

## 6AAIC011 - Culture Wars Assessment - 2022-23

In this assessment you are asked to outline two opposing positions on a **specific** issue or event that has been a flashpoint or a debate within the culture wars. The issue/event can be from any country/countries and from any time in the 21st century (although it may, of course, have a *much* longer historical background.) You should explain and contextualize the issue or event before outlining the opposing positions. You are then asked to provide a **commentary** on these positions, drawing on a range of relevant literature - including academic, policy, and journalistic texts. You should **critically interrogate** both sides of the argument, considering, for example, their factual accuracy, the power dynamics or differentials of both, the social and cultural effects of each position should they be dominant, and the ethical and moral qualities of each. It is possible, though unlikely, that you reach a conclusion that both sides have equal validity, so it is quite acceptable to support one position more strongly than the other, or even discount one side altogether, so long as you give your reasons for doing so.

You should present this material as **either a 15 minute audio 'podcast', or a 15 minute video essay**. The structure and approach that you take within these is up to you, so long as you succeed in meeting the brief. You could perhaps stage a debate, so that 'actors' take one side or another. You could use the testimony of real people who have been caught up in an issue, but please bear in mind that if these are first hand accounts rather than from published or other media sources then you will have to deal with ethical issues both bureaucratic (you will need to get permission from the College for the project) and human. You can use 'found' sound and images - still and moving - from a variety of media sources and edit these together to create a narrative. You can provide your own voice over - you may want to use this for the 'critical commentary' element of the assignment. Please note that you are not expected to have sophisticated technical skills, and you will not get extra marks for a 'flashy' presentation, but you will get credit for the effective marshaling of resources, constructing clear and convincing arguments, and for the creative usage of your source material.

Princeton University's guide to digital assignments suggests:

'As with other media, podcasts [or video essays] can reflect many different genres. Podcasts [or video essays] might contain interviews, conversations, scripted audio dramas, news documentaries, or film or music reviews. Most often however, podcasts [or video essays] are presented in some sort of narrative form. In this regard, storyboarding and organizing materials are often essential to creating an effective podcast [or video essay]. Many professional podcasts may leave listeners the impression that they are freeform and ad-libbed. This may be true for a podcaster with many years of experience, but for students with no experience producing podcasts, a well developed script is almost essential.

In developing a podcast [or video essay], attention should be paid to the listener's [or viewer's] experience. Being a very linear format, audio gives content producers the opportunity to lead the listener through an unfolding experience.'

**You will also be asked to submit a written script which should be fully referenced, with both in-text citations for quotes and a full bibliography, and a reference list for any audio or visual material used. Please see the department's style guide for more information on this.**

You should consider the following issues as you prepare your podcast:

1. Understanding – read the brief carefully and consider how to respond. Remember to factor in the time limit of the assignment, i.e. don't try to cover too much ground, choose a specific topic or focus.
2. Research–by reading through relevant books and articles, you can develop your own perspective of the issue.
3. Bibliography –build a reading list for the podcast. This can be added to throughout the process as you change approach or alter your position.
4. Argument – as with a written piece, the presentation of the argument is vital. Through a reading of the relevant literature, you can define how the podcast will present your ideas and the way in which they will be framed.
5. Presentation – as an audio(video) project, clarity is essential. Try to be clear and concise, to focus on the issues, avoid getting side-tracked and overly-complex approaches.
6. Style – you can decide upon how best to communicate your ideas. For example, perhaps a voice-over that introduces the podcast/video at the outset, or, one that sets a question to the listener/viewer. The project could just be a recording of your voice, or, you can use music, images or audio. Think about the best way in which to communicate your argument. An appropriate style for the content and argument is vital.
7. Script – once you have decided on the argument, content, presentation and style then a script for the entire podcast/video can be produced.
8. Rehearse and revise – once the script is produced, the script can be spoken through, practiced, edited and altered to make the argument stronger or build in further research.
9. Record – here the podcast/video can be produced using a number of different programmes. Recording the podcast/video does not mean the final product. All editing platforms allow for revisions and changes.

For recording a podcast, bear in mind these factors:

- Familiarise yourself with the equipment and software
- Find a quiet place
- Practice as if you were recording
- Imagine your audience and speak directly to them
- Speak slowly and consistently
- Avoid hesitations, repetitions, overly long silences, informal expressions, saying “er” & “um”.

10. Listen – go through the final version and make sure it answers the brief, demonstrates your research and communicates clearly.

For the recording you can use the College's Kaltura software, Powerpoint, Audacity, Garageband or PremierPro, whatever is available to you and you feel most comfortable with, and meets the needs of your chosen media.

There are a range of freesound archives where you can download material that could be used in your discussion.

- Wikimedia Commons – a database of audiofiles that can be used for free without copyright restrictions
- Creative Commons – a source of audiofiles that can be used for free under the Creative Commons License
- Free Music Archive – a source for high-quality legal audio downloads
- British Library Sounds – a selection from the British Library's extensive collections
- BBC Sound Archive – a range of audio files that are free to download for educational use
- Box of Broadcasts – UK television and radio archive (which includes numerous feature films) free to access and available to use for educational purposes.

(adapted from University of Nottingham guidelines)