

ENGL 1010.031 Seminar in Academic Writing: Empathy & Activism Social Engagement Project

Throughout the semester, you will dive into an issue or movement and engage in your own act of empathy that helps promote or take part in the issue or movement's concerns. This project comprises several parts including ongoing field research, proposals, and drafting that will culminate in a multimodal composition which brings together empathy and activism. These projects are "multimodal" in that they encourage you to compose in more than one way, perhaps outside of written text, be it aurally (sound), physically, verbally, visually, or otherwise. I encourage you to think broadly about how your project defines activism, how effective it is in achieving the goals of activism, and in what ways it relies upon or subverts what you already know and what we learn about empathy this semester.

Your projects will take several shapes, but each will require rigorous research and extensive work, acting as an equivalent of a research project. Consider the following guidelines as you conceive and compose this idea:

Students will

- Engage deeply in a relevant cause/issue/movement through various research approaches
- Draft and compose an act of activism that rhetorically expresses and calls for empathy for others

Projects need to

- Be grounded in empathetic concern for others
- Present information to viewers/listeners/etc. that urges and encourages individual or communal response
- Articulate a specific objective to its viewers/listeners/etc.
- Demonstrate thorough knowledge of the cause/movement/issue with which it engages
- Clearly detail methods of further engagement for others
- Be aesthetically engaging through strategic rhetorical design choices

We will work on this project throughout the semester, and it will comprise several parts. Tentative dates for these tasks are below. As their dates of completion near we will discuss in more detail what each may look like and how formal they should be. Click the underlined text in the table to be directed to the specifics of that task in this document.

Note: I suggest downloading this document and putting your survey answers and citations in it rather than making a new file. Then, share this file with me via Google Drive, so that I can stay apprised of your research process.

Social Engagement Project Prompt Contents & Deadlines

Page	Task	Due Date
3	Interview Write-up	Contact interviewee: Tues., 1/29 Submit Write-Up: Tues., 2/12
4	Surveying Your Interests	Thurs., Jan. 31
6	Reviewing Your Initial Research	Tues., Feb. 12
8	Proposal	Draft: Thurs., 4/2 (in class) Revised: Tues., 4/9
10	Research Log	Discussed every Tues., 2/5 - 4/9
N/A	Final Project	Tues., 4/16 - Thurs., 4/18

Interview & Write-Up

In order to get a sense of how pervasive helping others is in our daily lives, I ask that you interview someone from a field, career, or life situation you are interested in or admire. This might include your professors, professionals in your major or field, local business owners or representatives, parents' friends, or staff at the university. If you are unable to find someone to interview, please let me know and I will put you in touch with someone.

After, please write up a summary and reflection about the interview following the guidelines below.

For this part of the Social Engagement Project you will:

1. Contact your prospective interviewee via email, using the model we create as a class as a guide.
2. Schedule the interview and determine how it will take place (e.g., in person, over the phone, via email, etc.).
3. Ask the interviewee at least four-to-five questions. Be sure to take notes either by hand, by recording the conversation (*only* with their permission), or saving the emailed answers they give you.
4. Submit a write-up that includes the following:
 - A brief summary of interview in terms of the experience, how it went, and the answers given. (This will act as a sort of overview of the transcription following it.)
 - A copy of the questions asked and transcription of the answers (either in full, if via email, or summary if only through your notes).
 - Discussion of what you learned about this person and their view of activism, empathy, and their field.
 - Discussion of how this gives you a sense of the way empathy-driven activism (in the broad way in which we're defining it) occurs in the lives of others.
 - How does this give you some sense of where you might start brainstorming the causes and issues that interest you?

Mechanics:

Please note that there is no specific length required, aside from being sure to ask your interviewee 4-5 questions. Your write-ups will vary in length.

Surveying Your Interests

The below survey asks you some guided questions to help kickstart your thinking about the Social Engagement Project. You will need access to the internet to complete this. I estimate that this process will take approximately 35 minutes (depending on computer speed, how your thoughts develop, and how far you get sucked into a Wikihole).

1. Give yourself a two-to-three minutes to list answers for the following guided questions. While some of your responses might seem unconnected right now, write down all the ones you can think of — they might help generate more complex ideas later on.

- a. What are some of your general interests?

Click or tap here to enter text.

- b. In your intended or prospective major(s), what are some of the issues that people care about?

Click or tap here to enter text.

- c. When you are scrolling through social media or wandering aimlessly online, what sorts of sites, information, or stories do you tend to read? (No judgement here, folks.)

Click or tap here to enter text.

2. Review your answers to the above questions. Mark three that interest you most (whether by highlighting, underlining, or bolding the text).
3. Using your browser (e.g., Safari, Chrome, Firefox, etc.), give yourself approximately five minutes to search around about each of these topics. You might start with the “News” tab in Google Chrome, or go down a Wikihole. (See [Shirley Li’s 2014 article on Wikiholes here](#) for details about this and also sad news about *Air Bud*.)
4. At the end of each five-minute stretch, jot down a few notes about your search. Did you uncover anything interesting or weird? Where did you end up?

- a. First search term

Click or tap here to enter text.

- b. Second search term

Click or tap here to enter text.

- c. Third search term

Click or tap here to enter text.

5. Based on your research above, write a few sentences about your developing ideas for the project. You might mention what overall issues or causes you want to investigate, or explain how and why you're debating between more than one topic.

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Now that you have gathered information about your general interests, we will spend some time in class helping each other select initial research topics.

Reviewing Your Initial Research

After you have selected your initial topic, it's time to start digging in to find more information.

