Assignment Three—
Advocating for a Cause: A Visual PSA

**Writing II:
Rhetorical Composing**

Description

For this assignment, you will produce two documents: a visual Public Service Announcement (PSA) based on the cause that you have been working with this semester, and a 400-500 word artist statement that explains your composing process and rhetorical choices.

Being a writer with a cause often means taking up some form of advocacy, seeking to inform a public, change minds, or influence people's behavior. With this assignment, you will practice your advocacy using visual media, which comes with a different set of affordances and limitations than other forms of address. At the same time, rhetorical principles we've learned in class and practiced in earlier assignments and conversations still apply. For example, you will be responding to a social problem, and so you will want to craft your work with a clear sense of *kairos*. Likewise, you will be composing for an audience, and so you should keep in mind what kinds of rhetorical appeals you would like to make.

As you are developing your PSA, be sure to consider the argument you want to make for your audience, the information you should convey in order to make that argument, and the ultimate purpose of the PSA. Do you want to inform? Change opinion? Persuade to action?

Once you have your argument and rhetorical purpose in mind, seek to become more familiar with your topic before creating your PSA. Look more deeply into your topic to gather useful information such as statistics, quotations from reliable sources, and so on. We suggest that you engage online and print sources with a high degree of credibility: websites for charitable organizations, government organizations, academic institutions, and so forth.

Along these same lines, you might investigate the work of other advocacy groups related to your cause. Consider how their rhetorical purpose informs their ad campaigns. Who is their target audience, and how do they effectively rally that audience to their cause? You also may choose to compose your PSA as if it were produced on behalf of a particular advocacy group such as the Red Cross/Red Crescent, UNICEF, or the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

For more ideas about moving forward with the PSA, check out the embedded videos below ("What is a PSA?" and "Artist Statements") as well as the other resources listed below.

Video Walk-Through

- "What Is a PSA? (length) [link to YouTube?]
- "Artist Statements" (length) [link to YouTube?]

Objectives

The learning outcomes for this assignment are as follows:

- Authors will identify meaningful connections between images, alphabetic text, and other modes of expression to create a persuasive, compelling message that reaches a particular audience.
- Authors will craft a rhetorical message that demonstrates an awareness of medium and format, as well as the benefits and drawbacks of those choices.
- Authors in their artist's statement will reflect on their own composing and design process, and effectively articulate why they made particular choices in their finished product.

Production Details

For this assignment, you will submit two elements to WExMOOC: a web link to your visual PSA and a 400-to-500-word Artist Statement.

The Visual PSA may take any of these forms and should be uploaded to WExMOOC:

- a static poster- or postcard-sized graphic that includes alphabetic text. We suggest the following dimensions:
  - Poster - 11" (28 cm) x 17" (43 cm) or 8.5" (20.5 cm) x 11" (28 cm)
  - Postcard - 4" (10 cm) X 6" (15 cm)
- a 30-second "photo story" consisting of a series of still images, text, and/or audio
- a 30-second edited video

Your artist statement of 400 to 500 words should address these issues:

- Describe your goals for this project. What specifically are you trying to accomplish rhetorically in this project?
- Explain the specific rhetorical, material, methodological, and technological choices you made to achieve your purpose. How did these choices serve to meet your stated goals?

Your visual PSA and accompanying artist statement should be submitted to WExMOOC. Please refer to the technical guidelines in the Writers Exchange for details about file formats, size, and other relevant details.

Some Thoughts on Technology in Assignment 3

Although many of you have had some practice working with graphic images, text, sound, and video, we know that, for others, composing rhetorically effective visual arguments will be an exciting new experience. You may be concerned that you don't have the technical skills needed to create a visual argument.

However this assignment is not about dazzling technical skills; it's about rhetoric—the effective, persuasive communication of a message. While technical polish can't be completely separated from rhetorical effectiveness, we don't want you to focus so hard on technical aspects of your assignment that you lose sight of your primary persuasive message.

Therefore we have not mentioned technical quality as a goal of this assignment—not in the learning objectives and not in the peer review criteria, either! As you create your own PSA—and especially when you respond to the PSAs of others—you shouldn't emphasize it either. Image quality, drawing ability, video editing, sound volume, and other technical aspects are not as important for this assignment as whether or not you convey a strong, simple, contextualized rhetorical message to your audience.

Our best piece of advice for people new to using images and/or video: Keep it simple.You will find some very powerful PSAs that use one still image and very little text among the examples we have provided. You can compose a wonderful image-and-text-based PSA in a word-processing program such as OpenOffice Writer or Microsoft Word. If you want to produce a time-based visual argument, video can be simulated in presentation software like Microsoft PowerPoint.

Keep in mind, too, that you can use the Discussion Forums to ask questions and provide tips and advice to people as you discuss your projects-in-development over the coming weeks.

Resources

- Creative Commons Image Search— here, you can search for additional images to incorporate into your design.
- Wikimedia Commons— here, you can search for additional images to incorporate into your design.
- GIMP (Graphical Image Manipulation Program) is a free, open source application used to edit images in a variety of ways. A series of tutorials is available here.
- Pixlr is a free web-based image editor that offers many of the same features as GIMP or Photoshop. The Pixlr Blog offers resources including tutorial, tricks, tips, as well as a user community discussion forum.
- iMovie (Mac) and Windows Movie Maker (PC) are video-editing tools that either ship with Macs and PCs or can be downloaded. Tutorials are available (including lots of great YouTube videos contributed by users).
- YouTube Editor is a new (free) service that allows simple video editing online. Other web-based video editors with varying capabilities are also available for both platforms.

You may find that your computer already has other tools available for image and/or video editing—and there are lots of other free tools, online and offline, that we haven't mentioned here! Feel free to explore other options besides the ones we list above.

Submission

After you've written your assignment, please submit it for course credit to WEx, The Writer's Exchange at wexmooc.osu.edu by following the instructions here.

Notice that, like Assignment 2, this assignment will undergo peer review, meaning anonymous evaluation from several fellow students. In exchange, you will provide 3 peer reviews to other students on their submissions. After the peer review period, you'll be responsible for a reflection and for assigning helpfulness scores to your peer feedback.

Also, we invite you to share your assignment by posting it in the forum Share and Discuss: Assignment 3: Advocating for a Cause: A Visual PSA. Here you will have the opportunity to read each others' PSAs and begin a conversation about what you are learning from the other writers in the class. For Assignment 3, this step is optional, but we hope you will consider sharing.

Peer Review Criteria

As you review others' PSAs and artist statements, we ask you to address the following questions, which are based on the learning objectives for this assignment. For more guidance in the WEx peer review process, consult The WEx Training Guide in Carmen Content.

- **Criterion 1:** Rate how well the PSA combines words, images, and overall design to target and potentially persuade or inform a specific audience.

- **Criterion 2:** Rate how clearly the PSA identifies a specific issue of social concern and suggests a course of action for addressing it.

- **Criterion 3:** Rate how well the accompanying artist statement (i.e., the paragraph submitted along with the link to the PSA) explains the rhetorical, material, methodological, and technological choices for the PSA.

Assignment 3: Advocating for a Cause: A Visual PSA is a WEx Share assignment. This means that Assignment 3, and the four peer reviews that follow it, are required assignments for participants seeking a Coursera Statement of Accomplishment for this course.