

TEACHING PROJECT-BASED ASSIGNMENTS

SUPPLEMENT 2: ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK OPTIONS FOR PROJECT-BASED ASSIGNMENTS

Assessment

Clear rubrics are essential for project-based work so that students know when and how their work will be assessed. Because successful projects build relevant course content knowledge as well as skill sets students are genuinely invested in, the best kind of assessment measures both instructor-driven and student-driven outcomes. In this way, assessment can be rigorous and in accordance with course goals while at the same time allowing for individual student goals. Options for rubrics that include both instructor and student-driven goals include

- Instructor-created rubric with one or two empty categories that students create
- Two rubrics—one created by the instructor and the other created by the student after a successful proposal stage (it's difficult for students to generate concrete categories before this stage)
- A collaboratively created rubric by the class after everyone completes a successful proposal

Feedback

Because projects often span half or the full fifteen weeks of the semester, it is important to give students enough feedback so they feel confident and invested enough in their work to continue. Determine when these feedback options will occur before the project begins and make these decisions transparent to your students. Varying the kinds of feedback students receive helps them best experience multiple audiences and perspectives and reminds them that approaches to problems can, and should, be varied.

- **Options for Feedback:** private conference with the instructor, written feedback from the instructor, presentations followed by Q & A-style feedback from classmates, small group discussions, written peer responses, a tally of completed tasks
- **Common Stages for Scheduled Feedback:** 1) Proposal that includes a clear articulation of the problem they are addressing as well as a guiding question for their research 2) Production plan that includes a rough calendar and outline of the work they plan to do for the project 3) Research checkpoint 4) Partial project draft 5) Full project draft

Other Project Work Options For Students:

Because Project-based learning works best when students have some choices about what work they will be doing and why, it's useful to give them some task options to choose from. Below are

several tasks that University of Michigan students in Sweetland's Minor in Writing choose from while they work on their Capstone Project, a semester-long research project of their choosing.

1. Blog Post

Initiate a topic of discussion for our course that's relevant to your project's problem. (200-500 words accompanied by something multimodal (ie, photo, screenshot, hyperlink, audio, video).

2. Annotated Bibliography Sets

Document and streamline your research! 3-5 annotations count as a set. Each annotation should include the following:

- Citation information in MLA, APA, or Chicago form (keep your citation information consistent throughout the course)
- A brief summary of the source's topic, genre, and main purpose/argument.
- A reflection on what interests you about this source and how it might influence your essay, project, or portfolio

3. Small Group Discussion

Pick a reading you've done on your own, concentrate on an issue it raises that would be relevant to either the peer review working group your instructor has placed you in, or a few relevant students in the course, and email them a brief summary of what you want to discuss. 100-300 word email, with link or file included when relevant.

4. Author Self-Interview at the Beginning of a Project

Conduct the following self-interview on paper or into a digital recorder and then reflect on the moments that most surprise, intrigue, or disturb you.

What is your major/minor?

What is your work and/or extracurricular background?

What is the problem you are interested in working on?

What do you know about this problem?

What don't you know about this problem?

What unique resources do you have to investigate this problem?

5. Author Self-Interview in the Middle of a Project

Conduct the following self-interview on paper or into a digital recorder and then reflect on the moments that most surprise, intrigue, or disturb you.

What did I want to discover at the beginning of my project?

What is the most important project decision I've made and why?

What is the most important research I've done so far and why?

How has the research I've done affected my response to the problem?

How does the research I've done affect my initial project decisions about genre, audience, and purpose?

What's the thing that's working best about my project? Is there a way I can highlight that even more?

What do I think needs to be changed, deleted, or added? Why?

How would I fill in the blanks to the following sentence?:

"I am researching _____ because I want to understand _____ in order to help my audience _____ understand _____."

6. Do Another Writer's Research

Find a source you think would be perfect for another student's project. Email them a 200-300 word message that

- introduces the source
- summarizes what you know about the student's project
- explains why you think this source would be useful for their project

7. Mapping

Create an annotated map of a place relevant to your research to help us understand your problem.

8. An Annotated Timeline

Create an annotated timeline that show some of the complexity and patterns of the problem.

9. Out Loud and Unvarnished

Read one of your project drafts out loud into a digital recorder. Allow yourself to digress and discuss the places where you stop or hesitate (for whatever reason, positive or negative). Write a 200-500 word reflection that discusses the digressive moments that most surprise, intrigue or disturb you and how you plan to use those moments to help you revise the draft.

10. Working Lunch

Get a drink, meal, or snack with another course member and discuss your projects. This should be a time to share the good, the bad, and all the ambiguous in between of your project work. Decide on at least one tangible way you want to support each other's projects and write a collaborative statement formalizing this support plan. 200-400 words.

11. Pitching Your Project

Propose your final project in the form of a pitch to a prospective publisher of your work. Your pitch should consist of a letter (one single-spaced page in 12-point font with one-inch margins) and a sample of the work (around 100 words of text and one image, sketch, audio clip, video clip, or hyperlink). The letter must answer the following questions:

- Who is the intended audience of the work?
- What form will the final work take—what genre, and for what specific publication venue? Magazine article (and for what kind of magazine), short story, children's book, etc.?
- Approximately how long will the final work be?
- How will the project combine textual and other multimodal elements?
- Why should the work be published? What are its motive and stakes? Why should someone want to read your work? Why now?
- Why should *you* write the work, rather than some other writer?