



## **Teaching Artifact – Assignment: The Culture of Participation**

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### **Instructor Commentary**

The following assignment is taken from a Fall 2014 WRT302: Writing Cultures course at the University of Rhode Island. The course examines ways in which cultures write to meet the rhetorical situations that are part of a culture, where culture is considered to be a group of people with shared values, behaviors, and beliefs (Bates & Plog, 1990). The three cultures were separated into three separate units: Culture of Consumption, the Culture of Participation, and the Culture of Memory. For each culture, students read scholarly articles, did field research, and engaged each other in online forum discussions. At the end of each unit, students created and published a “bundle” which contained examples of at least five genres, where genres were considered “texts” and ranged from purely lexical and static, to multimodal and dynamic.

A major aim of the bundles was to move students from passive consumers of messaging, to creators of their own message -- from consumer, to producer-consumer -- as a way to engage them in the ongoing conversation that is active in various publics. Digital affordances were made available to students via the university’s Production Lab (a multimedia space with computers that had a variety of programs like iMovie and Photoshop, recording, and video devices) and allowed students to combine modes of communication to compose purposeful texts to meet the exigence of the rhetorical situation, as defined by Bitzer (1963). Additionally, the tenets of responsible scholarship were reinforced in each of the bundles; students need to attribute and cite any image, video, audio, etc. that was not of their own creation.

The teaching artifact that follows is taken from The Culture of Participation. In this unit, students read select chapters of Elizabeth Ervin’s *Public Literacy* (Longman, 2003) and learned about publics – everyday, local, national, and global – and the genres used to meet the rhetorical situation inherent in the publics. Students were asked to find and define an issue, exigence, purpose, and context that would guide their selection of genres for their bundles. Issues ranged from domestic abuse, over-reaction to Ebola, animal adoption, to insufficient parking on campus. Students were expected to experiment and create writing in a way that a typical researched essay

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could not, and they were encouraged to choose a combination of modes and genres. Genres used included complete websites, videos, radio spots, bumper stickers, T-shirt designs, and tri-folds, and in every case, students used a variety of modalities to accomplish their purpose. The results were impressive, with one student creating a parody video about the parking situation and another creating an audio radio spot as part of their bundles. All bundles were submitted electronically to a drop box on the course's Sakai site.

WRT302

Fall 2014

Unit 2 / Bundle 2: The Culture of Participation

### **Bundle 2 Requirements:**

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In this bundle, you will have explored, researched, and created documents / genres that respond to the rhetorical situation, as defined by Bitzer. The genres should serve to meet the rhetorical situation in at least two of the publics we have discussed (everyday, local, national, or global). Again, you have a choice of genres, but the manner in which you include these genres has changed from Bundle #1, since you are encouraged to use other modalities than static-visual, and lexical.

#### **1: Letter of Introduction:**

Your letter of introduction, or multimodal introduction must include your location in the public of your choice, and describe that organization's or community's role in meeting the exigence of the public(s) you intend to reach. You have two choices:

1: Single participant: person who is a part of a public, looking to encourage participation as a way to respond to the exigence and audience (public/s) that comprise a rhetorical situation, presented by your topic and issue.

2: Community participant: a person who is a part of an organized community, whose work is to participate and to foster participation in public(s), as a way to respond to the exigence and audience of the publics you represent, and the publics that you want to participate in your topic and issue.

Whether you choose to be a single person, or a member of an organized community, your bundle will contain an introductory document that clearly defines and describes the following:

**Topic**

**Issue**

**Exigence**

**Purpose**

**Context**

**Publics**

**Genres chosen, and why**

**Plan to participate / encourage others in your public(s) to participate**

#### **2: Genres for the Bundle:**

**Your bundle will contain 5** of the following possible genres. You are encouraged to make use of a variety of modalities in any of the genres. **If you want to explore a genre that is not listed here, you must meet with me within the next week.**

**A video public service spot or advertisement = *three genres out of the five required genres***

**TV:** if you choose TV as a medium, and a public service announcement, event announcement, or advertisement as your genre, then you will need to:

- 1) **Create, complete and include a story board, with timing, notations for music, etc.;** you are encouraged to use Powerpoint, iMovie, or a similar digital-visual mode
- 2) include audience analysis for the medium and public(s), as a separate document
- 3) post a video, to Youtube that I can access and view via imbedded link, no more than 30 seconds long for a public service spot, or no more than 15 seconds long as an advertisement.

**\*\*\*All images used in the video that are not directly created by you, must be cited on a works cited page, visible at the end of the video.**

**A Radio spot or advertisement = *three genres out of the five required genres***

**Radio:** if you choose radio as medium, and a public service announcement, event announcement, or advertisement as your genre, you must:

- 1) create and complete a radio script with notations for music, etc.
- 2) include audience analysis for the medium & publics as a separate document
- 3) a recording of the announcement or commercial, embedded as a link in your bundle.

This link must be able to be opened and listened to. Since I have iTunes, I recommend that format of recording, though you can also use Windows media player

**\*\*\*Any music used in the radio spot that is not directly created by you, must be cited on a separate works cited page, in your bundle.**

**Single Genres:**

These are typical lexical genres:

- A ballot initiative, including space for signatures
- A bumper sticker, t-shirt design, or bill-board, including an audience analysis
- A website homepage, describing your organized community's topic and issue
- A letter to an editor of a newspaper or Op-Ed column
- Flyers that can be handed out
- Meeting minutes
- Press release
- Other?

**3: Summarized audience analysis and research**

A brief summary of your audience analysis and research used to create your bundle, as the last item in your bundle.

**Format and Due Date:**

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The completed bundle must come to me as a website or as a PowerPoint if you are using visual and audio modes. All links must be active and functioning. Lexical modes should come as a MS Word document, or PDF.

**References**

- Bates, D. G., and F. Plog. (1991) *Human adaptive strategies*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Bitzer, L. F. (1968) The rhetorical situation. *Philosophy and Rhetoric, 1.1*. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40236733>
- Ervin, E. (2003). *Public literacies*. New York: Longman.