Final Report Assignment

In a one-two page, single-spaced report, develop a rationale and plan for moving forward with what you've learned this semester. As a part of this future thinking, include a revision, promotion, and distribution strategy for moving forward with your podcast series. Actually moving forward with the podcast is not a requirement. After you receive final grades, you can delete your Soundcloud account, let your podcasts sit on the server indefinitely, or actually move forward to produce and distribute some more episodes. The purpose of the final report is to reflect on the semester, your podcast, and think about what someone would do once they have a podcast. Even if you don't continue the series, assess what you've done over the semester and learn about what you might do if you were to move forward.

Heuristic:

Use this as a basic outline for what is to be included in the report:

1. Influence and Purpose

    After working most of the semester to think about sound in new ways, learn about podcasts as a genre, and work with sound to produce podcasts, step back and consider how it impacts your thinking about writing. If you are a creative writer, discuss how sound and podcasting influence your sense of storytelling; if you are a teacher, discuss how sound and podcasting might influence your teaching, either directly or indirectly; if you are interested in professional or business writing, discuss how sound and podcasting could operate and thrive in those settings; if you are interested in public writing, discuss why you could move forward with podcasting. If you are into music or a music scene or are in a field like journalism or PR, these might be good reasons. But there are plenty of others, including just for fun or something to do.

2. Audience Analysis

    Include in this discussion some thinking about potential audience. Who would you want to listen and why? Who would *actually* listen and why? Where and on what devices would they actually listen. Discuss your planned length in relation to these audiences: Will the short 3-5 minute length work for this audience? Could or should you go up to 10-12 minutes? Why? It is unlikely that you would go longer, but if you think this is necessary, definitely explain why. Finally discuss whether or not the type and level of content you have will work or be revised to fit this audience. Will your podcast content need to be more focused? More detailed? Better researched? In general, a broad NPR-like approach might not work for your more specific project. Ask yourself: What content do I have or can I provide that my specific audience doesn't have and would want or need?

3. Title, Tagline, Image

   We discussed the importance of Titles and Taglines earlier in the semester. Following some of the advice in the Tips articles linked on the syllabus, discuss whether you should revise or change your title and tagline, to what, and why, or explain why what you already have would continue to work. In addition to advocating a simple and direct approach, the readings also discussed having "cover art" or a lead image that also clearly and simply signifies the content and purpose of your podcast, even when reduced to smaller sizes. What image do you think could fulfill this role and tie the title and tagline together to produce a coherent package or combination? Does what you already have really work to fulfill this role? What image might work or be better? Why?

4. Description (including tags and metadata)

   You'll need a good description of your podcast series. You'll want one for Soundcloud but also for iTunes and many of the directories or apps you could sign up for. One of the Tips articles gives you a good heuristic for things to include: What your podcast is about; How you help your listeners; How often you broadcast a new episode; etc. They also recommend "writing like you speak" or writing with the kind of voice that you'll use in the podcast that might be more informal or express more of the personality that goes into the podcast than much of the academic or professional writing you typically do. Your description should be in the neighborhood of 50 words. Check out the Invisibilia example and examples from other well known podcasts and podcasts related to your content or genre (https://www.npr.org/podcasts/510307/invisibilia).

   It is also important to make your description search friendly: use words that you know people searching for this type of content will use. Ask yourself: What might people search for when they need the information I'm sharing? Make a list of words and phrases, and then drop them in various search engines—Google, iTunes, Soundcoud, etc.—to see what comes up. If these are the things, sites, or podcasts you want your podcast to be associated with, use them. If not, revise them in terms of specificity or content.

   These words will also prove useful as tags for your podcast. You'll use tags in Soundcloud and many of the other directories and apps to help people find your podcast. We haven't talked a lot this semester about tagging. While generic tags like #podcast need to be included, you'll want to go more specific than this as well. Again, find other podcasts in your genre or topic area and check out their tags. In the final report close the description with a list of the tags you'll use so people can find your content. As one of the readings noted, title, tagline, tags, and various descriptions are all metadata that function as the packing for your podcast and significantly impact the "distribution" of your series. (Also see BOA – metadata, p. 24, for including this information in the file itself in addition to the social networking and directory sites that store and distribute it.)

5. Distribution Plan

   Discuss how you would most likely distribute your podcast: posting it on iTunes; listing it on specific podcast directories; getting listed on specific podcasting apps; pushing it to your pre-existing social networking sites; starting a written blog where you will embed your podcasts. You may want to do all of these, but only some of these may make sense for your specific content, audience, and purposes. Explain which ones you will use and why you think it will connect you with the audience you are after. Specifically list the directories and sites that you will utilize and why you think these are the best places for your podcast, series, or content.

6. Technology Upgrade Plan

   You may feel like recording with your iPhone, editing in Audacity, and posting to Soundcloud are the only technologies and skills you'll need to move forward. But, depending on your purposes, audience, and content, you may need to upgrade microphones, or learn to use more powerful software, or use a preamp or mastering equalizer, or post your podcasts through a different service. Discuss these possibilities and why you'd need to upgrade or continue to use your current setup.

7. Episode Analysis

   Select one episode that you produced this semester that you feel gives you the best basis for moving forward. Discuss why this is your favorite episode and why it gives you a form, genre, style, or content that could work for your purposes, audiences, and goals.

Presentations:

   I will send around and sign-up sheet for class presentations. The presentations will be simple. Each person will have roughly 7-8 minutes to overview or gloss some key points from your final report and play the one episode that you feel gives you the best basis for moving forward. The final report should be much more detailed and polished than the overview you deliver for the presentation.

Grades:

   Both the presentation and the final report will be up to 5 participation points each. This will give you a good chance to boost the participation grade a little. Just make sure that you follow through with these last two assignments so you don't hurt your overall participation grade.