

Multimodal Project Design Guide

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Step 1

Explain your exigence—the issue, problem, or situation that motivates the creation of this assignment.

If you have come to this workshop to revise or add to a pre-existing writing project, what are the goals of the pre-existing project and why do you want to revise it? If you plan to design a writing project from scratch, what course/program learning outcome(s) would you like to address with the project you create and why?

Step 2

Map your project onto the knowledge domains from which successful writers draw (Beaufort, 2007).

We suggest you start with the subject matter knowledge prompt, then go to discourse community knowledge, then rhetorical or genre. End with writing process prompts.

Using 6-8 key terms, define the subject matter knowledge you want your students to develop through meaningful engagement with this project (Yancey, 2018).

Subject matter knowledge can include the disciplinary content students are asked to create, engage with, or reflect upon in order to complete the assignment. This can also include guidelines for research practices and/or the selection of alphabetic, audio, visual, spatial, and/or gestural sources appropriate to the project and discipline.

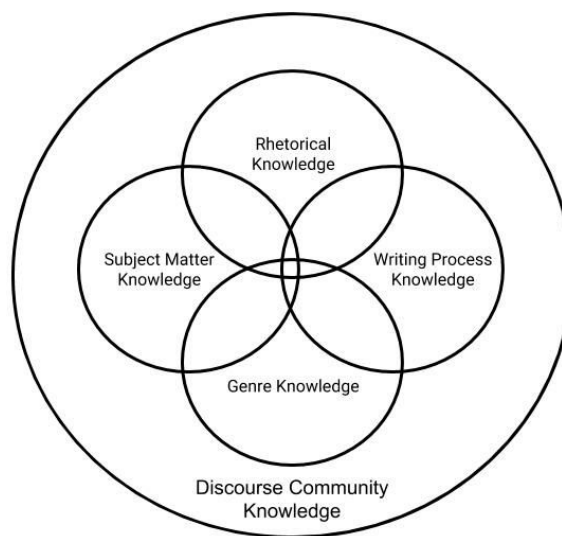


Figure 1: Knowledge Domains (Beaufort, 2007)

For more on designing projects in multimodal genres, see:

Fodrey, Crystal N., & Mikovits, Meg. (2020). Theorizing WAC faculty development in multimodal project design. *Across the Disciplines*, 17(1-2), 42-58. <http://wac.colostate.edu/docs/atd/volume17/fodrey-mikovits.pdf>

Define the discourse community *from which your students will be writing*. According to Swales (1990), a discourse community is a group with an agreed-upon set of common goals, recognized mechanisms of communication among members, members who use those mechanisms to engage in the community, recognized genre(s) used to further goals, recognized lexicon used among members, and a membership large enough and knowledgeable enough in the discourse to engage with it and share it with new members (pp. 24-27).

- Name the community (typically the larger academic discipline represented by the course subject matter) and describe its membership parameters. The discourse community can be but does not have to be the audience *for which* students will be asked to write.
- What are the shared values and goals of the community? Why does this group exist? What does it do? (adapted from Wardle & Downs, 2016)
- What genres help the community work towards its goals effectively? (adapted from Wardle & Downs, 2016)
- What genres would expand the boundaries of the discourse community to help it reach new goals and potentially audiences outside of this discourse community?

Define the rhetorical situation of the project.

- For what **purpose(s)** will students create the project? That is, what is the writing supposed to do in the world and/or for a particular audience?
- For what **audience(s)** will students create the project? That is, who is the intended reader/viewer/listener of the project?
- What authorial **stance** will students be asked to take in relation to the subject matter, discourse community, purpose, audience, and genre (see below)? That is, how should students position themselves as authors of the writing? Who should the student be in the text, and how is that connected to the norms of the discourse community from which the students are writing?
- In what **medium** will students create the project? That is, how will the project be delivered? Examples of media include books, YouTube videos, blogs, Google My Maps, Soundcloud audio files, etc.
- Which, if any, of those elements (audience, purpose, stance, and/or medium) would you like for students to define for themselves as part of the idea generation stage of the project? Why?

Consider the genre knowledge students will need to successfully address the project.

