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(This is a photo/writing essay assignment prompt I used with university students at the University of Louisville. Please feel free to adapt it to your own context and needs)

Ripple Effects Photo/Writing Essay

We are talking a great deal about digital and multimodal writing in this course and I want to include the experience of doing a project that involves other modes of communicating for you to experience and reflect on. In addition, one of the other aspects of literacy we'll be talking about in the course is how digital texts circulate across cultures and communities. This assignment is a way of exploring all those issues of how we read and respond to digital texts outside our own communities.

Purpose

[Ripple Effects International](https://rippleeffectsinternational.org/) is a photo/writing project about sustainability and culture in which people can share images, stories, and other forms of expression that capture their experiences, insights, and feelings related to water resources and other aspects of the natural environment. Around the world, issues around water resources are critical concerns that have an impact on health, culture, and sustainable development. The goal of this assignment is for you to explore these issues through a multimodal assignment in your community, and then to see how differences in culture and discipline shape the same multimodal essays in other parts of the world. For this assignment, then, you will create a photo and writing essay around issues of water in your community or life and then read and reflect on other photos and writing from people in other parts of the world. You will then have the option of publishing your photo/writing essays on the Ripple Effects International website.
(<https://rippleeffectsinternational.org/>)

Through this exchange we will be asking you to think about how you, and others, perceive and understand the natural world and also the environmental challenges they encounter within their everyday lives. We will also want you to reflect on how the concept of "place" influences understandings of environmental issues and climate change, considering local, regional, and global perspectives on environmental challenges. How do people in different cultures, and different academic disciplines, use multimodal texts to communicate the issues in their local communities? What similarities and differences do you see? Do the images and reflections from other places influence how you see your photos and writing? And how does this project help you think about the implications for communicating across cultures? What are the implications for you as you think about multimodal, rhetorical affordances? Most of all I want you to think about how you are using the rhetorical affordances of images and arrangement that we have been talking about in class as you put your essay together.

Details

Choose a focus related to a water in your world. For example, you could focus on pollution, clean water access, art, transportation, drought, flooding, recreation, economic justice, and so on. Don't feel that you are restricted to negative issues. Water is a conduit for life, a source of beauty, and can generate powerful memories for us. So, focus on an issue or problem or concept about water – large or small. Just like an essay written with words, the photo essay should have a focus, an idea that you are trying to get across. You should be able to answer the question: "What do you want your audience to know after reading this photo essay?"

Take maximum 5 images with captions identifying the location, date and photographer. I want the photos to be taken by you. You should save the photos you take, just as you might save drafts of a written essay.

Write a reflection about the images, a maximum of 500-1,000 words

Some questions to consider as you write:

What do you want your audience to know after reading this photo essay?

What do these images and ideas mean to you?

How does it relate to the topic?

How does it impact your life?

What do you hope the future will be?

What do you want your audience (both locally and globally) to know about the images?

This draft and cover letter essay will be due February 27 at the beginning of class time.

You should save the photo and writing essay on OneDrive and send the link to me by email.

Each file should have your last name in the filename! This is very important for me in staying organized.

Response and Grading

After you turn in the draft to me I will respond to it and give you my thoughts on it's strengths and things that I have questions about. This assignment is required for the course, but is not one that you can revise to raise your grade for the course to an "A."

Cover Letter

Along with the photo essay, you will write a 1-2 page, single-spaced cover letter in which you reflect on the process of creating the draft as well as things you might want to explain about the photo essay. Learning happens through reflection and analysis of experience, and that's the purpose of this letter. Also, an important part of being an more effective writer is to be able to articulate questions you have about your own work to an informed reader. **This is due at the**

same time as the photo essay, emailed to me in a single-spaced Word document with your last name in the file name.

Your letter should cover the following.

Rhetorical Affordances

How did you approach the rhetorical affordances of images in this essay? What choices did you make? What advantages and limitations did you see in working in this mode?

Writing and Editing Process

Discuss your reading and writing process for this draft. What challenges did you encounter in terms of composing and editing your draft? What strategies might you try in the future to continue to strengthen your processes?

Questions for your Reader

Discuss what you see as the strengths of your draft essay and where you think they could be improved. What do you think is working effectively? What are you less certain about? What questions do you have for me as a reader?

About Ripple Effects International

Ripple Effects International (<https://rippleeffectsinternational.org/>) is a collaborative, cross-cultural initiative with the goals of helping people focus on and learn more about the natural world, understand the global and local effects of climate change and sustainability, and connect to and develop empathy with others. In a Ripple Effects project, people take photos of water in their world – of any kind - write reflections about what the images mean to them, and then those images and reflections are published or circulated to show the different ways we connect to water in our world. Through Ripple Effects International, there is the opportunity to see and connect to similar projects by people across the world. Ripple Effects International was created by Mary Brydon-Miller and Bronwyn Williams, of the University of Louisville. The site also is collecting resources for teachers and community members to support creating their own Ripple Effects projects. Ripple Effects projects have been organized through libraries, primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, youth groups, and other community organizations. Ripple Effects projects have taken place or are being planned in Australia, Canada, Fiji, Finland, India, Norway, Pakistan, South Africa, Uganda, the United Kingdom, and the United States. If you are interested in knowing more about Ripple Effects International, or planning your own project, please contact Bronwyn Williams (bronwyn.williams@louisville.edu).