

Exploring Assessment in Group Work and Presentations:  
Tracking Learning in Media Theory-Practice Courses

**Group Learning and Presentations Positives**

- a) Group learning recognizes the student as more of an active agent in the learning process; they become less of a site for banking information/knowledge and more of a proactive individual who processes knowledge whilst working upon course content.
- b) Group work equips the student with key skills for work in their professional working environment. Assessing students in this situation enables them to advance skills and abilities so they can work in group environments. Employers seek good skills in terms of oral and written communications and group work facilitates this.
- c) As media project group work and presentations are transferable skills, they allow for the development of subject specific knowledge base as students acquire new information in new settings.
- d) By way of group work and presentations, students become more motivated and focused. They develop team work attributes, with encouragement and feedback, such as responsibility toward completing successful project work.

Negatives

When it comes to assessing group work and presentations, there are some negatives. Fairness is one. How is the grade fair for that individual who has committed less to the group project that does well? The 'free-rider' is a good example. There is always one person who finds him/herself benefiting without too much effort but the self & peer evaluation does have an impact (see below).

Exploring Assessment in Group Work and Presentations:  
Tracking Learning in Media Theory-Practice Courses

**Assessment**

Whatever these factors are, it is important for the student in her/his learning that s/he is able to track work from the *Aims* of the project, through *Learning Objectives* to *Assessment Criteria* and thus, to their *Grade*; in how well or not so well they have done. It's also important for faculty to track learning too. Consequently, clarity in what students achieve in a group project is needed as well where they achieved it, complemented by how well/not so well, they did. Thus, knowing *the learning outcomes* is a matter of fairness (i.e., an even playing field); so they can determine how well they have achieved work against that of their peers. It is also useful for professors to determine at which assessment point the student complaining about their grade, did not perform well and to critically identify the area of their work they need to better.

Once the learning outcomes for a course are published, then at the end of it students:

- a) Are enabled to know how well they have or have not achieved them.
- b) Are able to discriminate how well or not so well they have achieved them against peers.
- c) And thus, learning undertaken becomes more clearly delineated to them.
- d) There is fairness across and even playing field for all to see.
- e) All can see where they did well or not so well.

Students can then move to more specific tasks with connected learning objectives and assessment criteria.

Exploring Assessment in Group Work and Presentations:  
Tracking Learning in Media Theory-Practice Courses

**Main Documentary Project**

The main aim of your documentary production project is to focus upon an event from North Adams social history and related action(s) which in some way or other, draws the human condition into conflict. Reflecting upon NA history, your next aim/intention will be to depict the event/actions, educating and informing your target audience in a documentary form of your choice, across 20 minutes. This process will open with an anchor offering a live introduction in the television studio and it will similarly, close there too. In the intervening period you will produce a documentary edited on Avid Media Composer. All of the process toward this main project will be supported by documentation which is outlined below.

The project requires you reflect closely on your reading from *Developing Story Ideas* (by Rabiger, p.7-67) using its ideas as stimulus for your own storytelling techniques. Your aim will be to tell the story of one or more key characters in this narrative but one character must be especially prominent; with expositional discourses revealing the person's part in the events/actions. Your depiction here will be in-depth, revealing for the audience what sort of person this was and what was going on. The narrative structure will also be central to illuminating for the audience, how this person is significant to the story.

You will also explore what happened in the events/actions through thorough research of all available resources. Your attention is drawn to the library tour undertaken by Sue Denault (to take place on 3/1/07). She will present to you significant resources for your project and these should be used effectively; newspapers, book images and even old films can be employed. Clearly, the art of documentary-making can call on a number of resources making the process a creative one and you should include a variety. Of course, one of the resources available to you will be people you find and the skills learnt (earlier in the semester) in interviewing.

Next, you will also need to choose a documentary form with which to communicate to a specific target audience. As you now have a clear idea about the different types of documentary form that exist, you will make definite choice. In adopting a given form, you will have to make an argument about why you want to use it and how you think it will connect with the audience.

One day after the end of your production process you will also hand in documentation in the form of a file illuminating not only when meetings took place but how your critical thinking and decision making processes figured in the development of the documentary. In this documentation you will also reference documentary and narrative theory informing how you intended your work would turn out and also, how it changed across the course! This documentation will also provide the basis of a Group Presentation (15 minutes in length) to a real audience. This audience will consist of at least five people (more if you can) from the local community (not MCLA) who have special connection to this historical event and who can attend the viewing which take place in Bowman 102 on Tuesday, May 1<sup>st</sup> at 6pm.

**North Adams Documentary Project**

**Learning Objectives and Assessment Criteria**

**Learning Objectives**

## Exploring Assessment in Group Work and Presentations: Tracking Learning in Media Theory-Practice Courses

Through examination of the process toward documentary production, your learning objectives are:

- 1) To know and understand the documentary form chosen for storytelling.
- 2) To recognize how formal components will connect with your chosen target audience.
- 3) To work effectively as a group, sharing and successfully completing, necessary tasks for the benefit of the project (and not the individual).
- 4) To integrate communications theory into your work that meaningfully illuminates depth of understanding.
- 5) To understand how the documentary's narrative structure is organized for successful communication to the audience.
- 6) To develop further, new skills learned in the new TV Studio on range of technologies.
- 7) To reach an advanced level of editing on Avid Media Composer.

