WRT 205

Spring 2012

Unit 4

**Trailer Tips[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Regardless of the technology you use to compose your trailer, it’s important to think about the project as involving *translation*—that is, the medium should impact, even transform, the look and the rhetorical features of the argument. Think about it this way: technology like powerpoint has traditionally been used quite passively—essentially to package and present (to boil down) an already existing paper or project or set of ideas. But I’d like you tothink instead about the following…

* This final project emphasizes and draws on *rhetorical skills*. You’re not just presenting information; you are imagining and impacting your audience in a new way by drawing on your sensitivity to kairos and exigence, by carefully and strategically deploying rhetorical appeals, and by expanding your sense of the purpose of your argument.
* Your trailer should *reduce* or shrink the original argument, but simultaneously *highlight* and enhance what’s there. A two-minute movie trailer can’t possibly recreate a 100-minute movie; similarly, your two-to-three minute digital trailer can’t recreate your eight page argument. This project challenges you to make strategic decisions about what to leave out and what to emphasize (and how to emphasize it).
* Don’t be afraid to step away from the text itself and to see your argument anew. Select flashpoints from the essay and engage with them in new ways; identify lingering questions and stress them beyond their role in the essay; bring things to the fore that were not emphasized in the original argument.
* Your trailer should have a life beyond the written text. In other words, your argument should be born (or reborn) in the digital realm; viewers should not need to see the original argument essay to make sense of the trailer. Your use of image, sound and text must be *purposeful*.
* Digital assignments reward risk and play. There is no right way to do this project, which in turn puts greater pressure on you to be thoughtful in your rhetorical choices (What is your musical selection saying? What impact/s do your images have? Do your textual choices make sense? Are the textual choices readable?)
* Your digital product does not have to be perfect or flashy or completely without hiccups. I am most interested in the thinking that accompanies your design and execution (that’s why the rhetorical analysis of the trailer carries equal weight in the unit).
* Don’t get caught up in technological limits (or technological promise); for our purposes a powerpoint is *not* less impressive than a digital movie. Pick a medium you are comfortable and confident working with, think about what you want to say, and play around with the technology until you make it happen.
* And finally, keep in mind that this project will take time—probably more time than you even expect. Keep up with the homework, and anticipate glitches and interruptions.

1. This handout is indebted to Anna Hensley, WRT 205 teacher and PhD candidate in Composition and Cultural Rhetoric [↑](#footnote-ref-1)