

**Lauren Campbell**  
**Seminar in Composition**

Week 8, 9, and 10 Assignments  
Digital Video Essay Experiments

**Tuesday, October 15 – Fall Break**

No class today – attend your Monday classes, instead!

**Thursday, October 17 – Notebook #4**

We'll be embarking on our digital essay experiment this week, and for today you'll be completing your first Notebook. Please bring a copy of your Notebook to class today—we will discuss the ideas you have as well as spend a great deal of time looking at examples of the kinds of work you'll be producing.

**For this Notebook, I'm asking you to begin conceptualizing your digital essay, the assignment for which is found below and which you should read carefully before beginning this Notebook.** You'll be creating a trailer for your Griffin essay, using pictures, video, music, audio, whatever you think you can make work to represent your essay in a video. But, before you can start to put these things together or even search for what you might want to use, you'll need to consider what you might want to search for. This means you'll need to first think hard about your essay: what is it about? Which parts are most central to understanding the essay—touchstones, if you will, for a reader? To make a trailer, you'll have to consider the whole and its parts, so that the trailer can indicate the trajectory of the essay, giving viewers an overall sense of the whole, while using key parts of the essay to illustrate that larger whole.

You can do a lot in a 2-3 minute video essay, but you probably cannot adequately represent every single part of an intricate 1500ish word essay—and you shouldn't try, or else you might make yourself crazy. You'll have to think about selection and what matters most. So, read back through your Griffin essay carefully, noting which sections you feel are most essential to the overall essay, which you feel should be represented in some way in the video trailer. **Pull those sections out and put them into a new document, indicating how you might arrange them** (what would come first, if you plot out how the video might progress? Does it necessarily need to go in the order that the textual essay progresses?). Please also add at least a few sentences of commentary after each section, explaining why you feel this must be represented in the video and what ideas you have for how you might turn written text into an audiovisual text.

I'd also like to mention here, again, that what this representation actually looks like is up to you. Your video essay doesn't have to literally portray scenes exactly as they are in your essay, and it likely cannot—but how can you get across the feeling of those scenes, their essences? At times your video may be more concrete, and at others, more abstract.

**Finally, I'd like you to also write an abstract for your essay.** An abstract is a single paragraph (for our purposes, at least) that summarizes the central ideas or argument of a longer essay or article. Abstracts often give an overview of the entire piece while also allowing a peek into the parts that make up the whole, signaling the central questions the essay explores while indicating some of the ways in which it explores them. You might consider this a way of putting together in summary, paragraph form, the work you've done in selecting key sections of your essay to represent in your video—the sections you've chosen before writing the abstract will likely be the most important “parts of the whole” you will discuss in the abstract. **Your abstract should be no longer than 150 words, and can be written in first or third person.**

**Tuesday, October 22 – Notebook #5**

If at all possible, please bring a laptop to class today so that we can spend some time working in class on your videos, troubleshooting together, etc. I don't think there are a ton of outlets in our room, so while I can probably provide one power strip, it would be helpful if as many of you as possible brought fully-charged laptops that

wouldn't need to be plugged into a power source.

For class today, you will also need to have completed Notebook #5, the assignment for which is this: gather materials you might use for your video.

Again, I want to reiterate that rather than seeing this as an exercise in illustration—exactly matching images and sound to the subject of your essay—you can and should approach this as an opportunity to sharpen, re-shape, and represent/re-present the essay. To think about how your essay looks and sounds, how it moves. So, while you should probably locate some video footage that is explicitly related to the subject of your essay, you'll also want to find material with less obvious connections—images that suggest or imply rather than explain or illustrate.

To make the trailer, you'll need materials. Spend several hours on this Notebook, hunting around for what you may want to use. You should locate video clips (either found or created yourself), sound clips (songs, noises, perhaps a recording of you or someone else reading some part of your essay or something you think is related to your essay), pictures—whatever you envision yourself putting to use to craft this video.

Once you've found what you'll use, make sure to save it to a dedicated folder on your computer, at the very least—you'll likely also want to save it all to a flash drive, for easy access and as a back-up.

So that I can see what you've gathered, though, I'll be asking you to upload your materials to your personal accounts on Box (where you have 25 GB of room for free, courtesy of Pitt—instructions on how to generate your accounts are toward the end of this assignment packet), and then to “share” those with me by clicking “Share” next to your uploaded file and then making sure to change the “Access” to either “Open” or “Your Company.” **This way, you can complete Notebook #5, which is gathering materials and then sending me a Word document that includes the Box links to your materials as well as descriptions of what they are and how you plan to use them.** If you're having trouble with this using Box, we can work through it in class today—I'd like your materials by the *end* of class today, rather than the beginning, this time. (Don't expect to use class time to find all your materials, though.)

#### **Thursday, October 24**

I'd like you to bring laptops to class again today—we'll likely be looking at more examples as well as spending time in class actually working on the videos, so we can troubleshoot and experiment as a group.

#### **Tuesday, October 29**

Today, your digital video essay is due, and you'll be performing peer reviews in your regular writing groups. **At least one member of your writing group must bring a laptop to class today for this to work—we'll coordinate this on Thursday, the 24<sup>th</sup>.**

To turn your video in to me, I'll ask that, as you did with your Notebook #5, you will upload the video to Box and then email me with a link. Please do this before class today. Email me, as well, your critical reflection/statement on making the video.

