

RUBRIC FOR VIDEO ESSAY ASSIGNMENT  
(25% of final Course Grade)

Your task is to work collaboratively with three (or four) of your classmates to produce a brief 3-5 minute video essay on a historical subject. A Video essay uses a combination of text (words) and images (photographs, maps, video), as well perhaps as music to convey information about your subject. After watching your video essay, a viewer should know the basic details concerning your topic as well as have an appreciation of its significance to American history. As video historians, your first task is to accurately research and describe your topic. Imagine that your audience is a peer (a friend or fellow student) who is not in this class. Your finished video essay should seek to inform this intelligent but uninformed viewer who or what your topic was – the significance of your topic to the major themes of American history, either in what it caused or in how it reflects upon larger issues, and also why they should care about your topic – that is, you need to make it interesting and engaging.

The Assignment is broken into three parts:

1.) Writing a Production Script (due October 25<sup>th</sup>) – this is worth 40% of the video essay grade

The Production script is a blueprint of how your final video essay will look and sound. This is to be created by the entire team, and will be submitted (and evaluated and critiqued) before you proceed to actually making your video essay.

The finished production script should be divided into two parts.

The first part will contain the “sound track” of your video essay. This part should include all the words that will be read aloud during your video (as well as an indication as to who will be reading them). If any part of your narration script consists of quotations of material either written by your subject(s) or by someone else writing about them (it), you need to list the source and page reference for the quote in the script (although you do not need to speak these references aloud in the essay). You cannot cite any inter-net site or web-page as a final source, but must find a printed (or manuscript) source for everything. (If you find it on the web, you must also find

out where they found it.) Likewise, if you use music – to introduce, conclude, or as a background soundtrack in your essay – the name of the music and the artist should be listed as well as the source from which you obtained (i.e., downloaded it). (You should also indicate – in seconds – precisely how long the music will play – when it will start and when it will end). Your spoken text (script) should be approximately 500 words long, this will probably take about 4:00 minutes to read at a moderate pace allowing for pauses etc..

The other part of your production script is the visual “script” (or “image track”) for your essay. Here you will describe exactly what images (or who – if you are filming a “talking head” narrator) will be on the screen at every moment of your video and for how long the image will be shown (in seconds). You need to provide information regarding the original (non-web) source for any images you use, as well as where you obtained them. You cannot use any image or film for which you cannot locate an original (i.e. non-digital) source. Thus, if you find an image on “Google Images,” you must also discover from where “Google Images” got the image. Any words, graphs, maps, that will appear on screen in your video (apart from words contained within a photograph) should also be listed here. If any of these are taken from other sources you need to provide proper citations. If you use a video within your video (i.e. a clip from a movie, documentary, or you-tube) you must indicate where it came from and provide information on how you obtained it. No more than 10% of your video essay can consist of clips taken from other videos – that is, if your video essay is 5 minutes long, the total length of all the clips you put into it cannot exceed 30 seconds. Likewise, ten seconds is the maximum time that any one image can remain on the screen at a time. So you should aim for at least thirty different image changes during a 5 minute video essay.

These two parts can be written as opposing pages (of a two sided essay), so that odd pages show the “sound track” and even pages show the “image track.” Or, the essay can be written as two separate columns on the same page, or even in a single column in two type-faces. Clarity for the reader (me!) is the object here.

Your production script will be evaluated and graded by me and your TA on the basis of its historical accuracy and content and not for creativity, per se. The key questions

are: a.) Is what you say about your topic true (or at least verifiable)? b.) Is it sufficient (that is, did you leave out anything that is essential)? c.) Do you have proper citations for all your quotes and images? d.) Is there a sufficient bibliography at the end (i.e., have you consulted and cited the most relevant and recent sources)?

2.) Video Essay – (due no later than noon, Wednesday, 27 November) – 40% of video essay grade

Finished Video essays will be downloaded in a digital “drop box” visible only to you and your team and myself and the class TAs. They will be viewed and evaluated for all of the above (historical content) but also for their “artistic merit” – that is, is your video essay interesting, engaging, and “watchable”? In this vein, I would caution you however against being too flippant, or satirical in your essays. While I want you to have fun with your essay topic, any video essay that makes fun of its subject will be graded harshly. (Fun with = good; fun of = bad).

3.) Assessment of Project and Peer evaluation – (due in class on December 6) – 10% of video essay grade

Each individual student will write a 500 word assessment of their project and of the contributions made by each member of their team. Your grade on this portion of the assignment will be based upon the assessment of your peers.