**URBAN ECOLOGY VIDEO PROJECT**

For this assignment, you will work in groups of 3 to create a short video telling a story about urban ecology issues or themes we have been discussing this semester. Government organizations, NGOs and private business are increasingly using multimedia techniques to convey information, sway public opinion, and attract clients. In this project you can try your hand at creating informative and engaging video content. We will watch the videos in class on December 6th.

**Digital Storytelling**

Your goal in this assignment is to create a compelling narrative that inspires viewers to think differently about urban ecology. You may choose to tackle a theme that has not received much attention in public discourse on urban sustainability. Or you might take a prominent issue and examine it from a new angle. Either way, your goal is to provoke thought, reflection, and discussion.

We will talk in class about what makes a compelling digital story, but here are some considerations:

* Audience. For this project, imagine that your audience is the Macalester community. In other words, a smart and educated group of people, but who may not have any specific knowledge of the issue or topic you are addressing.
* Degree of persuasion. Do you want to convince your audience of your stance and perhaps make a call to action? Or do you want to expose a debate and let the audience make up their own minds? Or perhaps you will fall somewhere in between. Either way, make sure that you have a clear idea of the purpose of your video. **By the end of this assignment, you should be able to state the main idea of your video in one, clear sentence.**
* Depth and breath. What is the scale and scope of video? What can you reasonably get across in a short amount of time? How much detail do you need to make your story seem “complete”?
* Working with a group. Keep in mind that this is a collaborative effort. Be open to the suggestions of your group members. Listen carefully to their ideas and be curious rather than judgmental. Also be prepared to compromise your “artistic vision” at points.

**Video Format**

* The video must be 4-6 minutes in length. Points will be taken off for videos that do not stay within these limits.
* Each group member is required to contribute to the production of the video. At the end of the project, you will evaluate each of your group members as to their level of engagement in the project. This evaluation will greatly influence overall participation grades for the course.
* You can use any format you choose for the video. For example, you can film yourself in front of the camera. Or you can use still shots and video accompanied by audio narration. The main criterion is that you choose a format in which you can engage the audience visually and audibly.

**Ethical Considerations**

* Video Release: If you choose to interview people for this project (keep in mind that this is not required), you will need to obtain a video release. Video release forms will be posted on Moodle. Please do not interview people under the age of 18 as they are not covered by the video release.
* Copyrighted Material: Be aware of using copyrighted material in your video including video/audio clips and still images. The general rule is to use no more than 10 minutes or 10% of copyrighted video or audio footage, whichever is less, and to use only open source images.

**For Inspiration…**

* For examples of student work, I will be posting last year’s videos on Moodle. Keep in mind that parameters of the assignment were different than they are this term. Also you might check out the videos produced for Pete Ferderer’s Macroeconomic course. Links to the videos are found at the top of the page under the section titled “Intermediate Macro Prize Winning Videos:”

<http://www.macalester.edu/~ferderer/macroeconomics.htm>

* Planet Forward ([www.planetforward.org](http://www.planetforward.org)) is a sustainability media network that posts many short video produced by students and non-media professionals.
* The Northwest Institute for Social Change holds an annual student sustainability film contest. You can view interesting video on their site and you might consider submitting your own entry: <http://nwisc.com/programs/student_sustainability_film/>
* For inspiration from professional work I recommend “Climate Wisconsin: Stories from a State of Change:”

<http://climatewisconsin.org/>

* The following sites are also great resources for digital storytelling:
	+ The Digital Naturalists is a blog about the art of digital storytelling in the NGO/advocacy context: <http://www.thedigitalnaturalist.com/>
	+ World Documentaries has a variety of documentary and media projects with an international focus: <http://www.wdocs.me/>
	+ Center for Digital Storytelling has examples of compelling stories told by non-professionals: [www.storycenter.org](http://www.storycenter.org)
	+ Vimeo Video School has great “how to” videos: <http://vimeo.com/videoschool>

**Resources**

Video equipment, iMovie editing software, and technical assistance can be found at the Humanities Resource Center:

* Hours of operation: <http://www.macalester.edu/hrc/hours.html>
* Instructions for iMovie 9 and 11 are posted on Moodle.

