Culture Wars
6AAIC011

The Assignment

- FIND A FOCUS - 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. - Make sure you choose something that can be covered adequately in the short time available. *Something like a film, or a song, or a protest, or an object would be ideal (rather than an entire movement or ideology) to give your podcast/video a clear focus and a starting point to explore the bigger picture/context.*

- 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 object, issue or event before outlining the opposing positions. *What is the cultural/social/historical/technological/political context?*

- *The introduction to your presentation should include the following:*

  - *WHAT you are talking about. What is the case study you have chosen?*
  - *WHO are the main people or organisations involved in this case?*
  - *WHEN did this happen?*
  - *WHERE did this happen?*
  - *WHY you have chosen this topic. What aspect of the culture wars does it illustrate? Does it ask or answer previously unasked/unanswered questions on the topic?*
  - *HOW you will tackle the subject. What key theoretical/conceptual ideas are you using to interrogate/frame your subject matter? Why are these useful and appropriate?*

- 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.

Methods/Approaches for critical analysis

- Fact-checking – is what people/organisations claim actually true?

- Analyse images or audio material produced by opposing sides in the debate – what kind of language is used? How are groups of people or cultural objects described or portrayed? Is the representation balanced and complete, or does it give a partial view of events or individuals that might be misleading?

- Consider how the issue is reported by a variety of news services. Why might they report the same event/issue differently?

- Follow the money/power – Who is saying this? Who are they claiming to speak on behalf of? Who are they saying it to? On what platforms? What do they hope to achieve? Whose interests are being served? What political agenda does this advance? Who is making money from this? Who is funding this? Why?

- Use theoretical/conceptual frameworks – e.g. (intersectional) feminism, post-colonialism, globalization, political economy, philosophical, social justice

- Interrogate the concepts and discourses used by others (see the 'Contrapoints' video for a good example of this done well)

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

- Possible approaches:
  - One main voiceover (e.g. 'Contrapoints')
  - Stage a debate, with one or two people on each side (e.g. 'Antisocial')
  - Two voices, one posing questions and the other answering (e.g. 'You're Wrong About')
  - Voiceover plus interview(s) (e.g. 'Vox', 'Tortoise Slow Newscast')
  - Create a collage of found material – audio clips, images, film clips (e.g. 'Vox')

    N.B. you can *combine* a number of these different approaches in the same presentation

What kinds of voices and sources to use?

- Expert voices
  - Academics/academic sources
  - Researchers outside of universities (perhaps working for NGOs or think tanks)
  - Advocates for minority/marginalized communities
- Authoritative voices
  - Politicians
  - Journalists
  - Business/organization leaders
- Experiential voices
  - Individuals who have found themselves caught up in a culture war or related issue/controversy, individuals with identities/ideas which are or have become controversial
- Some voices/perspectives may come from more than one, or all of these categories, they are not mutually exclusive
- HOWEVER! - Be wary about equating authority with expertise or impartiality. Think critically about the agenda that the individual or the organization that they represent may have.

What are research ethics & why are they important?

- Although your assignment will take the form of a podcast or a YouTube style video, because it is an academic assignment and you are undertaking it as a KCL student, this comes with *additional responsibilities and protocols* that podcasters and YouTubers don't have to deal with.

- It is important to ensure that academic research (including student assessments) DOES NO HARM to participants

- If you are involving other people in your research as sources or interviewees, you will need to get ethical clearance from the University (n.b. you can use friends and family AS ACTORS in your presentations without getting clearance, but you will need to indicate clearly in your work that this is the case)

- **It is recommended** – due, not least, to time constraints (getting high risk research projects approved is a lengthy and complicated process) - **that unless your research is minimal risk, you find another way to gather your data** (i.e. from already published sources)

- **You must not begin recruitment of participants or data collection until you have received your letter confirming ethical clearance.**

- **Work involving other people without ethical clearance WILL NOT BE MARKED**

What are the minimal risk criteria?

