

Expository Web-Text for Social Justice: Countering Dominant Narratives

In this assignment, you will work in groups of 3-4 students each on conducting primary and secondary research around an issue of (in)justice in the U.S and present your findings in a web-text to inform a targeted audience. By a web-text, I mean a combination of (interactive text, visuals, audio, and video) that you publish online for readers beyond our class community. While you have the freedom to decide on what topic to work with, your project should tackle a dominant narrative in the U.S that advances and keeps (in)justice unchallenged and offers the readers a counter-narrative that promotes social justice.

Definitions

Dominant cultural narratives, defined as “overlearned stories communicated through mass media or other large social and cultural institutions and social networks” (Rappaport, 2000, p. 3), are systems of representation that function as subtle mechanisms of oppression and social control that shape cultural norms and personal beliefs, while concealing the processes that produce them (Ewick & Silbey, 1995). According to social dominance theory, dominant cultural narratives operate as legitimizing myths that justify the maintenance of unequal intergroup relations (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001). Dominant cultural narratives exert their influence through processes of psychological internalization that shape the self-concept and social perceptions of members of both dominant and minority groups. (Julian Hasford 158)

Counter-narrative refers to the narratives that arise from the vantage point of those who have been historically marginalized. The idea of ‘counter-‘ itself implies a space of resistance against traditional domination. A counter-narrative goes beyond the notion that those in relative positions of power can just tell the stories

of those in the margins. Instead, these must come from the margins, from the perspectives and voices of those individuals. A counter-narrative thus goes beyond the telling of stories that take place in the margins. The effect of a counter-narrative is to empower and give agency to those communities. By choosing their own words and telling their own stories, members of marginalized communities provide alternative points of view, helping to create complex narratives truly presenting their realities” Raúl Alberto Mora

Examples of Narratives and Counter Narratives

Narratives	Counter Narratives
Columbus Day: we celebrate the anniversary of discovering America and we honor the legacy of Columbus	Columbus discovery of America marked the beginning of stealing a native land and colonizing and colonizing its people. We continue to occupy and live on that stolen land, and we continue to oppress Native Americans as a subordinate minority
You can be whatever you want	Circumstances around you including but not limited to (race, skin color, culture, nationality, religion, sexuality, gender, class, education, privilege....etc., are what decide for you what you could be and what you could not
Black men are more likely to commit crimes than White men; they make the majority of prison inmates, and they commit the most sever crimes.	Black people are segregated from White people, they have less access to education, employment, and government support, and they are discriminated against in the judicial system.
Women who get sexually assaulted contribute to their assault by not being careful, by dressing up inappropriately, and by giving men mixed messages	Men are raised since childhood to hold power over women, and to see women as subject to their desires. Women are raised to act feminine, kind and polite, and gain men’s attention.

Project Objectives

- Engage you in the U.S civic life by responding to issues of social (in)justice.
- Develop your critical thinking, research, and analysis skills
- Develop your rhetoric and digital composition skills
- Practice writing for a real audience in a particular rhetorical situation

Project Stages

- Brainstorm, research, and investigate the history of a dominant story
- Research and investigate counter-narratives that resist the dominant narrative that your group wishes to respond to
- Present a research-based web-text to inform a particular narrowed-down audience about a counter narrative to make them start thinking of and resisting a dominant narrative in the U.S
- Promote your web-text to your targeted audience

The Web-Text Timeline

Friday (3/5): Project Plan

Friday (3/12): Revised Topic Proposal and Project Plan

Friday (3/19): Research and interview questions

Friday (3/26): Start working on the Summary of Interviews Secondary Sources

Friday (4/2): Finish working on the Summary of Interviews Secondary Sources

Friday (4/9): Web-text Draft#0 (skeleton and landing page) & Authors' Memo

Wednesday- Friday (4/14-4/16): In-class web-text proposal presentation

Monday (4/19): Web-text draft#1 and authors' memo

Friday (4/23): Web-text draft#2 and authors' memo

Monday (4/26): Start circulating the web-text

Monday (4/26) – Wednesday (4/28): Group conferences with Dr. Diab

Wednesday (4/28) – Friday (4:30): Reflection on meeting with Dr. Diab

Friday (4/30): Web-text presentation and Final reflections

Sunday (5/2): Web-text final draft and authors' memo

Monday (5/3): Self- growth letters and peer-growth letters

Collaborative Rubric/ Assessment Criteria¹:

A good web-text as I see it should meet all the following criteria divided under five categories

Website Components

- The website should include a combination of (interactive text, visuals, audio, and video) components.
- The text component should be at least 6,000 words in length.
- Every web-text should include the results of 3-4 interviews with marginalized participants whose life experiences counter the dominant narrative.

Clarity of the Rhetorical Situation

- The title of the website relates to the rhetorical situation of the website (the problem(s) it tackles, the audience it targets, and the purpose it aims to achieve)
- The URL includes a title of the website that relates to the rhetorical situation.
- The web-text needs to target a particular narrowed-down audience
- The landing page of the website provides a cohesive story about the whole website and its rhetorical situation (the problem(s) it tackles, the audience it targets, and the purpose it aims to achieve). That should not be by telling the audience “This website is about...” In other words show/ don’t tell the audience what the website is about. The clarity of the rhetorical situations needs to be achieved through the textual and non-textual elements of the landing page. That includes the color scheme and design of the page.
- Every inner page of the websites provides a cohesive message about its content and elaborate on what was promised in the landing page.
- The titles of the pages provide a clear idea about what’s in the pages

Organization and Cohesiveness

- Every page needs to be organized around a topic rather than a research method. For instance, interviews need to be summarized and synthesized to

¹ Feel free to add your input before we finalize this assessment criteria

speak to each other or to other research components such as a survey you conducted, past studies, or internet sources. The implication of that is titling any page in accordance to its topic component. For instance, instead of title the page “Interviews” you might title it as “Local narratives of homelessness”

- The organization and design of the website needs to always be suitable for the targeted audience. For instance, if your web-text targets children (the readers are children) then the level of language complexity, color, and visuals...etc need to appeal to children throughout the website.

Readability and Accessibility

- The font type, color, and size are clearly readable and contrast well with the text background. If these are controlled by the “theme” that the website builder provides then you need to change the whole theme.
- The website is easy to navigate. Every component on the website can be accessed in several ways to guarantee that the users would have equitable chances of accessing the content.
- Navigating any page components requires the minimal amount possible of scrolling and clicking
- All the links are provided as hyperlinks and all are tested to avoid broken links
- All videos, audio, and visual components on the website or linked to from the website need to have a textual description of them.

Submission Requirements on Canvas

- Starting from draft #1 through draft #4 the web-text project must be presented on a website.
- For the peer and teacher feedback purposes, every draft assignment requires submitting a text-only pdf authors’ memo file and an accessible hyper link to the website.

Past Student Web-Text Examples

The following are web-texts made by students in past classes of expository writing courses that I taught. While not perfect, these examples should give you an idea about what a good web-text might look like. In the coming few weeks, we will analyze these examples to see what was done well and what could be enhanced and

apply what we learn on our own web-texts. We will also review and analyze professional web-texts of social movements to inform the design and content of our web-texts,

- [Crushing Stereotypes Against Hispanic Americans](#)
- [A Room of One's Own](#)
- [Uncovering Homelessness](#)
- [Who Really Discovered America](#)
- [Immigration Resources for Educators](#)
- [IU Asian Students Archive](#)