I expect to see in your plan:**

- **Explain the people you plan to interview and why.** Name names! For example, if you plan to interview dining hall employees, what are their names and what dining halls do they work in? If you want to talk to other first-year students, which ones? How are they connected to your project?
- **Explain how you plan to interview people.** If you want to talk to lots of “random” students, how do you plan to find them and record them? Where will you “set up”? Why set

up there rather than someplace else? If you're talking to the head of the Writing Program, how and when will you contact them?

- **Explain the kinds of sources (other than interviews) you're planning to use.** For example, do you need to look through particular pages on WWU's website? Do you plan on looking for online articles about particular ideas? (Specifically name the ideas!) Do you need to plan to collect and read informational brochures from specific campus organizations? What about peer-reviewed articles from our library database or the reading we've done in class?
- **Why, right now, is this your plan?** Whatever you plan on doing, why are you planning on doing it? For example, why are you using academic peer-reviewed articles? Why are you planning on hunting for blogs and social media posts about an idea? Why are you interviewing so many people? And so on.

**IRFP rubric (all or nothing):** To earn all 5 points, your assignment must meet my 4 expectations above.

### Act Three: 2 Interviews and 2 Sources with Reflections

**Due:** Monday, October 10th

**Grade:** 10 points

**Length:** 600 words total

As we've discussed in class, you need to do intentional work with your sources—how you are using them to help you make your own point rather than reporting on somebody else's ideas.

So for this assignment, please upload: **One** written reflection that details how you are thinking about the two interviews that you've done so far and **one** written reflection about the two important sources that you've already collected and engaged with. (I'll repeat this: You're only writing **one** reflection per two sources, and **one** reflection per two interviews.)

#### Here's what I expect to see in the Interview Reflection:

- **A short description of who you interviewed and how the format worked.** Was the interview more like a good conversation? Did you ask too many questions? Too few? Were you able to get "off script" a little and encourage the interviewee to tell stories?
- **If you could do each interview over again, what would you do differently and why.**
- **How the interviews changed your thinking (or not).** If they didn't change your thinking, write about why you think that is.
- **What you think you might do with the interviews.** How might you best incorporate them into your episode (think about methods)? Or if the interviews aren't going to work for your podcast, then write about why that is.

**Here's what I expect to see in the Source Reflection:**

- **What two sources other than interviews are you most excited about so far? Why?**
- **How might you best incorporate these into your episode (think about methods)?**

**Interview & Source Reflection Rubric: You're able to earn 10 points here.**

<b>Not Complete.</b>	<b>Almost Basic Criteria (7 points)</b>	<b>Basic Criteria (8 points)</b>	<b>Advanced Criteria; goes beyond the basic labor criteria (10 points)</b>
This project does not earn enough points to be considered complete because it does not demonstrate the labor required to meet the basic criteria. Bummer.	There's evidence of two descriptions, but the description doesn't respond directly to the assignment (e.g., the description is just about the interviewee, or the place they were interviewing.)	Around 300 word descriptions. One 300 word description of your interviews; one 300 word description for your sources.	300 word description demonstrates careful attention to language, perhaps indicating a trip to the Research Writing Studio.
	The Interview Reflection addresses the questions but doesn't explain the <b>why</b> , or the reasons behind the answers.	The Interview Reflection responds directly and in detail to all 3 questions in the assignment expectations.	Not only responds directly to the questions, but also quickly reflects on how your questions might have already influenced the interview.
	The Source Reflection addresses the questions but doesn't explain the <b>why</b> , or the reasons behind the answers.	The Source Reflection responds directly and in detail to the 2 questions in the assignment expectations.	Not only responds directly to the questions, but also evaluates the quality of these sources in detail (again, might indicate a trip to the Writing Studio and careful attention to what sources you choose).
		Assignment needs to be copy-edited and turned in on time.	Or other things that go beyond my expectations.

## **Act Four: Podcast Episode Script**

**Due:** Monday, October 17th

**Grade:** 20 points

**Length:** Depends on your podcast!

Please upload your script to Canvas. We've been drafting this in and out of class all week, so I expect the version you submit to be polished, useable, and to act as the "ground" for your episode as you record and design.