A	B	C
Is my project high risk?	**Is my project low risk?**	**Is my project minimal risk?**
If you answer yes to any of the questions in column A your research is deemed to be high risk If you answer no to _all_ question in column A then proceed to column B.	If you answer yes to _any_ of the questions in column B your research is deemed to be low risk. If you answer no to _all_ questions in column B then proceed to column C.	You have identified that there are no foreseeable risks to your research participants. Therefore you may be eligible for the Minimal Ethical Risk Registration Process.
a. Will you be recruiting vulnerable participants? b. Will participants take part in the study without their consent? c. Will deception of any sort be involved? d. Could participants disclose any illegal or harmful activity due to the nature of the research? e. Could the study induce stress, anxiety or negative consequences on the participant? f. Does the study involve imaging techniques? g. Does the study involve ultrasound or sources of non-ionising radiation? h. Does the study involve physically intrusive procedures, administration of substances, use of bodily materials, or DNA/RNA analysis?	a. Will participants be under 16 years old? b. Will any gatekeepers in a position of influence be aware of who has participated in the study? c. Will the researcher be in a position of influence or authority over participants that could give rise to a perceived pressure to participate (i.e. lecturers/teachers and students)? d. Will personally sensitive subjects be discussed that participants might not be willing to otherwise talk about in public (i.e. medical conditions)? e. Will undue incentives be offered?	
Following submission of a high risk application within REMAS, applications will be reviewed at the next relevant SSHL RESC review meeting.	Following submission of a low risk application within REMAS your will receive a review outcome within 18 working days.	Following submission of the registration form you will provided with confirmation of registration within 3 working days.

Where can I find more information about research ethics & where to apply for clearance?

- https://remas.kcl.ac.uk/ - **Research Ethics Management Application System** (login to apply for clearance)

- **About Minimal Risk** https://internal.kcl.ac.uk/innovation/governance-ethics-integrity/research-ethics/applications/mr-scheme

- **Minimal Risk Guiding Principles** - https://internal.kcl.ac.uk/innovation/governance-ethics-integrity/research-ethics/stored-documents/3applications/minimal-risk/minimal-ethical-risk-guiding-principles.pdf

Planning the structure of your podcast/video

- Princeton University's guide to digital assignments suggests:

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- '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 [or video essays], a well developed script is almost essential.**

What information should be included in the script, and how should it be structured?

- The script should include a transcription of *all the spoken audio content* of the podcast or video.

- You should structure it like an academic essay, *not* a play script.

- The script will allow you to reference all material you have used, without this interrupting the flow of the audio/narration. So, if you are using 'found sounds' or quoting sources in your voice over, you can reference these in the text.

- You can and should indicate sources in your voiceover in a non-intrusive way by saying something like, for example, 'as Foucault outlines in *Discipline & Punis*h….'

- If you have used material from non-English sources and translated this yourself you should indicate this with **(Author's own translation)** in the script.

- Your bibliography should include references for ALL THE CONTENT & SOURCES you have used in your podcast/video – not just academic & written sources, but also images, audio clips, video clips & music. You can find information about how to cite all of these in the **CMCI style guide** (available in the Module Assessment section on the KEATS page)

What is an appropriate *tone* for the assignment?

- Although this is an academic assignment and you should structure the script like an academic essay, if you write the voiceover in the same tone as an essay it will probably sound very formal and stilted

- You need to strike a balance between being *conversational* and telling a story, and maintaining *scholarly & analytical rigour*

- You can do this by ensuring that your content is accurate, is presented clearly, your arguments are well supported, and are organized coherently

- These aspects will not be undermined by a more casual, informal style of presentation.

Seminar Task

- In the seminars we will be discussing your plans and ideas for your podcasts and videos, which will be a further opportunity for you to ask questions and to get feedback, both from your seminar tutor and your classmates.

- **Come to the seminar prepared with a brief plan, *or at least a potential topic* for your podcast/video.**

- Any questions?