

Dear Professor Belli,

When I first began the semester, I was excited at all the possibilities that I would entail with writing in New Media. After returning from a summer filled with challenging experiences and unique characters I was thrilled to share all the techniques that I learned over the summer. When I read the course description to refresh my mind, I assumed I would be writing within various new forms of media platforms. After the first class, I realized that I was already well versed in Wordpress and OpenLab due to past courses within the major and my internship at the Communications office at the college. Nonetheless I was overjoyed to learn another side of these mediums that I was familiar with. The semester carried on and during the middle of November you introduced the Final Project.

At first, the project seemed quite interesting. I was excited at the chance of creating an individualized project, which would showcase all of the skills I learned over the semester. During the week of 11/3, I found it very difficult to hone in on an idea that I was interested in. The final project for Writing with New Media seemed like this big cloud of confusion and I could not fully comprehend what was being asked of me. I completely misunderstood the entire project. I began to explore ideas that were centered on storytelling, visual rhetoric and culture within photojournalism. My initial project proposal was surrounded on the idea of visual rhetoric and culture and how new technologies created various online communities which played a role in shaping visual rhetoric and culture. I wanted to examine how many individuals used photos as a way to use visual rhetoric/ visual storytelling to quantify them. I wanted to explore if photos needed content and if different cultures play a role in how we interpret images. Specifically, I wanted to probe the question "Has our cultural beliefs affected the way we interpret a image and why does it affect the way the see a image? I believe that many of these images have shaped the way we see the world and various media misrepresent certain cultures. My belief was that environmental factors, psychology, traumatic events, fear, and age are major factors that play a role in how our psyche interprets an image. Although this seemed like a phenomenal topic to explore, it was not what the project asked for. What I was imaging was a complex psychology topic that would require world-class psychologist and a massive research center. Again that was not the project. I started to get frustrated and shut down.

For the second revision I tried to revise the project using the same idea- not a good idea. In revision number two, I approached the question "Can Photojournalism Changes Our Biases?" This was just like the first proposal, it was more of a proposed theory, and there was no practical deliverables for the project. This one was even more emotional because it would require psychoanalysis of what happens to me when I review an image and if it changes my biases. **Again this was not the assignment.** Slowly but surely, I realized that I wanted my project to center around the ideas of photojournalism and storytelling. Once I discovered that these ideas

could potentially blossom into something unique, I ran with it. The next step of the project was to find sources that supported my idea that I was still nurturing. The annotated bibliography gave me a chance to dig deeper into research that would support my ideas. In doing my research I used a new technique, the annotated bibliography. The annotated bibliography helped to clearly define my proposal. What I realized that I wanted to do was to explore the photoblog Humans of New York (HONY) stories via Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and their blog. My aim was to create a best practices guideline of the blog and then try and create stories using their best practices. This all became apparent later on in the process. This was quite a meaningful revelation because I found the idea that I wanted to explore which would help me in understanding how individuals shared their stories on loss via HONY. The project is very dear to me because I enjoy reading stories on loss and I wanted to see if my rendition of HONY could be just as successful. The process of learning how to share a story via these social sites would help me when I write my memoir later on in my career.

There are various elements of this project that was challenging to me. The first was the initial stage of creating the proposal. I had no idea of what to propose to create a project that would be interesting and would have deliverables that would include multimodal composing elements. I struggled immensely with choosing a research project because I have never done anything like that before. In the first stages when I did not have a clear proposal, it made the research phase very difficult. Nonetheless I tried researching ideas that included storytelling. It took almost an entire month to have a clear idea of what I wanted to do. I feel that as I go along the project begins to manifest in a weird way--- I found it to be beautiful! It was the coming of something spectacular.

While completing the project "At what point in your life do you acknowledge defeat?" was a question that came to my mind. There were moments I wondered, "Have I successfully articulated in my proposal what my project is and how I expect to complete this project. It's very much of challenge to clearly define my purpose of this project as well as the deliverables. I went back and forth with trying to clearly state my vision of this project. The project required a lot of discipline that I did not have because I was focused in various places. As a result, it forced me to rethink my management skills and how I prepare for a project. In a weird way this project has helped me develop as a critical thinker. Specifically, how I analyzed and synthesized a project brief. Looking back, there were many times I did not use my time effectively during the first rounds of this project which made the project more difficult to complete. With the built up frustration and confusion and exhaustion, the project gave me a chance to reflect on who I have been all my life. It has required that I change many of my bad habits. This project required me to clearly define a proposal with specific guidelines. Another significant moment of the project that I did not first take into consideration was how much a collaborative project it would be. I had to not only take into the consideration the feedback from my professor but

also the feedback of my classmates. I was never exposed to anything like that before. It was very challenging the different suggestions--- it was a lot of heads in the pot.

My favorite moment of the project was creating my deliverables. I got a chance to interview individuals on a subject that was dear to my heart, loss. I chose loss because it was important to me to know about the different types of loss people experience through their lives. I interviewed a friend of mine and my friends' friend and lastly myself. I do not identify these individuals because in the blog Humans of New York they remain anonymous. I posted the images on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and my personal blog Black Attire Aficionado. The project in my eyes was a success because various users engaged with the images by liking it, commenting and sharing their story. As a result, I received new followers on social sites such as Instagram, Twitter and Black Attire Aficionado--- I was amazed by how receptive the images were and how people really enjoyed. After completing sharing these images I want to continue to interview individuals and share their stories. I do not hope to gain any popularity or money; I just want to continue to share stories.

Sincerely,

Jodieann J. Stephenson