

EN267: Group Video Essay (finalists)

Due: Week 11, Term 2

The video essay is a form of assessment that includes collaborative and transmedia skills. You will work with others in your group to produce a short film that bridges creative and critical presentations – ‘creative’ in the sense of not being limited to the *form* of a conventional academic expository essay, but ‘critical’ in the sense of being driven primarily by an expository essay’s goals of intellectual presentation and analysis.

A few guide points:

- **The expectation is that this assessment should require no more than one (1) week’s work.** This video does not require the extensive preparation of a written essay.
- **The mark you get will be given to all members of the group.** It is a collective mark. The division of labour within the group can vary. Some contributors may not appear on screen, some may help with the editing but not necessarily the “script,” and so on.
- **The mark is not based on aesthetic or technical skill in film-making.** Some groups may use a more complex mise-en-scène, others might simply prepare a script that is read by a single person to the camera. It’s up to you.
- As with the above, the working assumption is that **it will be filmed with a mobile phone or tablet camera, and does not require any additional equipment** (lenses, lighting, etc.). If no one in your group has a phone or tablet, then video equipment can be borrowed from IT services: <https://warwick.ac.uk/services/its/service-support/av/equipment/>. Full computer access is also available in the Learning Grids. You can of course be more technically ambitious if you have those skills and the equipment is available to you.
- Your group is not required to get pre-approval of the project focus.

What you need to do

Create a video project **3-6 minutes in length** (minimum length: 2 minutes 42 seconds; maximum length: 6 minutes 18 seconds).

The video should be a creative-critical presentation on the topic of ecology as a way of seeing. You can organise the video around any one of our recurrent foci on the module, if you wish:

- Local/global natures; ‘the end of nature’
- Enclosures; the commons
- Eco-praxis; walking
- (Post)colonial environments

- Urban ecologies
- Anthropocene/Capitalocene
- ‘The weather’
- Energy; waste; edgelands; sacrifice zones
- Digital/media environments

Or choose a theme taken from other readings you’ve encountered in your research. Remember, though, that as with a written essay, you will need a **specific focus** and **clear argument** supported by (visual, textual) **evidence**.

The video might take the form of original scripted content, produced by members of the group, or combine aspects of a “video essay” incorporating clips of other videos (which need to be cited, just as you would a quotation in a textual essay).

The video should have a title and should include credits that list the names and student IDs of your group (this can just be simply a shot of a handwritten or word-processed sheet).

Note: I’ve organised you into groups of 3-4 finalists for the purpose of this assessment; see the forum for group lists.

Submission

Once the video is made, send me a link (via Dropbox or other Cloud-based storage, which may be the university’s own at myfiles.warwick.ac.uk, etc.) so that I can download the file.

Alternatively, you may upload it to Youtube or Vimeo, **but** make sure your video is set to ‘private’ and include the link and password in your email. It is vital that at least one member of the group **backs up** a copy of your video essay using a memory stick or other storage device.

Important: In order to ‘submit’ your assignment on Tabula, which is where you’ll receive your comments and mark, **you will need to upload a submission statement**. This should take the form of the sentence below, uploaded as a Word document or PDF (the point of this is both to identify your group, and to make sure you submit it before the deadline so that you can get your comments and mark back in a timely way):

‘I confirm my group has submitted the video essay ‘[insert your title here]’ to the module tutor within the assessment deadline.’

A few tips for effective video essays

- If you are using voiceover, make sure that you speak clearly and that the pacing is judged correctly (the audience needs to be able to follow what you are saying).
- Avoid combining voiceover with footage where other voices are present, as this will be difficult to follow.

- Try to produce or select visual evidence that convincingly supports the theoretical point you are introducing. As a rule of thumb, less is often more; that is, don't 'overload' your video essay so that it becomes hard to identify the key insights. A few well-chosen images/scenes with in-depth commentary is generally more effective than a jam-packed speedfest.
- If you choose text overlays to introduce theoretical concepts and quotations (recommended), make sure you give the viewer enough time to read the text before moving on.
- Avoid text overlays when another voice can be heard in the footage talking about something else (this is distracting for the viewer).
- Play your video essay to a friend or classmate to ensure it makes sense to an audience.

How is a video essay different from a traditional essay?

The video essay is a short visual argument or exploratory analysis. Typically a video essay will make use of original filmed material and/or sequences from film or television in conjunction with text or voiceover, and scholarly quotations, in order to analyse a concept, image or idea. Kevin Lee, a prolific video essayist (whose work can be found at Fandor and elsewhere) defines the latter kind of video essay as follows: 'These videos take footage from films and reconfigure them using editing, text, graphics and voiceover to reveal startling observations and insights' (February 2013, RogerEbert.com).

