

Writing Spaces Assignments & Activities Archive

Multimodal Proposal

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Overview

This assignment is intended to be used as a proposal for a big multimodal composition project. The goal of this assignment is to help students articulate their topic, think through their intended audience and where they exist, and practice composing through a non-linguistic mode of communication they will be using for their bigger project. You could use this proposal in preparation for a multimodal narrative, a multimodal research text, or any other assignment that requires students to utilize divergent modes of communication within a writing class.

In preparation for this assignment, students should read, watch, or view something that gives them a good understanding of what multimodal means and what the multimodal composing process looks like. Within this assignment description, I utilize Melanie Gagich's "An Introduction to and Strategies for Multimodal Composing" since she speaks directly to students about what this process looks like in a typical college writing classroom. Within the Gagich reading, I ask students to have a good understanding of the five modes of communication that she references (linguistic, visual, spatial, gestural, and aural) (67). You may also want to teach a question-of-inquiry lesson if they are doing a research-heavy multimodal writing assignment.

When they have a solid idea about their topic and what multimodal composing entails, then they are ready for their proposal. As previously stated, I ask students to use the primary mode of communication they will be utilizing for their project. For example, if spatial ends up being their primary mode, they may repurpose a boardgame and its various pieces to communicate an idea. A group of two students did this for their proposal in one of my classes as they submitted a picture of a

Scrabble board with a mix of Spanish and English words spelling out their project details. They used the space of the board to communicate their proposal and invoke the spatial layout of a Scrabble game. This proposal served as a precursor to their final multimodal project where they created an original boardgame that debated the merits of two-way immersion vs. immersion ESL instruction.

The goal of the proposal is to get students to think through their topic, the audience they want to engage, and practicing the mode they want to use to engage that audience. Do not assess students too harshly on how polished the primary mode they use looks, feels, or sounds since this is intended to be a practice run at using that mode for their bigger project.

Time Commitment

2 class sessions

Materials

Due to the multimodal nature of this assignment, there are a plethora of materials students could use to create this project. If they are doing something digital, creating a list of tutorials for creating videos, uploading audio files, or interacting with imaging software may be helpful. You may also suggest that students use tactile materials around them (like the two students using Scrabble that I talk about in the Overview).

Assignment Process

- Students will read Melanie Gagich's *Writing Spaces* article "An Introduction to and Strategies for Multimodal Composing" and demonstrate a good understanding of the five modes of communication that she references (linguistic, visual, spatial, gestural, and aural) (67).
- Next, students will begin composing their proposal by relying heavily on one of the five modes they will be

utilizing (aside from linguistic, which should be a secondary mode if applicable) for their final multimodal writing assignment. The steps that follow include the details they need in their final proposal.

- Next, students will communicate a line of inquiry or narrative topic (dependent on your bigger multimodal assignment) they want to pursue.
- Next, students will hypothesize who they think their intended audience is and where their final artifact should exist to find that audience.
- Next, students will talk about the primary mode and other secondary modes they will be relying on to communicate the information in their final project if those modes are not self-evident through their proposal.
- Next, students will evaluate the tools they will need to access to build their multimodal artifacts.
- Finally, students will submit their proposal. The final proposal should rely on the primary mode they will be using for their bigger multimodal project.

Learning Outcomes

Students engaging in this assignment will:

- Gain an understanding of multimodality and the various modes of communication that exist
- Articulate the rhetorical effectiveness of their primary mode of communication for their multimodal project
- Compose a line of inquiry that a multimodal writing process could address
- Demonstrate the impact their primary mode of communication can have on their intended audience

Learning Accommodations

- Since many first-year students may have limited experience with composing in the classroom without relying heavily on a linguistic mode of communication, showing examples of rhetorically effective multimodal

- projects completed by former students may be helpful.
- For non-digital projects, instructions should be provided on how to digitize projects so that proposals can be submitted for online classes or for courses that utilize Learning Management Systems to collect coursework.

Works Cited

Gagich, Melanie. "An Introduction to and Strategies for Multimodal Composing." *Writing Spaces*, vol. 3, 1 April 2020, <https://writingspaces.org/sites/default/files/1gagich-introduction-strategies-multimodal-composing.pdf>. Accessed 19 May 2020.

Further Reading

- Shipka, Jody. "Including, but Not Limited to, the Digital: Composing Multimodal Texts." *Multimodal Literacies and Emerging Genres*, edited by Tracey Bowen and Carl Whithaus, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013, pp. 73-89.
- Vasudevan, Lalitha. "Literacies in a Participatory, Multimodal World: The Arts and Aesthetics of Web 2.0." *Language Arts* vol. 88, 2010, pp. 43-50.