Given the previous areas you've considered, particularly the purpose, audience, and medium, what genre would be most appropriate? Is this a genre that already exists and that you can find several examples of, or is this a genre concept—that is, an idea for a possible new genre, likely using new technologies or old technologies in new ways, for which models do not yet exist? To determine the best course of action, review the two categories below:

Existing Genre	New Genre Concept
• Where would you typically find this genre? • What is the typical subject matter included in the genre? • What design elements (aural, visual, textual, spatial, gestural) are most often used in the genre? How do each of these elements facilitate communication in the genre? • Who typically engages with the genre? • When and why is the genre used? What purposes does the genre serve for the people who engage with it? • What, if any, examples of this genre exist within your disciplinary/content-area context?	• What necessitates the creation of this new genre concept? • What existing genre(s), if any, are most similar to this genre concept? • Where do you imagine this new genre appearing/being shared? • Why would this new genre be appropriate for communicating about the subject matter knowledge? • Which design elements (aural, visual, textual, spatial, gestural) will be central to the creation of the new genre? How will each of these elements facilitate communication in the genre? • Who, if anyone, would engage with this new genre beyond your course? • When and why do you envision this new genre being used? What purpose should this genre serve for the people who engage with it? • Are you able to create an example of this genre concept as a model for students, and/or are you able to devote a lot of class time to the creation of the project?

(adapted from Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010)

Define the optimal writing process for the project. Given the course level and prior experience that your students will likely have with the other four knowledge domains in relation to the project:

- What steps will students need to take in order to successfully complete the project? To what degree will you provide structured guidelines, planning documents, and deadlines for proposals, research/information gathering, drafts, and revisions?
- What design elements (aural, visual, textual, spatial, gestural) are necessary for the creation of the project? When and how will students create or find, evaluate, and incorporate these elements?
- In what ways will writing process steps need to be modified from those used in typical textual alphabetic modes of academic writing? For example, how will students be guided through the creation of storyboards, scripts, image mock-ups, asset collection, etc.?
- How and to what degree will you need to support students in developing necessary functional literacies (facility with hardware and software)? How can opportunities to practice functional literacy be integrated throughout the writing process?
- What information do students need to responsibly cite sources and/or abide by fair use and copyright law?
- Is this project one that requires HSIRB approval? If so, will you secure that approval on behalf of the class, or will students engage in the application process themselves?
- What steps must be taken, and what information will students need, to ensure the project is fully accessible (i.e., transcripts, video captioning, image ALT tags, layout and design, etc.)?
- Where do opportunities exist for peer feedback? For instructor feedback?
- Where do opportunities exist throughout the project for students to reflect on choices made within or among the five knowledge domains?

Step 3

Consider how and when you will ask your students to reflect while completing their writing projects. Students can be asked to consider and reflect on:

- their adherence to and/or purposeful deviation from genre conventions and functions;
- the successes and failures they experience both during and after the process and what, if anything, they would do differently in the future;
- the rhetorical effectiveness of their writing project and how they will use their rhetorical knowledge in future writing experiences;
- what they learned about how to communicate effectively from the particular discourse community outlined in the assignment and how they will apply that knowledge in future situations;
- what prior writing, subject matter, rhetorical, genre, and/or discourse community knowledge they could draw from to complete the project; what they learned in any/all of those areas from completing the project; and how they plan to apply those knowledges in the future based on what they learned from completing the project;
- Other ideas?

Step 4

Decide how you will articulate the outcomes of the project to students, and assess the project based on those goals.

Make sure that what you communicate to students about the project contains reference to your goals and expectations for the following:

- Subject matter
- Discourse community
- Rhetorical situation
 - Purpose
 - Audience
 - Stance
 - Medium
- Genre
- Writing process
- Reflection

References

- Bawarshi, Anis S. & Reiff, Mary Jo. (2010). *Genre: An introduction to history, theory, research, and pedagogy*. Parlor Press.
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- Yancey, Kathleen Blake, Davis, Matthew, Robertson, Liane, Taczak, Kara, & Workman, Erin. (2018). Writing across college: Key terms and multiple contexts as factors promoting students' transfer of writing knowledge and practice. *The WAC Journal*, 29, 42–63.