Why do a video essay?

An assessment like this allows you to develop (and share) a variety of technical skills by teaching yourself and your peers how to use editing software (such as iMovie), locate open-source film and music, and write text or script. You can apply your understanding of theoretical concepts by highlighting specific sequences, scenes, and images in a medium that is more direct than the traditional written essay. In this way the video essay can work effectively as an option alongside more traditional written assessments, and offer innovative ways of integrating visual and textual presentation.

Further guidance on video essay how-tos and links to sample video essays:

<http://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/audiovisualessay/resources/how-to-guides/how-to-video-essays-by-greer-fyfe-and-miriam-ross/>

Some examples of video projects:

<http://videoessays.tumblr.com>

Ideas on video essays (don't panic – we aren't expecting this level of production quality, we mention them just to give you some ideas):

1. Patrick Willems, "On Making Video Essays" (30 January 2018):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H13yrUgQT4A>

2. BFI Best Video Essays of 2018

<https://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/polls-surveys/best-video-essays-2018>

3. How to Do a Video Essay: An Introduction to the Video Essay

<https://ecu.au.libguides.com/video-essay/how-to-do-a-video-essay>

4. The Video Essay

<https://catoolkit.herts.ac.uk/toolkit/8-the-video-essay/>

5. The Audiovisual Essay: Resources for Teachers

<http://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/audiovisualessay/resources/resources-for-teachers/>

Appendix: Assessment criteria for video essays

80+ First class

- Research has been exceptionally thorough and wide-ranging, information has been selected and presented appropriately for the topic, and the producers have contributed original ideas to the topic under discussion
- There is a focused development of the presentational analysis, the focus is announced clearly at the beginning, and there are logical links between ideas and imagery (if used)
- Very thorough, detailed analysis with convincing, wide-ranging evidence to back up arguments, which use existing moving-image materials in creative and ethically responsible ways, adding value to them and showing awareness of copyright and fair use policies
- Clear evidence of originality in lines of argument, selection of evidence and a strong grasp of the scholarly responsibility entailed in choosing appropriate visual sources
- The video essay is exceptionally well structured and well written, using immaculate, grammatically correct sentence structure and appropriate style, including a full bibliography and references according to the specified referencing style and with comprehensive and appropriate credits
- The work responds to the brief in an original and creative way, and shows exceptional imagination, innovation, and conceptualisation
- A clear understanding of the form of the video essay and a deployment of the form in service of a well-honed argument

A submission achieving 80+ must be outstanding in every way. It presents an exceptionally coherent, well structured, immaculately presented, very well informed argument that is cogently supported, highly ambitious in scope, shows originality and relates the topic to its broader context while showing a sophisticated awareness of the module's concerns.

70+ First class

- Research has been thorough and wide-ranging, information has been selected and presented appropriately for the topic, and the writers have contributed their own ideas to the discussion
- There is a clear development of the argument, which is signalled from the beginning, and there are logical links between ideas
- The video essay includes thorough, detailed analysis with suitable, wide-ranging evidence to support its arguments; it uses existing moving-image materials in creative and ethically responsible ways, adding value to them and demonstrating awareness of copyright and fair use policies
- The video essay offers clear evidence of originality in its lines of argument, selection of evidence and/or sources and an understanding of the scholarly responsibility of choosing appropriate visual sources
- The video essay is well structured and coherent, with a clear structure and appropriate style including a full bibliography and references and with comprehensive and appropriate credits
- The work responds to the brief with some evidence of originality

A submission achieving 70+ must present a coherent, well structured, clear, very well informed argument that is very well supported, ambitious in scope, shows originality and relates the topic to the broader context of the module.

60+ Upper second class

- Thorough examination of the question with evidence of research beyond the essential reading and viewing
- There is a clear development of argument, which is announced at the beginning, and there are logical links between most of the ideas
- Thorough, detailed analysis with suitable evidence to support arguments, which use existing moving-image materials in creative and ethically responsible ways, adding some value to them and showing some awareness of copyright and fair use policies
- Shows glimpses of originality in lines of argument, selection of evidence and/or sources and some understanding of the scholarly responsibility in choosing appropriate visual sources
- The video essay is well structured and clear and includes a full bibliography and references and with appropriate credits
- The concept is clear and engaging

A submission achieving 60+ must be a clear, coherent, well-structured argument that is well informed, uses evidence to back up statements and shows reading and viewing beyond the essential sources. Work in this category tends to be less ambitious in scope than first-class work. Originality of thought and very good use of evidence may compensate for lapses in the argument structure.