### **Assessment Criteria**

Assessment Criteria are centered upon the depth and breadth of understanding about:

- 1) Your chosen documentary form and its communicative properties.
- 2) The critical awareness of the relationship between the form and the chosen target audience.
- 3) About the complexity of working relationships and how to successfully complete a project through negotiation and compromise.
- 4) About how to integrate research into the story with meaningful outcomes for the production and most of all, your audience.
- 5) How and why you have structured narrative to communicate for your chosen audience in the way you have.
- 6) The depth of achievement in working with new technologies in the TV Studio.
- 7) The level of editing achievement reached on Avid Media Composer will determine your grade for this part of the course.

### **Points of Assessment in Adv TV/Filming North Adams**

- a) You are being continually assessed as your production progresses and also, through questions posed by Professor Birch, Professor Seider and Peter Gentile; this means that the process of your production is being constantly monitored.

Exploring Assessment in Group Work and Presentations:  
Tracking Learning in Media Theory-Practice Courses

- b) In addition, your documentation forms the basis of your Group Presentation on 1<sup>st</sup> May which will need to be very detailed for assessment. So, do not leave anything out, as this is coupled with your presentation.
- c) When you show your audience your documentary, you will be asked questions either, at that time or afterwards (certainly in person and possibly in electronic form after the event). Your answers should be carefully considered before responding.
- d) Your peers will also evaluate the project presentation by way of the documentation seen below.
- e) Finally, you will all have the opportunity to do a self and peer evaluation of the each other in the group self & peer evaluation that forms your final exam.

**Guidance for Student Presentations**

Your presentation is timetabled to take place in Bowman 102 on Tuesday, May 1<sup>st</sup> at 6pm – there will be two groups presenting. All students will be given a Student Feedback sheet! These are designed to give constructive feedback to your peers at the end of the presentation.

Exploring Assessment in Group Work and Presentations:  
Tracking Learning in Media Theory-Practice Courses

Your presentation will be assessed by Profs. Seider and Birch according to the Learning Objectives and Assessment Criteria for this main project. However, you should also take on board the following as it will help your grade. Ignore it at your peril.

- 1) Structure – there should be an introduction to the presentation, including an outline of what is to be covered – i.e., offering a logical progressions and a summary.
- 2) Reference should be made to the processes in the project. Who were your contacts? How did they influence your project and your story? What determined your story structure and why did you shape it the way you did? What constraints/difficulties were there in the process of your production and how were these over come?
- 3) A recognition of the learning outcomes need to be voiced by the group, from the project. Do they match the anticipated learning outcomes set at the beginning of the process? Are there new learning outcomes?
- 4) Presentation Delivery – needs to be clear and the various project components linked coherently together. Avoid simply relating ad nauseam what you did this day and that. Also, avoid words like ‘awesome’ and ‘it was cool’. Notes can be used and a script utilized but keep eye contact with your audience.
- 5) Keep to the ten minute time frame as you will be stopped whether or not you have finished. It advised you have a practice run through before hand.

**Documenting North Adams Project**  
**Group Presentations Peer Feedback Form**

Name:.....

Group Letter: ..... Project Title:.....

Complete the following self-assessment about your contribution, thus far, to the group project by placing a circle around one number on each line in relation to the learning objectives and assessment criteria.

Exploring Assessment in Group Work and Presentations:  
Tracking Learning in Media Theory-Practice Courses

A = excellent B = very good C = satisfactory D = less than satisfactory F = poor

1) How clear is the knowledge and understanding about the form chosen as a way of telling a story for the audience?	A	B	C	D	F
2) What level is the recognition of how formal components connect with the chosen target audience?	A	B	C	D	F
3) What is the level of effectiveness in sharing group work and, successfully completing, necessary tasks for the benefit of the project (and not the individual) in this group project?	A	B	C	D	F
4) How successfully did the group integrate information 'as content' into the work and organizing it meaningfully?	A	B	C	D	F
5) How good is the group's understanding of how the documentary's narrative has been constructed and organized for the audience, so it can successfully communicate to them?	A	B	C	D	F
6) How well, do you think, what you could usefully apply learning from this project experience to one in the future, were you to undertake another similar project?	A	B	C	D	F
7) With regard to the technical quality of editing, what level of achievement has been reached?	A	B	C	D	F
Are there any aspects of the group work which you consider contributed in a qualitative way to the success of the project? Please mention these.					
Are there any areas for improvement on the part of contributions? Please identify.					

Continue on the other side of the sheet, if necessary.

Self & Peer Evaluation

Your group's self & peer evaluation is conducted at the end of the semester and forms the final exam for the course. You will use the Learning Objectives for the main project, which are linked to the Assessment Criteria. These are used as the map onto which students track and measure their own assessment of their self. It also how their peers evaluate to what degree they did contribute to accomplishing those learning objectives. The free-rider does not quite make it through the course without getting some of what they deserve in the self & peer process.

---

Exploring Assessment in Group Work and Presentations:  
Tracking Learning in Media Theory-Practice Courses

**Bibliography and further reading**

Allen, J. & Lloyd-Jones, Roger, (1998) *The Assessment of Group Work in the Humanities: A Guide Book for Tutors*, School of Cultural Studies, Sheffield Hallam University.  
Educational Development Dept. (October, 2000), *Designing and Integrated Programme*, University of Plymouth.