Reminder: *Before* closing out your browser and/or erasing your search history, remember to take five-to-ten minutes and jot down the sources that you want to return to later in your research log.

1. Briefly describe your research interest. (Don't sweat - doesn't have to be perfect & it may still change as you research!)

Click or tap here to enter text.

2. Where are you considering searching and for what? (Be as complete as you can. Sources for search could be people, books, websites, films, newscasts, databases, the natural world, i.e., observation; music, i.e., instruments or lyrics; etc.)

Click or tap here to enter text.

3. What search terms will you use? Be on the lookout for new, related terms that come up often in your search results. Write those new terms down here. (For example, if you were exploring gun control activism, you might start by searching "gun control," but find articles that often mention other terms like "school safety," "school violence," or "school shootings.")

Click or tap here to enter text.

4. Now, try out your search across blogs/forums, library databases, web browsers, or news sites to see what people are talking about. Give yourself a reasonable amount of time to adjust your search terms more than once and to scroll through responses.

Note: Don't worry at this point about reading articles in depth (or, in some cases, at all); right now you're taking stock of the ideas that are out there. Skim some abstracts or a paragraph here or there, check out article titles, where they are published, and who publishes them. If you are researching through the library databases, look at what keywords continue to appear.

5. What have you found that's interesting so far, and what makes it interesting?

Click or tap here to enter text.

6. What sorts of information or resources are you coming across that are not relevant to your project right now? That is, what other topics, issues, or fields seem to be appearing in your searches that you do not plan on using.

Click or tap here to enter text.

7. Now that you've started diving into this topic, what do you want to know more about? How will you adjust your search to find this information? (i.e., will you search in a different venue, like a news site or database? Try new search terms? Adjust your focus?)

Click or tap here to enter text.

8. How have your overall ideas about the social engagement project developed and changes during this process?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Remember to record the sources that you want to return to later in your research log!

Project Proposal

The goal of your social engagement project is to use what we have discussed in class and your own knowledge to engage in an act of empathy-driven activism. This multimodal needs to express your own empathy and encourage it in others. In many ways, we rely upon Rajini Srikanth's claim that "empathy, to be worth anything, must be accompanied by meaningful intervention" (5). Your project needs to

- Identify and respond to a harm inflicted upon others
- Serves to help others and encourage others to do so
- Demonstrate knowledge of the harm, the affected group, and movements/persons trying to help them
- Make strategic decisions about engaging in activism
- Creatively use media (writing, images, sound, video, objects, etc.) to invite interaction with this cause

Your proposal will detail how you will accomplish these objectives, by offering background information, outlining the plan for your project (including a timeline), and explaining your goals for it. Your proposal may be broken down into different sections (i.e., it may include an outline), but be sure that your ideas in each section are legible. `

1. The Issue

- What is the harm being done? Who is affected, and who or what is causing this harm?
- History of this issue: where is this occurring? For how long has it been happening?
- What social structures impact how this issue or the people affected by it are viewed? (i.e., is this supported within law? social beliefs or values? powerful advocates?)
- What individuals, groups, or organizations have already started trying to address this harm? What have they done?

2. Your Intervention

- Specifically, what is your project? What are you doing or creating? What materials will you use?
- Imagine the audience for this project. What do you foresee them already knowing about this issue? What will you need to elaborate on for them?
- What actions does your project suggest that others take?
- How do you hope your project furthers, adds to, or offers a new direction from what other organizations and people are already doing to help?

3. Research

- What knowledge do you still need to gain for your project? What questions might you need to ask to get there?
- What resources do you need for your project? Can you access these resources at UConn? Do you need to learn how to use any of these resources? What additional research might you need to do to work with them?

4. Theory

- What are the values about activism (ones that we've discussed or others of your own) that you see your project exhibiting? How is your project engaging with some of the current discussions happening about activism, including the texts we have read in class?
- What are some of the concerns you have about acting as an activist?

5. Works Cited

- Include a list of the sources you have used to explore the movement and your project.
- Be sure to use MLA format 8th edition.

6. Timeline

- Generate a timeline that outlines what you'll need to create and prepare for your project. Identify each of its moving parts and offer dates for when they need to be completed. For instance, if you'll be making a video, you'll need a script or concept beforehand, you'll need to locate and learn how to use resources, and you'll likely want to practice it a few times before the final project.

Mechanics

- 500-750 words (~2-3 pages), not including the Works Cited page
- MLA conventions:
 - Size 12 point, black, Times New Roman font
 - Double-spaced
 - 1-inch margins
 - Headers with last name & page number, and
 - Remember to include In-text/parenthetical citations that correspond with the separate Works Cited page.

Research Log

Use this to keep track of what you find during your research. While I suggest including citations here at the beginning (to save you time on your works cited pages in the future), be sure to at least include a link to your source to reference it later.

Date	Source Citation	Brief Summary	Will you use it in the project? If so, how?
1/22	[Example] https://www.cosmopolitan.com/politics/a19482963/emma-gonzalez-march-for-our-lives-speech-transcript/	This covers Emma Gonzalez’s speech and gives a bit of context about what she said and why she held her moment of silence.	I might use this to look at empathy in youth activism and moments of silence.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Date	Source Citation	Brief Summary	Will you use it in the project? How?
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Date	Source Citation	Brief Summary	Will you use it in the project? How?
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Date	Source Citation	Brief Summary	Will you use it in the project? How?
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Date	Source Citation	Brief Summary	Will you use it in the project? How?
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.