

English 150

Assignment #5: Designing, Presenting, and Reflecting on Visual Communication: Brochure or Poster

Fall 2017

Date Due _____

Peer Response (rough draft ready) _____

You will summarize the highlights of your Assignment 3 (Profile of a Campus Program or Organization) or Assignment 4 (Understanding Place or Artifact: Campus Landscape, Building, or Art) by composing visual communication in the form of a brochure or electronic poster. In other words, you are repurposing material you have presented primarily in the written and oral modes to the visual, electronic, and oral modes.

- The purpose of your visual communication is to summarize what you learned and to convey that understanding to others in a form that is visually interesting and appropriate for your topic **(50% of grade)**
- You will also write a short reflective paper about the design decisions you made and the rationales for them in the course of creating your visual communication **(25% of grade)**
- Finally, you will make a short presentation to the class in which you share your visual communication and the highlights of your design decisions **(25% of grade)**

Remember the old adage about a picture being worth a thousand words? Andrea Lunsford, author of your *Everyday Writer* text, agrees and connects this to the communicating realities of the 21st century: "Creating a visual design is more likely than ever before to be part of your process of planning for a completed writing project. Visuals can help make a point more vividly and succinctly than words alone. In some cases, visuals may even be your primary text" (EW 96). The most important idea to keep in mind here is that visual communication, like verbal, is rhetorical: its effectiveness depends on a good fit between audience, purpose, and material. Excellent and important content can be badly undermined by a poor visual presentation of it. Similarly, snazzy visuals will not overcome a weak argument or a poor organizational plan.

Whether you choose a brochure or a poster will depend on the nature of your topic and of the information you need to relay to your audience. Posters depend more on visual text and on being read from a distance than written text. See the end of this assignment sheet for information about designing brochures and posters.

Reflective Paper and Presentation

After you complete the visual communication, write a paper of about one full typed page in which you explain the rhetorical decisions you made in the creation of your brochure or poster. Essentially, you will be explaining **how you matched your content to the audience and purpose of your communication using elements of visual design**. You will need to be specific here, using information from Chapters 3 and 9 in *The Everyday Writer*, pages 56-60 in your *ISUComm Foundation Courses Student Guide*, and the Design

Principles module on our course Moodle. Be sure to explain major decisions like the following:

- genre selection (brochure, poster)
- image selection (e.g., photographs, figures) and placement
- color choices
- font and typography choices
- amount and placement of text

Simply writing “I chose blue for the background because I thought it looked nice” is not a rhetorical decision. “I thought this was a cool picture” is not enough, unless you explain how this particular image fits your audience and purpose for your poster or brochure.

You will also make a five-minute presentation to the class in which you share your experience with your topic and your visual communication product. As you think back over your experience of gathering information for assignments and subsequently developing the brochure or poster, note the insights you’ve gained into the topic you investigated and into your design and selection process as you chose sources and visuals and developed them for specific audiences. In addition, share with us what you were most surprised/interested to discover about yourself as a communicator/designer. Use the suggestions in Chapter 3 in *The Everyday Writer* and pages 50-52 in your *ISUComm Foundation Courses Student Guide* to guide your planning of the presentation.

Provide visual support for your presentation audience

Use your brochure or poster itself as visual support for your presentation, but be sure that in the case of the brochure, it is projected in a large enough size that your class can see it. This will probably mean transferring individual panels from the brochure to presentation slides for your laptop. Simply passing the brochure around the room while you talk will not work: you can’t direct our attention to specific areas of interest (color or fonts, for example) this way, and the passing of the brochure will be a distraction.

Evaluation Criteria for Presentation

At a minimum, your presentation needs to satisfy these criteria. However, the grade is based not just on whether a feature is present or not, but on *how well* it has been integrated into your presentation. Also see your *ISUComm Foundation Courses Student Guide, 2017 – 2019* about evaluation of individual projects.

Context

- Your introduction identifies the purpose and focus of your presentation and establishes its interest for you and for your audience

Substance

- The presentation focuses on your insights in and reflections on the area you investigated and on design and communication decisions
- The presentation delivers relevant information and conclusions rather than including material for its own sake

Organization

- The presentation is organized clearly around key points that support your focus
- The presentation uses transitions, reminders, and forecasting to guide your audience's attention

Style

- Language choices are suited to your purpose, reflecting about earlier work to an audience of your peers
- Language choices sustain audience attention

Delivery

- Volume and rate of speaking allow audience to understand content
- Gestures, eye contact, expression and posture maintain audience interest and confidence
- You are not just reading your presentation

Brochure Design Principles

The instructions and criteria below are for a brochure; together, in class, we will adapt some of these to fit a poster and a website.