### **Here's what I expect to see in the Script:**

- **A three-part design** of some kind that easily communicates where the monologues/ dialogues, music, and sound effects all layer together. Feel free to use the template I gave you here.
- **Text** of all the monologues/dialogue and any "interruptions" you write into interviews or other source work
- **Text** of the interview clips you plan to use
- **List of the conversations** you plan to incorporate (if applicable)
- **Detailed descriptions of the music** (including song title and the "feel" of the song). Like my template demonstrates, the musical descriptions need to be written in a place where it is easy to see what monologue or dialogue you are pairing them with.
- **Detailed descriptions of sound effects.** Like my template demonstrates, the sound effect descriptions need to be written in a place where it is easy to see what monologue or dialogue you are pairing them with.

**Script Rubric: You're able to earn 20 points here.**

<b>Not Complete</b>	<b>Almost Basic Criteria (14 points)</b>	<b>Basic Criteria (17 points)</b>	<b>Advanced Criteria; goes beyond the basic labor criteria (20 points)</b>
This project does not earn enough points to be considered complete because it does not demonstrate the labor required to meet the basic criteria. Bummer.	Although all script elements are present, the script design makes it difficult to understand how music, voice, and sound effects are layered together. In other words, what goes with what.	Designed script that clearly indicates monologues/dialogues, sound effects, and music. Design indicates layering of music, text, and sound effects (e.g., what song goes with what conversation should be clear).	At the end of the script, a short explanation of your design choices and how you hope it helps a reader better understand what your episode will sound like.
	Most of the monologue text is there but not yet revised.	Revised monologue text for accessibility.	
	Most of the interview text is there but not yet revised.	Revised interview text for accessibility.	
		List of any conversations you plan to incorporate but have not yet had (if applicable).	Written summaries for any conversations you plan to incorporate but have not yet had.
	Only song titles and names of sound effects are listed.	Detailed description of the music, including song title and the "feel" of the song. Detailed description of the sound effects. Again, this alphabetic text is all about accessibility.	Written description of the kind of meaning/mood the music and sound effects create.

## **Act Five: Podcast Episode In-Process Presentation**

**Due:** Wednesday, October 19th & Friday, October 21st

**Grade:** 20 points

**Length:** 4 minutes

As you've probably already been experiencing, research projects like this are really hard to work on by yourself. It's important to get as much feedback as possible to be sure that what you're making will connect with the world that exists outside your head. Remember, listeners can't always tell what you were trying to do. So I'm asking you to **give about a four-minute presentation** to the class where you:

- Introduce and explain your structure or the story (basically a longer version of your Focus Sentence).
- Play us at least one audio clip from your episode and explain how you are going to use it. (This could be a rough interview clip or it could be the way you've already designed your introduction. You decide.)
- Tell us what you're most excited about as you move forward, what you're concerned about, and ask one question in particular you want feedback on.

### **Here's what I expect to see in the Presentation:**

- **Evidence of good planning and preparation.** This is not something you can stand up and wing. To get the best feedback, you'll need to prepare the order and structure of what you're going to say and how you're going to present.
- **Thoughtfulness regarding the process of your podcast.** Even if you're just really beginning to record and design in earnest, which I'm sure is true for many of you, I still want to hear carefully chosen audio clips and thoughtful excitements and concerns. The more thoughtful you can be here, the better feedback you'll get from all of us.
- **Practiced Professionalism.** Throughout college (and certainly outside school!), you're going to be asked to formally offer updates and share your work with others who also have a stake in the project. Here's a chance to practice that skill. Demonstrating evidence of good planning and thoughtfulness will go a long way here. I'm also looking for you to be as polished as possible regarding what you have to say and share, to generously consider the feedback you get, and to be mindful of the four-minute time frame (ideally, not more or less than 4 minutes).

**Presentation rubric (all or nothing):** To earn all 20 points, your presentation must meet my 3 expectations above. **Note:** really use the above assignment prompt to plan this thing.

## Act Six: Podcast Episode & Self Evaluation

**Due:** Monday, October 28th

**Grade:** 40 points

**Length:** 6–10 minutes

As we've discussed all quarter together, the podcast episode you're making needs to be discussion-driven rather than one long monologue, and it needs to be grounded in one or two good questions about your issue/topic regarding the university.

