

# *Writing Spaces*

## Assignments & Activities Archive

### Informative or Argumentative Infographic

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## Informative or Argumentative Infographic

Erin Breux

### Overview

This multimodal assignment challenges students to think in a different medium and consider the impact of visual rhetoric. While composing an infographic, they learn skills such as concision, design principles, organization of texts and images, and use of statistics, charts, and graphs. The infographic works well for remediation of informative or persuasive essays where the goal is for students to transform their written essay into a visual form, using research they have already completed. However, the infographic may also be assigned as a stand-alone project involving new research.

To prepare for this assignment, the professor analyzes existing infographics, discusses the principles of good design, and compares the components of good writing with that of effective visual media. The students also look at popular programs and tutorials, and they compare them before deciding which one they want to use to create their infographic. Students browse and experiment with their program in class and sometimes decide they need to transition to a new program depending upon what they want to do.

This assignment may also be assigned without the remediation component; the infographic does not need to be directly related to an essay the student has already written. Students can go through the research process for a new topic they choose specifically for their infographics. An infographic may also be assigned as an activity rather than a major assignment.

### Time Commitment

2-2.5 weeks

## Materials

- Canva, Adobe Express, Piktochart, or Ease.ly
- Online Programs for Creating Charts, Graphs, etc.
- Open-Source or Creative Commons Images and Icons Sites
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## Informative or Argumentative Infographic Process

- First, students are introduced to the infographic assignment guidelines and process. This includes explaining the genre conventions of an infographic and explaining what remediation and multimodality mean.
- Next, students view and discuss example infographics—by professionals and former students—so that they become aware of the genre conventions and how various rhetors have approached composing an informative or argumentative infographic. Students answer questions to help them brainstorm how to remediate their essay into an infographic form. (See Appendix A.) They may do this on their own or in small groups—the students they peer reviewed are a good choice since they will be familiar with each other’s essays.
- Then, students receive a lesson on design tools and principles—text, color, layout to contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity (Cohen; Moxley). This lesson includes examples of these tools and principles being used in pieces of 2D visual rhetoric.
- Students begin browsing the free infographic programs listed under Materials, watching tutorials provided on the LMS, and seeing if the program would be good for what they want to accomplish. Students are made aware that they cannot just

plug in information to an already-created template with the same colors, icons, and layout; they must create one from scratch or make major changes (layout, color, etc.) to a template to make it their own.

- Students are given a couple of in-class days where they work on their infographics, while I walk around and troubleshoot with them.
- Then, students give informal but targeted feedback to their classmates based on what they have created so far. This works well in a computer lab where everyone can pull up their infographic draft.
- Finally, if there is time, students present their completed infographics to the class. They must discuss their composition process and rhetorical choices rather than just summarizing the informative or argumentative content. The assignment sheet should lay out what they will need to cover in their reflective presentation. (See Appendix B.)
- Students are graded on the strength of the following aspects: clear purpose & claim; content/information/argument; design and organization; use of appeals; and completion of presentation/reflection.

## Learning Outcomes

Students engaging in this assignment will:

- Learn the genre conventions of an infographic
- Think critically about remediation and multimodality
- Practice composing visual rhetoric
- Gain an understanding of basic design principles

## Learning Accommodations

- The infographic guidelines, design principles lesson, and remediation brainstorming questions can be presented in multiple formats to include asynchronous online delivery.
- Video tutorials for the free infographic creation programs can be provided alongside transcripts or written tutorials.
- The informal peer review could be completed online in an LMS.
- If a student can't present orally in front of the class, they can write their rhetorical reflection.

## Further Reading

Cohn, Jena. "Understanding Visual Rhetoric." *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing*, Edited by Dana Driscoll, Mary Stewart, and Matthew Vetter, Vol 3, Parlor Press, 2020, <https://writingspaces.org/past-volumes/understanding-visual-rhetoric/>.

Moxley, Joseph. "Design Principles: The Big Design Principles You Need to Know to Create Compelling Messages." *Writing Commons*, 2023. <https://writingcommons.org/section/design/principles-of-design/>.

## Appendix A: Remediation Brainstorming Questions

As you decide what information and what graphics to include in your visual argument, and how you will organize them on the page, consider the following questions:

1. What exactly is the argument I want my infographic to convey? It may be your claim as a whole—or, perhaps, you'll find it more appropriate to focus on one aspect of your argument (a particular reason, one solution, etc.).
2. How can I engage my audience? How can I leave my audience thinking? Is there a visual way to accomplish these things? Think about who you are specifically targeting.
3. What is my strongest/most interesting reason or solution? What is my best evidence, example, and source information? These are probably best to focus on.
4. What information in my argument or places in the essay would have benefitted from a visual? Can I use this in my infographic? What can I accomplish with a combination of visuals and words that I could not accomplish with text alone?
5. What kinds of graphics would be most appropriate (photograph, chart, graph, symbols, etc.)? What do I want to represent visually?
6. What kind of argumentative and organizational strategies would work well for my topic/argument (definition, cause/effect, comparison, narrative, timeline, Venn diagram, flowchart, map, etc.)?
7. What color schemes or layout themes would work best with my topic/argument?
8. What kind of arrangement would serve my argument and audience well? What can I use to achieve balance? How can I be consistent? What do I want to emphasize?
9. How will I give credit to others' ideas in my infographic?

## Appendix B: Reflection Instructions

You will also turn in a 1-page reflection with your infographic. It is not an essay but should be edited and in paragraph form. It should discuss some of your design process and choices. If we have time, you

will also show us your infographic in class. As you show us, you are not delivering an argumentative speech. You are just walking us through some of your design process and choices like you did in the reflection. Think about what you are going to say beforehand. Then, just talk to us informally.

Use the following questions to help you reflect:

- Who did you decide as your target audience for this infographic, and why?
- How did you decide what content to pull from your essay versus what to leave out of the visual argument?
- What rhetorical appeals does the infographic feature or focus on? Why did this seem like an appropriate choice? What other argumentative strategies did you decide to use, and why?
- What did you take into consideration in terms of the design/format? Tell us why you made a few specific design tool/principal choices in relation to your argument.
- Show us new information or a graphic that you had to find or create specifically for this visual medium. How did you go about finding or making it?
- What challenges did you face in creating a visual argument? How did you work through them?