

Your Essay as a PowerPoint

Presented by

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The Project

- Late in the semester, my FYC students are working on a three-page interpretive paper that places two sources into dialog
- After their first draft is done, I ask them to turn the Word document into PowerPoint slides
- The PowerPoint template that I provide contains some “kickstart” template language (if needed)
 - ala Graff & Birkenstein’s *They Say / I Say*

The Affordances

- Students are bored by outlines
 - Early points often over-wrought, later points ignored
- Students need practice in self-editing for length
 - They're used to stretching, but not cutting down
- PowerPoint allows them to see each point as a stand-alone statement
 - While they develop another useful, marketable skill
- Paragraph template verbiage from the slides gets rewritten when students convert back to Word

The Constraint

- Famed design guru Edward Tufte has said that PowerPoint “**elevates format over content, betraying an attitude of commercialism that turns everything into a sales pitch**” (2003)
- He famously blamed the crash of the space shuttle Columbia on NASA’s use of PowerPoint

The Debate

- Don Norman (NWU) says that Tufte is shooting the messenger: **“Most talks are horrible and most PowerPoint slides are bad – but that’s not PowerPoint’s fault. Most writing is awful, too, but I don’t go railing against pencils or chalk”** (2004)
- Clearly, projecting text onto a screen can be an optimal of transferring information...

Praxis

- The next two slides are shown to students just before the assignment is given out
- The subsequent eight slides are what students download to do the assignment
- The final slide shows anonymous online student survey results, taken after my third classroom delivery of this project

Generic Interpretive Essay Outline

- **Introduction** of author and text, then give a brief statement of the author's purpose (your **claim**)
- **Big-Picture Context:** Background info about the author, the text, the audience, zeitgeist, or other stuff
- **3 Evidence slides**, with each slide containing:
 - “Close-up” context (how evidence fits into essay)
 - A quote from text (remember to provide page #)
 - Some analysis of the quote (connect it to your claim)
- **Finding:** Give your interpretation (author's purpose)
- **Conclusion:** What's at stake for the audience, & me?

For Our Next Class:

- Please start your Essay B revision by converting your chosen essay into a Powerpoint file
- Download the PPT template from D2L, then copy-and-paste your text onto the slides
 - *This will help you organize your content*
- Finally, edit your text to fit the space (**brevity!**)
 - *The titles of the slides you'll download match the suggested outline we just examined, but you can repeat slides or make new slides as needed*
- We'll view the PPTs during our next class

English 101

Interpretive Essay B

by *Your Name*

Introduction & Claim

Replace the text below with your own words

- **Firstname Lastname**'s editorial "**Title of work goes here**" reveals the author's belief that **purpose statement goes here**.

“Big Picture” Context

Replace the text below with your own words

- “Essay’s short name” appeared in venue on date, a time when describe relevant info about the spirit of the times.
- As an occupation of author at author’s employer, Lastname’s background is describe her experience. The author relies on that experience when crafting this message for her audience, a group that she sees as describe author’s view of audience.

Evidence #1

Replace the text below with your own words

- **Lastname** discusses **idea goes here** as a way to show us that **explanation goes here**.
- As mentioned in the section **Subtitle Goes Here**, the author says, “**Quote goes here**” (99).
- A likely interpretation of this statement is that **Lastname** believes **put more explanation here**.

Evidence #2

Replace the text below with your own words

- The author clarifies **idea goes here** by providing more information about **something**.
- In section **X**, we are told: “**Quote goes here**” (**99**).
- This reinforces the idea that **Lastname** believes **restate idea here**.

Evidence #3

Replace the text below with your own words

- **Lastname** helps explains **idea goes here** by comparing it to **another thing**.
- In the essay's conclusion, **Lastname** states that "**Quote goes here!**" (99).
- This shows another aspect of the author's argument that **restate idea here**.

Finding

Replace the text below with your own words

- **Lastname** feels that the consequences of **author's message** are important to her intended audience of **description of audience**, so the author uses **strategy #1** and **strategy #2** to argue her point.
- The evidence presented in this essay is used to support **Lastname's** assumption that **author's message**. The author is showing her audience that the best way to address this situation is by **author's purpose goes here**.

Conclusion

Replace the text below with your own words

- If **Lastname** is successful in convincing her audience to act, the results will be **explain**. If she is unsuccessful, however, the consequences are **explain**.
- As a reviewer, I find her argument to be **persuasive or not persuasive**, and **agree or disagree** that we should all **author's purpose**.

Student Feedback Survey

How would you rate the "Essay as Powerpoint" assignment versus the typical homework writing assignment?



I'm looking forward to your thoughts!

Feel free to follow up via email at
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