

ENG3760 Digital Storytelling
Project 1
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For this first project in ENG3760 Digital Storytelling, you will have an opportunity to plan, design, and execute a non-fiction (fact or truth-based) story broadcast through social media, in this specific case, Twitter. Additionally, the students in the class will interact with the other digital storytellers by using the affordances of Twitter to engage, question, and respond to the stories of others. Another consideration will be what kind of story would you like to tell using new media that will reflect positively on you as a part of your professional portfolio. Of course, this and considerations of readers all involve different audiences for your work online. Who are these audiences, and how do you write for those audiences? Your successful navigation of the rhetorical choices involved in crafting this social media-based digital story will respond to these issues of audience at the heart of this assignment, and in fact, all of the work that we do.

Your nonfiction story should have a beginning, a middle, and an end. It should introduce a catalyst in the beginning, reveal how the event(s) from the catalyst are dealt with in the middle, and ultimately, resolve the aftermath of the catalyst at the end. For this assignment, your non-fiction story should be personal, related to something that you know about or is important to you, and connects directly or indirectly to your professionalism or professional goals. It should reveal how you overcome challenges or negotiated difficulties instead of simply promote yourself or something that you have accomplished easily. Think: Where is the emotional connection? Where is the drama?

For example, you might write about receiving an internship opportunity (beginning), doing the work of the internship (middle), and what the internship led to—job offer, expanded network, etc. (end). Another example might be, you write about wanting a job that you eventually got: you see/hear about the job (beginning), you overcome hurdles to obtain this job (middle), and the job has opened new opportunities, led to promotion, etc. (end).

Let's break down the assignment into smaller modules that reveal a methodical process of composition that will help you create the most effective digital story. To do this, the list below are the deliverables that are due for this assignment:

1. Planning: Think of at least two non-fiction stories that you could tell in this project, and write a brief memo (approximately 250 words) describing the two possible nonfiction stories that you would like to tell in this project, and explaining why, of the two possible choices, you selected the one that you did. Post this as a comment to OpenLab. Also, you should confirm that your Twitter account has a fully formed profile with profile image that fits into your interconnecting online professional image/brand, which of course, you might change over time but it suffices to have a profile in place that you might decide to change later. Also, all students should follow one another and follow Dr. Ellis' @dynamicsubspace Twitter account. (in-class Feb 3)

2. Details: Focusing on your selected story, create a list of events from the beginning to end. Each event, thought, decision, and action should be a separate entry on your list (using a numerical list will be fine for this part). Think about and describe as many details of each point as you can. For example, how did you feel, what were you thinking about, what made you choose one thing over another, what physical details can you include: colors, sounds, place, people, etc. The goal here is to include as many details as possible. In fact, include more details than you might use in your final deliverable on Twitter. The idea is to give yourself as many options to choose from before you craft your digital story. When you put more into this stage, it saves you time and energy later, because if you have to fill in the blanks later, you are trying to make details fit into a structure that you have already decided on. Instead, give yourself the story and details first and you will discover a structure that works for your specific story. There is no one always correct way to tell a story, so you should rely on your story to help you figure out its way of being told. Include this list of details in a memo. (in-class on Feb 8)
3. Structure: With your details memo in hand, look at the pattern of your story points. Are some details irrelevant to the story that you have to tell? If so, cross those out. Should some points be moved around depending on your audience's need for context and understanding of what you are talking about? Then, create a new document, copy your final details list into it, and create three headings between your details that clearly show where the beginning, middle, and end of your story are. Next, look at each point of your story and add at the beginning of each point the number out of how many total number of points there are. For example, I have a story with 12 points. My first point will begin with 1/12 meaning that it is the first out of 12 points (and later, tweets). Then, use Google Drive or Microsoft Office to show you how many characters (and spaces) there are in each point including the "1/12" part. If it is more than 140 characters, you will need to edit that point until it is 140 characters or less. Finally, you will want to write "bookends" for your series of story points. At the top of the list, write up to 140 characters introducing your story with a tl;dr point. This should succinctly say what your story is about, but it should also entice your reader to take the time to find out the details. What can you leave out of this point or allude to in this point that is truthful yet alluding to more info? At the end of your list, write up to 140 characters concluding your series of story points. You might thank your readers for paying attention, or apologizing for the rant (if it is one). You might promise more to come in the future, or direct your reader to details some place else (like a link to a website relevant to your story). (in-class on Feb 10)
4. Execution: We will all login to Twitter during class, and we will all be following one another. Then, one student at a time will run their digital story. Copy and paste each story point into a message and tweet it. Those of us following the student will read the story in real time as it appears, responding to the messages, retweeting, favoriting, etc. Each student will have a turn doing this and we will spend some time discussing each digital story run afterwards. Each student will memorialize their feedback on each story briefly in a comment posted on OpenLab. (in-class on Feb 17)

5. Archiving: This is how you will submit your draft of Project 1. You will archive your digital story as a blog post on our OpenLab site. To do this, you will create a new blog post on our OpenLab site. Give your post a title that does the same thing that your first tweet does—informative and lacking yet encouraging the reader’s curiosity, and your name. For example, “An Archive of Something Funny Happened on the Way to the Forum by Julius Caesar.” In the body of your archive, write a brief introduction stating that this is an archive of a nonfiction story that you published on Twitter, copy and paste the link to each tweet in chronological order (this would be the reverse of Twitter’s reverse-chronological order) beneath the introduction. When you copy and paste a link to a tweet into OpenLab/Wordpress, it turns it into an embedded tweet. Finally, write a concluding reflection of about 250 words on your writing process, who your audiences were, how you shaped your story to connect with those audiences, how effective (or ineffective) your story was based on quoted feedback from your peers (look back at the memorialized feedback from step 5), and write a 50-100 word analysis of your Twitter analytics of your tweeted story (go to ads.twitter.com and review your analytics for the numbers that you can incorporate into this part of the discussion). (due before class on Feb 22)