

ENG2720 Writing with New Media
Project 1
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NB: Project 1 is an important and integral part of all of the individual assignments that follow in the first 2/3 of the semester.

In Project 1, you will create a Wordpress blog-based “think piece.” The new media communication medium is the Wordpress blog (OpenLab). The type of deliverable expressed in that medium is a think piece, or a type of essay that supports a point of view that you have about something while discussing different aspects of it through the view points and ideas of others. The think piece that you will write for this project should be 750 words.

In essence, it is a short research essay, but it is one in which you grapple with an idea and develop a consensus or grasp on that idea through your discussion. Furthermore, an online think piece is meant for an online audience who might be reading your writing on different kinds of screens, which changes the way your writing is read, and as we know from research, readers who read on screens employ different scanning and skimming strategies than they might use when reading something in print, in say a book or magazine. This means that you need to accommodate the specific needs of an online audience in the way that you write your essay and in the way that you structure its sentences and paragraphs—favoring smaller chunks of information over longer passages and sentences.

Another concern about this project is since it will inform the subsequent individual projects, you will want to choose something about which you are very interested. The subsequent projects will be transformations of this think piece into the medium designated for the other projects, which will help you visualize in a hands-on manner how these new media relate to traditional media and to one another. Additionally, it should be a document that will be useful as a part of your professional portfolio, which means that you should choose a topic or idea that you want to express your professionalism.

Your think piece should not be over 750 words and it should not be fewer than 725 words—aim for as close to 750 words as possible without exceeding the requirement. Word count is the measure by which most online writing is done, and one aspect of this assignment is to satisfy the word count requirement, which you will likely encounter again in the workplace for a variety of reasons (brevity, space, etc.). Word count is inclusive of your quotes and citations.

We will break down the project into these smaller modules, which will lead to your completed assignment:

1. **Planning:** Think of two possible think piece topics to write about. Record a synopsis of these topics in a memo about 250 words long that describes both ideas, and explains why you have chosen one over the other. Even though you will be going with one topic, having some notes about another topic provides you with a backup should you encounter any trouble developing your selected idea. (in-class on Feb. 4)

2. Details: Research your selected topic to better understand what other people say, write, or think about the topic. You should go to newspapers (LexisNexis database and nytimes.com), and academic articles (JSTOR, Academic Search Complete, and others available through the library). Skim the sources that you find and record quotes that you can incorporate into your discussion in the think piece. Record page numbers, and write down the MLA citation information. Put all of this research into its own document that you can return to as you write your think piece article. You should use at least three quotes in your think piece. (begin between classes and complete in-class on Feb. 11)
3. Structure: Create an outline for your think piece essay. Typically, these kinds of articles begin with a problem or question or issue, and the writer discusses, grapples with, and works through the issue in the subsequent paragraphs, and concludes with a resolution or better understanding of the issue at the end. Your outline is a way to help you think through how you want to write your think piece, which will save you time in the long run. Without a good structure for your think piece going into it, writers often get bogged down in details or tangential points, which have to be cut from the final essay before publication. Save yourself time in the long run by creating an outline that you stick to as you write the think piece. Besides aspects of the issue that you will be writing about, you can select quotes/observations/points raised in your research as a paragraph in your outline. Each paragraph should be about a single issue, discussed, and leading into the point of your next paragraph. If it seems like you have one paragraph on your outline with several quotes or points, you should break it into smaller paragraphs. For those paragraphs where you plan to discuss a quote from your research, copy-and-paste the quote, citation, and bibliographic info into that point on your outline. Again, you are setting yourself up for rapid writing and saving time in the next step. (in-class on Feb. 11)
4. Execution: Copy and paste your outline into a new document. Working through your outline, elaborate on each point so that each paragraph develops your think piece's narrative of exploring, working out, or understanding the issue better. As you do this, you can delete your outline's headings so that the further you progress, your think piece will look more like an essay emerging from your notes. When you encounter a quote, explain it and engage it into your discussion. Make sure that you cite it and move the bibliographic info to a new "Works Cited" list that you create at the end of this document. As you progress, always think about how to transition from one paragraph to the next so that your narrative flows from point to point, paragraph to paragraph. Share this document with someone in class to read and provide you with written feedback. Aim as close as possible to 750 words inclusive of your works cited. (in-class on Feb. 16)
5. Archiving: Create a blog post on our OpenLab site with a catchy and engaging title with your byline. For example: Something Funny Happened on the Way to the Forum by Julius Caesar. In the body of your blog post, copy and paste your completed think piece essay from the previous module. Confirm that it is formatted correctly and it has a Works Cited list at the bottom with MLA formatted bibliographic entries for your quoted sources. Following your essay and works cited list, enter a horizontal line (from the tool palette). Then, write a 250-word reflection on how you wrote your think piece, the audiences that you are attempting to reach, and how the medium of online writing (blogging) shaped the way you wrote your think piece. Publish your blog post to complete the assignment. (due on Feb. 18)