

# *Writing Spaces* Assignments & Activities Archive

## Reflective Artist's Statement for Multimodal Assignments

*Benjamin Djain & Angela Geosits*

This activity guide is a selection from the *Writing Spaces* Assignment and Activity Archive, an open access companion resource to the Writing Spaces open textbook series.

To access additional selections, visit:

<http://writingspaces.org/aaa>.

Assignment and activity selections © 2020 by the respective authors. Unless otherwise stated, these works are licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) and are subject to the Writing Spaces Terms of Use. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>, email [info@creativecommons.org](mailto:info@creativecommons.org), or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA. To view the Writing Spaces Terms of Use, visit <http://writingspaces.org/terms-of-use>.

All rights reserved. For permission to reprint, please contact the author(s) of the individual articles, who are the respective copyright owners.

# Reflective Artist's Statement for Multimodal Assignments

*Benjamin Djain & Angela Geosits*

## Overview

The challenge of providing a multimodal assignment to students is encouraging creativity and experimentation with tools that are unfamiliar while, at the same time, ensuring that their work can be marked to a standard. Having students craft a substantive artist's statement fulfills this dual remit of recognizing the student's efforts at using an unfamiliar format while maintaining the learning outcomes of a writing class.

One of these learning outcomes encourages students to reflect on their writing, a process that Bourelle et al. see as a natural extension of multimodal writing work: "Much like our belief that multimodal composing provides learning opportunities that stretch rhetorical understanding for students designing multimodal projects, using a variety of modes to mediate students' reflective practices stretches students' meaning-making capabilities" (91). The artist's statement activity asks students to engage in reflection through a sequence of steps. First, students are given the prompt for the multimodal project assignment and are asked to brainstorm ideas to develop in their project as well as possibilities for how they could communicate their ideas through new modes. In this step, students should be encouraged to use both written techniques for generating ideas, such as brainstorming and free writing, and visual techniques, such as sketching and coloring their proposed content and format. By incorporating coloring or sketching during the planning stages of the multimodal process, the abstract nature of multimodal projects becomes more concrete for students. When students have already begun working in multiple modes, it can also be less intimidating to continue developing the multimodal composition. A further benefit of incorporating coloring or

sketching in this step is that visual organization begins to develop naturally. The brainstorming step is then followed by a group workshop, where students answer specific questions about what they are trying to achieve with their multimodal project, what challenges they think they'll face, and why they're choosing to present their work in their chosen format. Later, after an initial draft is produced, students will return to the same workshop groups and review their work. Finally, students will submit their artist's statement alongside their multimodal assignment. Being guided through such a detailed process provides students with a great amount of content to reflect on in their final artist's statement. The key to a good artist's statement is a student's reflection on the entire process, from invention to execution that led to the multimodal project it accompanies.

This reflective artist's statement activity is designed to be incorporated alongside any multimodal assignment. The process of drafting the artist's statement during the planning stage helps students clearly envision their multimodal project. As the multimodal project is completed, the artist's statement should be revised to reflect the challenges and triumphs of the multimodal composition process. If the artist's statement is part of the final submission, we recommend that students are not asked to generate extensive new text in the multimodal project, since that would discourage their reflection on the project. This approach is then ideal for more visual or audio driven multimodal assignments that are not text heavy. Another alternative would have students rearrange existing work into a multimodal portfolio, making reflection the focus of the assessment. Finally, we recommend making a multimodal prompt for the assignment. Students appreciate seeing different possibilities for rhetorical communication as part of the classroom experience. An instructor might choose to provide color or images as part of their assignment prompt, to deliver the prompt via video, or even to sketch the prompt on a whiteboard or connected drawing device (such as an iPad or Wacom tablet connected to Zoom).

## Time commitment

3-4 weeks

## Materials

Students will need access to a range of drawing and coloring materials for the initial brainstorming session (the more they can work with, the better).

## Activity Process

- Students will generate ideas about their multimodal assignment. A variety of written and visual techniques for invention should be suggested. Students should be encouraged to draw and color their initial vision of their project.
- Next, students will meet in workshop groups to discuss their vision for their project. Students will exchange ideas and potential challenges.
- Then, students will write their draft artist statement in conjunction with completing their larger multimodal project.
- Subsequently, their draft artist statement is workshopped alongside the main assignment. Assigning the same workshop groups as in the previous step can give students the benefit of seeing each other's projects throughout their development.
- Finally, a full artist's statement is submitted alongside the major assignment.

## Learning Outcomes

Students engaging in this activity/assignment will:

- Gain an understanding of the importance of an artist's statement for an effective multimodal project
- Experiment with new, hands-on approaches to

brainstorming and generating ideas

- Think critically about their own writing process by reflecting on it through the lens of a different modality
- Create a new framework for tackling writing that relies less on a template and more on the rhetorical situation

## Learning Accommodations

- It should be clearly communicated to students that the drawing component of the brainstorming step will not be assessed for artistic skill.
- Students may choose two different forms of participation in the group component of this activity, as a discussion leader or note-taker, to maximize engagement and accommodate different learning styles.
- Material should be presented in multiple formats to include in-person instruction and asynchronous, digital delivery.

## Works Cited

Bourelle, Tiffany et al. "Thinking beyond Multimodal Projects: Incorporating Multimodal Literacy into Composing and Reflection Processes." *Bridging the Multimodal Gap: From Theory to Practice*, edited by Santosh Khadka and J. C. Lee, Utah State University Press, 2019, pp. 87-104.