

Unit 3: Advocacy Portfolio

How can we ethically & productively engage a civic issue?

How do we study and write about those whose values and worldviews we may not share? That is, how do we engage respectfully and thoughtfully with others? How do we answer questions of ethics and representations under these challenging conditions?

– Kirsch & Royster, *Feminist Rhetorical Practices* (36)

How well do we know our local communities and how well known are we in them? Are those outside the university eager or reluctant to work with us? How prepared are we to go through the process of learning how to understand and respond to local needs? Do we know how to frame questions in useful ways and listen for answers, even ones we might not like?

– Mathieu, *Tactics of Hope* (xi)

In unit 1, we looked at different texts (both scholarly and popular) that addressed civic engagement, and you parsed out your own understandings of what it means to engage with civic issues and how writing plays a role in this process. In unit 2, we explored how different groups of people have historically accessed and been denied access to civic spaces. The texts in this unit focused more on breadth than depth: the literacy practices of 19th century African American women, action in the civil rights and disability rights movements, queer rhetorical practices. Also in unit 2, we began to look at a range of media: scholarly articles and news articles, creative videos and documentaries, podcasts.

In unit 3, our final unit, we will extend many of these discussions in order to further ground your understandings of civic engagements and the different forms of “writing” that engage civic issues. For the final project, **you will choose a local civic issue and create a portfolio of advocacy materials that ethically and productively address that issue.** Unlike the breadth of unit 2, you will need to delve deeply into this issue: narrowing and focusing your topic, identifying an audience (or a couple different audiences), doing some background research of the issue and how it is frequently addressed, and determining the most appropriate “texts” to advocate for that issue.

Guidelines.

Though the pieces you create for your portfolio do not have to cite particular sources (specifically if it’s a genre in which that would be inappropriate), you *do* need to do some background research about your issue, audience, and what materials already exist about this issue. Throughout the unit, I will ask you to synthesize and draw on this research.

Like the Unit 2 analysis, **you should pick something local** (whether Syracuse, your hometown, or a very particular situation or group of people) that you can *productively* engage. Ask yourself:

- What are the important conversations and controversies occurring about this issue?
- Who is involved in these conversations?
- How can you ethically include and represent these voices?

- How is this issue being discussed or represented through writing (broadly conceived)?
- Is current representation of this issue effective?
- What can *you* contribute that will productively engage this issue?
- How will you position your own *ethos* as someone capable of advocating for this issue?

Attention to Rhetorical Issues.

Just as we practiced rhetorical analysis in unit 2, we will continue to address rhetorical issues and deploy rhetorical awareness as we research and compose materials for the advocacy portfolio. Specifically, in class and for your portfolio, I expect you to do the following:

- **Assert** why your issue interests you or matters to you (and why it should interest and matter to your audience) at this particular historical moment. In other words, compose your argument *kairotically* and establish exigence.
- **Recognize** and attend to what your audience will need in terms of explanation, preparation, contextualization. You will want to do the following:
 - determine your target audience(s),
 - research the needs and wants of that audience,
 - look at other materials that address this issue (or similar issues),
 - use these materials to guide the creation of your own “texts,”
 - anticipate confusion or resistance (by the target audience),
 - anticipate counter-arguments (by others),
 - use rhetorical appeals and strategies appropriate for your rhetorical situation.
- **Advocate** a particular perspective for a particular issue. Your materials should fit into an ongoing debate or conversation.

Criteria: What You Will Produce.

- **a portfolio of 4-5 “texts”** informed by background research that addresses a community, and critically and rhetorically advocates for your local civic issue. The text format is open, and the length will depend on your format. You should, however, have at least **two written texts** and at least **one non-written text** (ie., audio, visual, 3-D).

Possible texts could include:

- a research proposal or report that outlines the issue,
- flyers or pamphlets,
- artwork that represents the issue,
- creative writing,
- a digital archive of representations/sources relevant to your topic,
- a collection of photographs,
- a video or podcast,
- a blog, Facebook page or Twitter account,
- a series of memes,
- a set of public service announcements (or ads),
- an op-ed or letter to the editor,
- a zine.

- a 3-4-page critical reflection that outlines your goals and rhetorical choices and reflects on how background research impacted your final product.

Not all media are appropriate for all audiences (or topics).

- How does the medium affect your argument?
- Who, realistically, is (could be) your audience?
- How might you engage and appeal to your audience in *new* ways?

The Deets.

The Unit 3 Advocacy Portfolio should include a minimum of 4-5 pieces that demonstrate your understanding of the genres discussed in class that are most appropriate for your issue and target audience. Please include a 3-4-page critical reflection detailing the rhetorical choices you made and how your products productively engage the chosen issue. Please include a Works Cited page with the reflection for any texts referenced.

The portfolio is due by midnight on **Tuesday, December 10**. If it is a digital portfolio, please email it to ahhitt@syr.edu. If it is physical, you can drop it off Tuesday between 10-2 in the Bird Library Café. If you need to drop it off before then, please email me to schedule a meeting time.



The Facebook page for Syracuse Students Against Drones, an example of a (digital) space that allows students to gather to discuss and advocate for a local civic issue.