

## Project 2: “Found” Social Media Essay



**Overview:** A multimodal, personal essay comprised entirely of posts you have made to various social media (Facebook, Vine, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) and “written” in order to gain a better understanding of the online “self” you have constructed/and is being constructed for you. If you don’t use social media, or if you don’t feel comfortable sharing your posts, you may choose to put together an essay that focuses on a public figure, using his or her social media updates to assemble a found essay.

What’s a “found” essay? Much like found art, this essay uses found objects (images and text from your social media activity) which you will curate to build an essay. This project is unlike a traditional essay you would write for a specific rhetorical situation in that instead of writing new content, you will assemble textual and visual fragments in a new arrangement in

order to explore how your identity is crafted through/in/by social media. Collage is a useful metaphor for thinking about this genre of writing. As such, this project should also allow you to be more creative than other essays you will write in this course. Think of it as an intellectual art project. Through it, you should come to a new understanding of how (social) media afford and constrain “the kinds of people that we can be...the kinds of social identities we can adopt” as users of particular technologies (Jones and Hafner, 8). You should also see this as an opportunity to play with language, mixing and building textual fragments to create new meanings through assemblage and collage.

Like Project 1, the ultimate venue for this project will be a new page on your Wordpress site. You should also, like project 1, include at least one image taken from your social media activities.

### **Process:**

This project is open to interpretation and play, but it should involve some combination of the following processes:

- The “research” for this project involves the collection and review of your (or another public figure’s) social media posts. You may choose to collect from a single social media network (e.g. just Facebook updates, shares, etc.) or collect from multiple networks (Facebook and Twitter and Instagram, etc.). While you are required to choose

at least one image (e.g. a profile picture), you are free to determine the ratio of image to text that you choose to work with.

- Once you've collected and examined a body of fragments, you'll spend some time reflecting on them to see what types of themes or patterns emerge. The ultimate selection of the fragments you use to assemble the essay should revolve around a coherent theme, controlling idea, or conscious organizational device. The example found essay, linked below, is a good example of how a single "writer" can arrange multiple fragments toward a controlling idea.
- Deciding on a controlling idea will allow you to begin arranging fragments. Remember that these fragments do not need to be arranged in the order you posted them (chronologically). Rather, you should make a conscious effort to assemble them in a way that works toward a semblance of coherence (one fragment builds on/expands the previous). This won't always be possible, of course. And you might also discover that fragments that don't work toward a sequence are the most surprising, artistic, playful or interesting because they can delight the reader and serve as a reminder of the essay's unorthodox technique.
- "Publish" your found essay to your blog. Give it an interesting title and create a new page on your Wordpress site. Use the "Add Media" feature to include images.

### **Important Dates:**

- Introduce assignment (2/13)
- In-class "research" (2/18)
- In-class arrangement/composition of fragments (2/20)
- Final draft due to your Wordpress site- between noon 2/25 and noon 2/28

### **Requirements:**

- Length: 600-1000 words
- Includes Image/Video
- Utilizes fragments from social media network feeds

### **Evaluation Criteria:**

- Project works within the genre of the personal essay and is organized around a controlling idea or theme.
- Textual and visual fragments work together to create a sense of unity and coherence.
- Project includes at least one visual fragment.
- Project demonstrates evidence of careful reflection and consideration of assemblage choices.
- Project meets length requirements and is carefully proofread.

### **Resources:**

- Read the example found essay "Life, Love, Happiness: A Found Essay from the Twitterverse" by Pablo Pinero Stillmann: <http://brevitymag.com/issues/march-2013/twitterverse/>.
- You should also check out what Stillman has to say about the process of composing the essay: <http://brevity.wordpress.com/2013/04/04/i-twitter-curator/>.