50+ Lower second class

- Research is generally good but limited in range, and information has not always been selected appropriately, with limited contribution from the authors

- There is evidence of an argument, but it is not fully developed or can be hard to follow; the introduction and/or conclusion is lacking in key respects
- The analysis is adequate, but there is not always enough or well selected evidence to support arguments; the use of existing moving-image materials is deployed to an extent in creative and ethically responsible ways, adding some value to them and showing some awareness of copyright and fair use policies
- Shows a clear argument for the selection of evidence and/or sources and a limited understanding of the scholarly responsibility entailed in choosing visual sources
- Ideas are expressed reasonably well; while there may be some errors in presentation, the video essay on the whole is clear
- The video essay includes a full bibliography and references and with mostly appropriate credits
- There are some moments of good analysis

A submission achieving 50+ must show that the group is reasonably well informed about the core evidence used and uses this sufficiently well to present a fairly good argument. The use of video as a medium is uninspired but adequate to the task. Work in this category is competent in most respects, but lacks the comprehensiveness, accuracy and/or cohesiveness expected of an upper second.

40+ Third class

- There is some evidence of research and an attempt to address the question or topic, but only the most obvious sources have been used and little selectivity has been applied to the information gathered
- The work is descriptive and derivative rather than analytical, with a lack of critical insight and/or evidence of theoretical underpinning
- The structure is not related to the development of ideas and/or the introduction and conclusion are inadequate; existing moving image material is deployed without evidence of creativity or the exercise of ethical responsibility, and adds limited value while showing only limited awareness of copyright and fair use policies
- The evidence selected is not always relevant to the question and/or important points have been missed; there is no reflection on the scholarly responsibility of choosing appropriate visual sources
- Relatively competent use of language, but the video essay may often be unclear and/or contain frequent errors in writing or presentation
- Sources are referenced, but the referencing style is inconsistent; there is an attempt at including appropriate credits
- The form of the video essay is not exploited in any meaningful way
- There is only limited attempt at analysis

A submission achieving 40+ must show some understanding of relevant texts, concepts and theories. Evidence may be lacking or inappropriate. A fully formulated argument may be absent and the research question may not be fully addressed. Notwithstanding errors in presentation and communication, there must be sufficient evidence that the group has undertaken a satisfactory degree of work to warrant a pass.

30+ Fail (but with potential for compensation)

- Little or no research has been carried out, there is over-reliance on class material and no point of view is developed
- There is little or no analysis and discussion is uninformed and superficial
- The discussion is not clearly relevant to the assignment and/or too many important points are missed
- The viewer cannot follow the structure of the argument and the existing moving-image materials are used in a limited, derivative way with little awareness of copyright and fair use policies
- The work consists of a string of assertions and opinions that may not be related to each other, with little or no use of supporting evidence and no understanding of the scholarly responsibility entailed in choosing visual sources
- Poor presentation and linguistic competence, including shaky grasp of grammar, limited vocabulary, incorrect word use and poor spelling and punctuation interfering with the transmission of ideas and information
- Few sources are cited and/or referencing is inconsistent; there are some credits
- There is a partial and problematic attempt at analysis

A submission achieving 30+ fails to demonstrate understanding of relevant texts, concepts and theories. Evidence is lacking, unconvincing or inappropriate. There are flaws in the argument or an obvious lack in argument directed toward the research topic. There may be grammatical errors and/or a lack of clarity. The overall impression is of students who have not undertaken a satisfactory degree of work and observation to warrant a pass.

Less than 30 Fail (but without potential for compensation)

- Little or no research has been carried out and no argument is evident
- There is little or no analysis and discussion is uninformed, with little or no use of evidence relevant to the discussion
- The discussion is confused and not clearly relevant to the assignment
- The structure is very poor and disordered, and the existing moving-image materials are used in a limited way with no awareness of copyright and fair use policies
- There are many errors or gaps; overall, information is not sufficient to demonstrate even a basic grasp of core concepts
- There is no understanding of the scholarly responsibility entailed in choosing visual sources
- Very poor presentation and linguistic competence, including little grasp of grammar, limited vocabulary, incorrect word use and poor spelling and punctuation interfering with the transmission of ideas and information
- Sources are not cited appropriately and there are no credits
- The work is below the required duration

A submission achieving less than 30% shows obvious failure to demonstrate understanding of relevant texts, concepts and theories. Evidence is lacking, unconvincing or inappropriate. There are serious flaws in the argument or an obvious lack of argument. There are many errors or lack of clarity. The overall impression is of students who have very little understanding of the topic.