

The Digital Essay Workflow

Why a Digital Essay?

The digital essay is a visual short communication piece that reflects the author's engagement with the story, and therefore engages others. The story told should be of interest to the author, something that touches him/her on a deeper level. The story should never be told, but felt. The digital essay is a unique exercise in strengthening communication skills and deepening the level of understanding of content not just through the written word but through images, sound, narration, composition, and pacing. It's an artform, both an objective and subjective take on the subject matter. Your story should be unique, original, and evoke a response in you. If it doesn't matter to you, it won't matter to your audience.

Imagine your content, what does this look like visually.? What images do you see? What images will best tell your story? Multiple factors play a role in your argument. The Digital Essay combines the narrative, images, titles, transitions, special effects, and music.

Now that you have selected your essay topic, conducted your research, gathered your materials, and selected your iconic images, it is time to get organized,

Getting Organized

The written narrative script, telling the story in the author's own voice, is the centerpiece of digital storytelling. It is meant to organize all the other media elements used and should be completed FIRST!

Bring YOUR story ALIVE Write the Script

What is a script? Action or dialogue of your digital essay. This includes narration and shot direction.

Write the Script (Narration). All images, sounds, transitions, titles, special effects are organized around the narrative.

You can use google docs, word, or an iphone. Write your story first, then visualize what that story will look like. By doing so, you are creating a storyboard.

Planning the Project

Create the Storyboard

The storyboard is the visual organizer for your essay. It is here you block out images and arrange the content of your story. Next to your visual blocks you have a section for dialogue. Here you arrange your narrative next to your images, get a sense of timing and how long your images will be on screen according to your narration.

Here you can see the content or information. This is where you will work out the bugs. Here you will bring all aspects of your story together starting with the narration, images, titles, transitions, and special effects.

Read your script (Narration) aloud and work on pace and delivery. Now you are ready to record your voiceover.

Voiceover

Your voice is key component to your story. You will want to practice reading aloud your narrative several times before actual recording. Use inflection when needed and represent the tone of the story through your voice. Remember to feel your story not just read it!

Using the Audio booth

The Audio booth will give you the best quality recording possible. This sound proof booth allows you to capture audio without any external noise to interfere.

Post-Production

Now that the script is written, images have been selected, the storyboards have been created, and the voiceover recorded, you are ready to edit using iMovie.

Here you have full control over the look and feel of your finely crafted essay.

Use titles, transitions, and effects to bring your narration to life. Let your storyboard guide in the process of post. The usefulness of your storyboard really comes into play here.

After you have completed your digital essay, allow others to view to make sure your story makes sense not only to you but to others as well. Revise if necessary.

The Critique

After you have completed the rough cut of your Digital Essay if would be highly useful to get the perspectives of others. Whether this is in the classroom setting with your professors, your peers, or with Instructional Technologists on campus, it would be wise to have another set of eyes view your essay prior to your due date.

You are now ready to hand in your Digital Essay!