

## FEMINIST THEORY UNESSAY FINAL PROJECT

### Why an Unessay?

One of the most important skills that twenty-first century students will need is *creativity*, especially when applied to critical thinking and problem solving. Creativity is an aptitude that *all* students are capable of – it is not something that only “creative” or “gifted” people possess. Students can hone their capacity for creativity through activities and assignments that encourage risk taking, creativity, and innovation. The purpose of this unessay project is to encourage and develop this creativity through flexible modes, styles, and goals for your final project.

I am adopting and revising the guidelines for unessay projects laid out helpfully by Ryan Cordell (<https://s18tot.ryancordell.org/assignments/unessay>). You can see some examples of unessay projects his students have completed on his website. A grading rubric will be posted.

### Unessay Guidelines

In an unessay you choose your own topic, present it any way you please, and are evaluated on how *compelling* and *effective* you are at communicating the main idea of your chosen topic.

1. **You choose your own topic.** The unessay allows you to present on / write about / curate anything you want provided you are able to associate your topic with the subject matter of our course. You can take any approach for capturing and presenting the topic of your choosing. The only requirements are that your treatment of the topic be *compelling*: that is to say presented in a way that leaves the reader thinking that you are being **accurate**, **interesting**, and as **complete** and/or convincing as your subject allows.
2. **You can present it any way you please.** In an unessay, you have complete freedom of form: you can use whatever style of writing, presentation, citation, or media you want. What is important is that the format and presentation you do use **helps** rather than hinders your argument about the topic. Perhaps most importantly, the unessay allows you to use media deliberately and thoughtfully. For instance, you could:
  - Create a “How-to” guide (ex: for identifying sexism in a variety of settings and situations)
  - Create a boardgame (ex: a boardgame based on women trying to advance in the sciences, but being held back to due epistemic injustices / sexism / androcentrism / etc.)
  - Write a song or poem (ex: about gender performativity)
  - Write a short, graphic novel (ex: about a character’s experiences of misogyny)

- Write a movie or TV series review using one of the frameworks we have covered (ex: Beauvoir, hooks, Manne, etc.)
  - Write a lesson plan for how you would teach a class on your chosen topic
3. **You are evaluated on how compelling and effective you are.** If unessays can be about anything and there are no restrictions on format and presentation, how are they graded? The main criterion is how well it all fits together. That is to say, how *compelling* and *effective* your work is.

An unessay is **compelling** when it shows some combination of the following:

- it is as **interesting** as its topic and approach allows
- it is as **complete** as its topic and approach allows (it doesn't leave the audience thinking that important points are being skipped over or ignored)
- it is **truthful** (any questions, evidence, conclusions, or arguments you raise are honestly and **accurately presented**)
- it makes an **argument**, taking a particular point of view on the topic. **A good unessay doesn't just describe, it synthesizes and analyzes.**

In terms of presentation, an unessay is **effective** when it shows some combination of these attributes:

- it is **readable/watchable/listenable**: i.e. the production values are appropriately high and the audience is not distracted by avoidable lapses in presentation.
- it is **well crafted**: the assignment's invitation to write in different modes (using slang, etc.) does not mean the unessay needn't be copyedited. Deliberate stylistic choices can help convey your message, while needless errors will distract from your message.
- it is **appropriate**: i.e. it uses a format and medium that suits its topic and approach.
- it is **truthful**: i.e. it is presented in a way that leads the audience to trust the author and his or her arguments, examples, and conclusions.

## Unessay Requirements

1. Based on the above criteria, **each student will propose an unessay project idea by 5:00pm on Friday, November 5<sup>th</sup>**. The proposal should be emailed to [laura.kane@worchester.edu](mailto:laura.kane@worchester.edu) and include:
  - The topic you will cover
  - The medium you intend to use to convey your ideas
  - The goal(s) for your project – i.e. what should readers/listeners/viewers expect to get out of your project? This can be straightforward (i.e. a better understanding of topic x), or more complex (i.e. a feeling or reflection related to a portrayed experience, etc.).
  - Don't worry about being exact! A proposal is just that – a proposal. It shows me that you are thinking about how to approach your chosen topic in a compelling an

effective way. You will still have 2-3 weeks to finalize your unessay after the proposal period.

2. Based on the above criteria, **each student will complete an unessay project to present to the class between November 30<sup>th</sup> and December 6<sup>th</sup>.**
  - Individual due dates will differ based on presentation schedule.
  - Presentations may be pre-recorded (to be shown during class) or presented live during class.
  - Presentations should be between roughly 4-7 minutes in length and should explain/demonstrate the project, explain connection(s) to course subject matter, and detail the process of making the project.
  
  - If your project is digital, please email the completed project to [laura.kane@worchester.edu](mailto:laura.kane@worchester.edu)
  
  - If your project is analog, please bring it in to class. Please also take detailed photographs of it and email those photographs to [laura.kane@worchester.edu](mailto:laura.kane@worchester.edu) for documentation purposes.
  
3. Based on the above criteria, **each student will complete a short unessay project description to accompany their unessay project.** The description should include:
  - The topic you have covered
  - An explanation of how your project connects to your chosen topic
  - An explanation of how your project connects to the relevant course subject matter
  - An explanation of the process of making your unessay project
  
  - Your unessay project description should be between 2-3 double-spaced pages, 12pt font. Aside from this length/font requirement, there is no formatting requirement for the project description. Keep the project criteria in mind, though – it should be **compelling** and **effective**!
  
  - Please email your project description to [laura.kane@worchester.edu](mailto:laura.kane@worchester.edu)
  
  - You can use the project description in your presentation.

## **Alternative (Traditional) Assignment**

If the unessay project proves to be a source of anxiety or frustration, there is an option to complete a more traditional essay and presentation for the final project. Should you choose to go this route, you must still submit an unessay project proposal by November 5<sup>th</sup>. We can then discuss the alternative assignment option.