**Technical Considerations**

These videos need not be technically sophisticated, but they do need to be watchable and audible. Learning to work with the video equipment and software is part of the learning that goes into this assignment. Here are some tips to think about as you get started:

1. I will be posting a variety of helpful resources on Moodle. These include: iMovie instructions, advice from students who have done this project in the past, a basic guide to digital storytelling, and links to example videos.
2. Plan for and expect technical difficulties. Things will inevitably go wrong as you work on this project. Make sure you leave time to resolve difficulties that come up and be ready with a “plan b” if needed.
3. It is helpful to stick with one type of camera when filming and one computer when editing. Moving back and forth across different equipment can lead to glitches.
4. PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTIVE. The best way get decent audio and video is to experiment with the equipment ahead of time. Practice filming your roommates in a variety of situations. Actually download your footage to your computer to see how it looks and sounds.
5. Give yourself time to do sound and audio checks before you need to film. That means showing up for interviews and appointments early.
6. Audio is at least as important, if not more so, than video. The HCR does not have external mics, but consider using your cell phone or a digital voice record to get back-up audio recording.
7. It is the job of the student workers at the HRC to help you resolve technical difficulties. If they are unable to solve your problems let me or Alison Sommer know.

**Assignment Components and Deadlines**

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| **Sept 27: Video Project Proposal Due** |
| Between now and Sept 27, take time to explore example videos, research possible topics, form groups with your classmates, and consider what issues that might be well suited to a video. As a group, you will turn in 3-4 sentences on your video idea topic on Sept 27 (bring a hard copy with you to class). |
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| **Oct 9: Annotated Bibliography & Prospectus Due** |
| *Annotated Bibliography*1. Each student in the group will find **4 articles** that apply to their video topic (each group member must find different articles). Your group will create a Google Docs file, which you will share with me and Manu. In the Google Doc, each student in the group will post the bibliographic information for their selected articles as well as a 100-150 word annotation that describes and evaluates:
	1. The main points or arguments advanced in the article
	2. The evidence used to support these points
	3. The significance of the article

For more information on annotated bibliographies see: <http://olinuris.library.cornell.edu/ref/research/skill28.htm>Select articles from academic peer-reviewed journals that contain research studies or position pieces. Please ask if you have any questions about whether an article is appropriate. Make sure to read the articles carefully a few times so you have extensive and detailed knowledge of each one. 1. All members of a group will also **read 2 “foundational” articles** in addition to the 4 they have selected to read. It is up to the group to identify which articles count as foundational. Once identified, each person on the group will read these articles and use them to create a common base of knowledge about the topic. The bibliographic information for these should also be posted on the Google Doc.

*Prospectus*A prospectus is a preliminary proposal for how you see your video coming together. Specifically, you will write approximately two pages in which you outline the content, purpose, and format of your video as well as your plan for getting the work done. Make sure to identify the **main point**you want to get across in your video (as you currently understand it). Also discuss where and when you plan to film (you might want to include a timeline). Post your prospectus on your Google Doc, followed by your annotated bibliography.  |
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| **Oct 11: Video Editing Basics with the Humanities Resource Center** |
| A staff member from the Humanities Resource Center will be joining us in class on Oct 11. They will go over the basics of how to check out video equipment, steps for editing with iMovie, and how to troubleshoot technical difficulties.  |
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| **Oct 23: Raw Video/Audio Check; Reaction Essays; & Story Board** |
| Oct 23 is a workshop day in class. You will have time to work with your group and I will spend time talking with each video team. You will need to come to class with some raw video and audio footage that you have downloaded to your computer. This is to ensure that you have made progress in filming and are on the right track dealing with the technology. In addition, you will also turn in the following items:1. A 2-3 page individual reaction essay in which you respond to the articles you selected as part of your annotated bibliography. This essay will serve as a starting point for your individual research paper that is due on Nov 29 (I will provide a drop box on Moodle).
2. As a group, you will also turn in a storyboard for your video. A storyboard is simply a scene-by-scene sketch of the video with notes about dialog and action that helps you conceptualize the layout of your film. To create a storyboard, search for “storyboard template” on Google images. Use or modify one that you like. Please bring a hard copy with you to class.
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| **Nov 8: Two Minutes Edited** |
| By the start of class on Nov 8, you will upload two minutes of edited video to Moodle. This is to ensure that you have made progress with the editing process and to give you practice exporting files to their final form.  |
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| **Nov 29: Individual Research Paper Due** |
| On Nov 29th you will turn in a 7-10 page individual research paper on a subject related to your video project. The purpose of this assignment is to allow you to explore more systematically and comprehensively issues relevant to your video topic. I will provide details on the research paper in the coming week.  |
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| **Dec 6: Final Videos** |
| Your final video is due by 9:00am on Dec 6. You will upload your videos to a drop box on Moodle. We will watch the videos in class and also celebrate all our hard work with a pot-luck lunch! |

**Grading and Assessment**

The video project is worth 20% of your final grade. The rubric I will use grade your video projects will be posted on Moodle. In general, you will be graded on the following criteria:

1. Intermediary project components.
2. Choice of topic.
3. Storyline
4. Watchability
5. Visual aspects
6. Sound
7. Length

\* Note that participation will be graded by your peers and will count toward your overall participation grade for the course.