### Here's what I expect from your podcast episode:

- **Dialogue between one or more people.** That might mean we get to hear some interview tape or it might mean that you script some back-and-forth. Or maybe both. But use conversation to chase after your question(s) and ideas.
- **Carefully put together voice recording, music, sound effects, and background noise.** I don't expect you to produce studio-quality work, but the podcast still needs to make sure the voice recording is not drowned out by music or that the sound effects are not out of place and too loud. You are layering these things together so that they produce a unified whole.
- **Musical choices that can be well explained in the self-evaluation.** In other words, I expect the music (and the sound effects) to be purposeful. You should know what the music is doing (i.e., what mood it creates) and be able to explain its use.
- **Stay focused!** The podcast is after one or two questions related to your issue/topic. Don't lose your XY Statement or your Focus Sentence. Each element or segment needs to be clearly related to the whole.
- **Between 6 and 10 minutes long.** (Try really hard not to go over 10 minutes.)

Along with the Podcast, you are also uploading a Self-Evaluation. I need this evaluation to be turned in with the podcast episode because without it I can't evaluate your work. In other words, the only way I can understand what you are trying to do and how you understand what you're trying to do is evaluate your work *with* you. Again, I don't expect you to be professional audio producers, so I need to read about what you are doing and why you are doing it in order to best evaluate the labor underlying your good work here.

So please, **fill out the Podcast Self-Evaluation Rubric.** This is (basically) the exact same rubric I use to evaluate your work. That way, we'll both have a say in the labor you did. I expect you'll need 100-150 words of explanation per category on the rubric to fully explain your work and to help me understand what you are trying to do in this podcast episode.

**Please Note:** If I don't have a Self-Evaluation from you then I don't have a Podcast Episode. It's all one project.



**Podcast Rubric: You're able to earn 40 points here.**

<b>Not Complete</b>	<b>Almost Basic Criteria (28 points)</b>	<b>Basic Criteria (34 points)</b>	<b>Advanced Criteria; goes beyond the basic labor criteria (40 points)</b>
<p>This project does not earn enough points to be considered complete because it does not demonstrate the labor required to meet the basic criteria. Bummer.</p>	<p>A question that hasn't evolved into a good question through revision (e.g., a yes/no question, or a question with confusing word choice, or doesn't move beyond writer's initial assumptions).</p>	<p><b>A driving question that "guides" the podcast episode.</b> I'm looking for a question that clearly underlies your entire investigation.</p>	<p><b>Your driving question sets up a story for your research.</b> Here the podcast makes use of good questions to set up an arc or a narrative structure for your research. The scene being set, the complication being introduced (i.e., the good question), the wrestling with and complicating possible responses and answers to the question, a climax where you reach a response that will work for now, and a conclusion that explains the climax and reflects on the implications of both the question and the response.</p>
	<p>Poorly used sources (e.g., dropped in, not explained or introduced, etc.)</p>	<p><b>Background and Research:</b> At some point during the podcast (or all throughout), help your listeners better understand your issue/topic by weaving some good research into the mix.</p>	<p>In order to better tell the story of your research, make good use of outside articles, historical accounts, movies or songs that help readers make connections. BIG NOTE HERE: Please don't "drop in" this research. Each source needs to be introduced, quoted and cited appropriately, and then (then!) explained in a way that helps readers see the connections.</p>

	Overly long monologues and/or interviews, which don't evolve the episode's main idea.	<b>Multi-Voiced:</b> The podcast needs to incorporate voices and ideas that are not your own.	
		Completely fill out the podcast self-evaluation rubric.	
	Sound design that is clearly unintentional and haphazard. See Podcast Self-Evaluation for more description about Sound Design.	<b>Sound Design:</b> You incorporate a good deal of sound design, which means the podcast will make interesting, thoughtful, and, above all, purposeful use of music and sound effects.	<b>Evidence of obsessive editing:</b> The podcast is nearly flawless when it comes to the cohesion of the ideas (i.e., each one leads to the next) and when it comes to integration of the sound design (i.e., music and effects) with the spoken word work. Again, I know you're not audio engineers, but one important part of this project is helping you practice with newer ways of producing meaning and arguments. So the music, sound effects, and voices will carefully and purposefully put together with little to no rushed or awkward moments.  To accomplish this, I imagine you'll need to enlist the help of the Student Technology Center and (and!) get your friends to listen to several drafts because you need to hear what other people hear.
		Podcast is between 6 and 10 minutes long.	