#### **The assignment for the video is as follows:**

For our foray into digital composing, you'll take essays you've already written this semester—your Griffin essays—and create 2-3 minute “trailers” for them. What I'm asking you to do is consider how you can take what your Griffin essay does in print and reimagine that for a video. What does your essay look like? How can you visually represent your essay? What does your essay sound like? How can you aurally represent your essay? Your essay transitions in particular ways in writing—what kind of movement will it have in a digital medium? Just as your Griffin essays were experiments with what an essay can be and do, your video will be an experiment in form and revision.

When we think of “trailers,” we typically think of movie trailers. Trailers for movies are somewhat like

summaries—you get bits and pieces of the whole plot, some of the key scenes, but not the entirety of the film. You generally come away from a trailer intrigued, sometimes with a fairly solid sense of what the movie will be about, sometimes intrigued less because you know what the plot might be and more because of the general feeling the trailer left you with. Some trailers are very concrete, while others are more vague and abstract, and you can take those as models for this kind of work, as well (avoid doing the “horror movie misdirection” thing with your trailer, though—that wouldn’t really represent your essay).

**While you are not pretending that your essay is a movie** and shouldn’t present it as such (no “coming soon to a theater near you,” etc.), you do want to accomplish for your essay what a movie trailer does for a movie. How can you give viewers a sense of your essay as a whole by presenting them with key scenes/sections of the essay, cut and arranged in a way that represents the essay as a whole, but without making a video that tries to fully represent every scene, argument, section of the essay? What is most essential? **Unlike a trailer for a movie that has already been shot, you probably can’t literally recast the scenes of your essay; rather, you should find a way to represent (re-present) them that is suggestive of the whole.**

You may use pictures, videos, music, your own spoken audio (maybe you want to read sections of your text, or have someone else read them)—as long as it falls within proper copyright and fair use (which we’ll discuss on Thursday, October 17), you can draw from as many materials as you feel suit your purpose.

**In addition to the video essay, you’ll also be composing a 1 page, single-spaced critical reflection/statement** on what you were trying to accomplish with the choices you made in your video and how you feel the project went. How did you decide what you wanted to do to represent your written essay in a digital medium? Why did you make the choices you made in putting your video together? How do you feel those choices worked? What should viewers know about the creation of this trailer and your intent behind it?

#### **Essential Information:**

- Trailers must be 2-3 minutes in length and should include both audio and visual components.
- You can expect to spend between 6-8 hours (roughly) composing your video—it will take time and trial-and-error to learn the basics of the software, to get things how you’d like them to be. Allow for this time.
- You will need to have a functioning account at Box (through Pitt) to send me your video and your materials for Notebook #5.
- In addition to the trailer, you will compose a 1 page single-spaced critical reflection/statement on the trailer, detailing the choices you made and why you made them, what you hoped to accomplish with the trailer, and how you feel the process went for you.
- Remember that, as I will say many times in class, this is an experiment. While that doesn’t mean you shouldn’t take it seriously and produce the best video you can in the time you have, it does mean that you should allow that it won’t be perfect and that it’s okay if it doesn’t come out exactly as you wish.

#### **Technical Information:**

- I am new to all of this, too. I will be learning along with you, watching tutorials, trying things out. It’s my hope that by working together in class on these videos, we can gather our collective expertise and brainpower to troubleshoot and figure out how composing a digital essay works.
- To that end, let’s use the Course Blog to post questions & help each other out!
- If you have a Mac, you should use iMovie to create your video.
- If you have a PC, you should use Windows Movie Maker to create your video.
- Lynda.com is an excellent resource with tutorials on how to use these programs—you have access to it for free through Pitt.
- On the last page of this handout, there are instructions for how to access Lynda.com, how to access your account on Box, and places you can go to find video/audio/etc for your essays.

#### **Thursday, October 31 – Halloween!**

Today, we will likely workshop a few videos—but, should the class decide it wants to, this could be turned into a screening day where everyone shows their videos to the class. We’ll discuss this matter on Tuesday when you turn in your trailers. Regardless, we should probably be sure to have some Halloween candy on hand.

## Digital Composing Resources

**How to Access Box** – watch this video I made!

<https://pitt.box.com/s/dd5t4munq04a8mjuv3wh>

**How to Access Lynda.com Tutorials** – watch this video I made!

<https://pitt.box.com/s/md4lquklziy254ljdhk>

### Video

Vimeo.com / YouTube.com provide free accounts for storing and sharing video files online.

Archive.org is a non-profit “Internet Library” of free material, including audio and video files.

Keepvid.com / Videograbber.net are platforms for downloading streaming video from YouTube, Vimeo, and a number of other web media sites.

### Audio

Freesound.org is a collaborative database of Creative Commons licensed sounds. It focuses only on sounds, not songs, and anyone can contribute.

Freemusicarchive.org is a curated library of high-quality, legal audio to download, share, and reuse, depending on its licensing.

Jamendo.com is a community of free, legal, unlimited music published under a variety of Creative Commons licenses.

Listentoyoutube.com is a free online platform for capturing and downloading

### Equipment

**iMovie** is distributed free with Apple computers. Tutorials are available on the Apple website and on YouTube, as well as Lynda.com.

**Windows Movie Maker** is distributed free with Windows computers. Tutorials are available on Microsoft’s website and on YouTube, as well as Lynda.com.

If you want to use **Adobe Premiere Pro**, Version CS5 is available in the CL G-26 computer lab. Version CS6 is available on the Mac computers in campus computer labs. You can find numerous tutorials for these online, as well as on Lynda.com.

Most laptops and most cell phones have video and audio capturing capability if you want to create something to use yourself.

If you want to capture your screen for some reason, like I did when I made the “How to Access” videos, the program you want is **Jing** – which you can find at [www.techsmith.com/jing.html](http://www.techsmith.com/jing.html).