

### Description of the course and project assignment

This course examined how individuals create and perform their social identities through and in response to language, considering social variables such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, disability, geography, power, ideology, etc. Throughout fifteen weeks of instruction through scholarly texts, film, podcasts, and popular and news media, twelve students across sophomore, junior, and senior levels explored how these variables of identity intersect, clash, are contested and resisted, and may be resolved.

The digital storytelling component in this course was a final project, which asked students to develop a digital story video about an aspect of their own identities in response to a course topic relating to language, power, and identity construction of their choosing. Their final stories were presented as 5-7 minute videos during the final exam time. Video explorations of a personal story related to aspects of identities and popular culture which built upon a course topic, question, or sociolinguistic concept incorporating both class and outside, independently sourced materials as citational evidence. My goal of incorporating digital storytelling into the course as a final project was to provide a multi-sensory, interdisciplinary, inclusive, creative and personalized platform for students to process and synthesize course material in relation to their own intimate entanglements with the topic from the new special topics class. This project was also completed remotely in an online, synchronous class.

### Funding

Kenyon Digital Storytelling funding provided resources to purchase individual lapel microphones for each student to use over the course of the semester. These microphones were shipped to students' home across the country and the voice quality of the final recordings greatly benefitted from the use of these microphones along with students using their own phones as recording devices. Additionally, students were able to access the video platform, WeVideo, to create their projects funded through the Kenyon initiative.

Funding also served to compensate two guest speakers in the class. We welcomed a discussion with conceptual artist Luis Camnitzer to speak about his exhibit using language as a medium for art at the Gund Gallery. We also spoke with Dr. Sarah Wagner, winner of the 2020 Victor Turner Prize for Ethnographic Writing, about her use of evocative ethnographic detail to tell stories from her research in writing.

### Video production process and outcomes

There were four assignments in the course through which students compiled their final video projects.

1. Preliminary proposal and source overview: Students selected a preliminary topic from a class brainstorm discussion session and submitted a brief, 250 word abstract outlining their proposed final project topic. In their preliminary topic proposal, students outlined a project with an explicit connection to language and identity. To hone in on this explicit connection, students also included bibliographic citations of two academic sources (from class or outside sources) with brief annotations of the main point of the source, evidence, and connection to their proposed topic.

2. Story script: Based on direction from Digital Storytelling facilitators, students submitted a story script for a 5-7 minute video of roughly 300 words. In small groups in class, students in groups of two workshopped these scripts and video ideas in break out rooms as part of our last class meeting. I can then view each group's feedback and add my own before I return the scripts electronically. To write the script and envision the videos, asked students to watch other digital story videos from other courses and short storytelling examples from platforms such as Storycorps, Storycenter, and the Moth. We also had Ashley Butler from the CIP visit to teach the class how to format and use the WeVideo platform to compile audio and visuals.
3. Individual review meetings: During reading week, students signed-up for individual meeting times with me to workshop videos and scripts and discuss any technical issues with developing their digital stories on the WeVideo platform before the reveal as their final presentation a week later, during finals week.
4. Video presentation and discussion: For our class final time slot, students presented their digital story video. After each screening, I fielded 2-3 questions and comments from classmates about the videos.

As a collection, the final videos explored concepts of language ideologies, linguistic development, changing identities in terms of language use, race and language in music and media, labels in connection to gender and sexual identities, and code switching as evidence of social change.

### Ethics

As these stories dealt with some potentially sensitive themes, we discussed appropriate handling of the topics and story materials. First, throughout the course we practiced discussion structures to explicitly value the differences in opinion and backgrounds that students brought to the course. This included activities where students first wrote down responses or shared thoughts in small groups of classmates. We used shared documents for students to collaborate on in activities and I offered alternative submission formats for weekly assignments. Students were to be supported in not only their learning styles but in bringing and foregrounding unique and distinct aspects of their backgrounds in connection to class material and discussion questions.

Second, students learned ethical practices in anthropology of collecting and disseminating materials and data. Ultimately, after discussing standard protocol of interviewing and ethics in showing images of other people, students elected to use photos of themselves, only share photos portraying others, such as family and friends, with the class, or to focus on telling stories from their own lives in their own perspectives maintaining confidentiality of names or identifying features of anyone else included in their story. Many students also elected to use public media or stock images or video footage with music on the WeVideo platform to not comply by copyright laws.

Closer to the final deadline, I provided an anonymous survey to ask students if they wanted to share their stories beyond the classroom space. This allowed students to have control over the broader audience of their work. Many students chose to share their stories within the class setting for various reasons.