

Podcast Analysis Assignment

After identifying/subscribing to 1-3 podcasts, students will script and compose a 3-5 minute genre analysis of the podcast series that examines the themes, organization, online distribution, and technical dimensions to the serial program. The purpose of this is two-fold:

1. To become familiar with the genre of podcasting.
2. To be introduced to and practiced in audio editing.

Each audio response podcast should have some form of these components:

1. Collection (identify the podcat(s) you chose, explain why you chose them, and how you access and listen to them)
2. Context (who are the writers, what are the primary themes, who are the intended listeners, what are the podcasts' primary purposes in connecting these writers, themes, and listeners?)
3. Form (discuss the sonic aspects of the compositions, the main types of examples—both verbal and sonic, the main rhetorical appeals, the types of language and music used)
4. Rhetoric (generalize from these formal patterns and rhetorical contexts to describe podcasts in general from your specific examples—what is assumed, important, the primary attitude or mood invoked)
5. Response (close with a critique, a continued question, a point of inspiration, etc.)

Successful assignments will show clear evidence of a careful analysis of the podcasts' form and content and will also demonstrate at least a beginner's facility with audio editing that includes introduction music or sound, some layered sound effects, and the use of outside audio for analysis purposes.

Be sure to use the "Guidelines for Analyzing Genres"—and the various examples and heuristics the textbook chapter and academic book chapter—as heuristic guidelines, not requirements to follow like a list. We are following their basic process:

1. Collect samples of the genre.

While the reading emphasized print genre and collecting multiple samples, we are obviously focusing on the podcast as a genre and on 1-3 series with multiple examples from them. The Podcast Analysis Proposal should have taken care of this part of the process, unless you decide to follow a different podcast or podcasts over the course of the next three weeks.

While listening to podcasts, be prepared to take lots of notes like we have been doing in class. Identify elements from 2, 3, and 4 below. Then arrange them into a "script" that can be as tightly or loosely structured as you are comfortable with in

relation to the numbered list above. Along with the content and details, include “directions” or notes for ideas about what types of sounds to layer in, quotes or examples from the podcast you want to use, and even potential effects you might want to use. Then collect these sounds and clips cut from the podcast and prepare for your own dialogue. You won’t have to enact the entire script in one pass. Record small clips or snippets from it that need to be done smoothly. The rest you can layer and edit together in the final mix.

2. Identify the scene and describe the situation in which the genre is used.

With many print genres that are connected to organizational cultures, the scene and situation are tied to the people, place, structure, and purposes are tied to that organization. For podcasts, the situation can be similar: NPR, Radiotopia, ESPN, for examples, are different types of organizations that produce podcasts. Listeners in particular situations are a second part of context. They could be walking or driving, or sitting in a dorm or workplace on a computer. The combined scenes produce the setting for texts, subjects, writers, readers, and purposes that the producers and writers inscribe into the genre. (See Guidelines p.93; See example of scenes in the textbook chapter; See book chapter p. 204-05 for a further heuristic.)

3. Identify and describe the patterns in the genre features.

Patterns and features are both about structural form but also rhetorical action. You want to examine the structure of the podcast, in what sequence do the “textual” events occur as well as the “layers” of sound that accompany the sequence. Along with these formal properties will be specific content and types of content as well as particular rhetorical purposes for particular sounds. Even if you don’t know a lot about podcasts or rhetoric and its concepts, you can still identify the purposes for the sequence and the layers. Finally more typical things such as tone and style, even if just the level of formality or informality, could be helpful in deciding how to proceed with your podcast. (See Guidelines p.94; See example of language use and form in the textbook chapter; See book chapter p. 195-96 for further heuristic to follow.)

4. Analyze what these patterns reveal about the situation and scene.

When it comes time to analyze all of the elements, you want to generalize from your findings. What do these specifics tell you about how podcasts in general, or at least podcasts on this particular topic, operate? Imagine the scene and situation for your listeners and how you want them to respond to your podcast. What are the grounding values or ideals that you exhibit and want the listener to identify with? Who does this include and exclude? What are the actions the listener should take upon listening? Maybe it is “just entertainment”? But maybe you want them to think differently? Act differently? How will the “genre”—the combination of form, rhetoric, and situation—invite these outcomes? (See Guidelines p.94; See textbook

chapter p. 72-73 for a sample analysis or generalization; See book chapter p. 197 for further heuristic.)

5. Close with your specific open-ended response: a “critique” of the genre and what you’ll want to do differently and why; or an inspiration from the genre that you’ll want to try and emulate. As the book chapter suggests, you’ll be creating a mini-manual for learning to write the genre for you to follow (201).