Your brochure will present material from one of your earlier papers, developed as a two-sided, three-paneled brochure. Select the most relevant details to include and consider how the design of the brochure and visual support can highlight the most important information. I will ask you to bring examples of brochures from local business or campus organization so that you can see how panels complement one another.

Below is a representation of the two sides and six panels of a brochure:

1	2	3
Left inside	Middle inside	Right inside

First Side

4	5	6
Folded inside	Back outside	Front outside

Second Side

When you design your brochure, you'll need to keep in mind how people will unfold it so that the panels will work together.

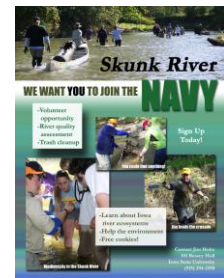
- #6 needs to make sense by itself because it acts as a kind of title page; however, when the entire brochure is open, #6 also needs to work with #5 and #4.
- #1 needs to work with #4 because people will see them together when they turn back #6. When the entire brochure is open, #1 also needs to work with #2 and #3.

Once you have selected a topic, find a minimum of three visual images that will help readers understand and interpret the information in the brochure. Cut or crop the images neatly so they provide only information necessary for your purposes. Place them carefully in the brochure so that they are near the written text they support. Add brief, helpful captions. If you are working with color images, find a color photocopy machine to make your final copy.

The written material in a brochure is single-spaced. Choose two different type fonts appropriate to your subject and purpose: one for headings, perhaps, and another for the text.

Poster Design Principles

1. **Size headings large.** As minimums for a small poster, think roughly an inch (70–72 points) for the title, a half-inch for main headings (36–48 pt.), a third of an inch (18–30 pt.) for most body text. Scale upward for larger posters. Anyone should be able to read text 5–10 feet away.
2. **Make headings talk.** Reject generic headings (“Pollution”) for specific ones (“Unsafe Nitrate Levels in Iowa Rivers”) or combine the two. Reading top to bottom, left to right, your headings should tell the story of your poster in a logical sequence.
3. **Visually emphasize the big three.** Your audience is mostly likely to focus on three spots in your poster: the title, the most prominent visual, and your main point.
4. **Chunk main ideas.** Tell your story in 5–8 main sections. Use color, line, shape, and space to separate these main ideas. Use contrast so that text is easy to read against its background. Add a sense of depth with computer-generated backgrounds (shaded backgrounds, drop shadows, overlapping elements). These techniques isolate and project your main ideas visually.
5. **Define directional viewing.** Plan vertically. People will often need to read through a group gathered around the poster, so shape chunks for reading from top to bottom, not horizontally across the poster. If photographs have any natural direction, make sure the movement leads into the poster or into a relevant section. Add simple lines or arrows to underscore the sequence of chunks for reading.
6. **Telegraph your ideas.** A poster is more like a web page than a print page. Your goal is quick access to information. Prefer short lists and phrases to long sentences. Make every word count. A poster usually doesn’t need to include a summary; it IS a summary.
7. **Deepen headings.** If you use more than one paragraph in a section (three should be the limit), turn the first few words of each paragraph into headings or add a short heading like “deepen headings” in this paragraph.
8. **Invest in one prominent visual.** Your primary visual may create an impression and provide information, but it should be located to catch the eye and connect to your main point. Avoid tables and long lists. Simplify the design, not the content. Respect the audience’s need for quick information without being simplistic. Visually, indicate which image is the main one; your audience may never get to the others.



9. **Color lightly.** Muted colors play a better role in supporting your main point without overwhelming it. Use pale solid-color or lightly textured backgrounds (generally photographs as backgrounds, even semi-transparent ones, decrease readability). Text should contrast well with the background without going to extremes (not black-white, but dark gray–off white or the color equivalent).
10. **Prefer simple design.** Avoid horizontal rules to separate text; use spacing instead. Keep lines thin and to a minimum. Indicate the priority of your ideas visually. Treating units of information equally often weakens the design. Beware of too much text centering, too many uniform boxes, too little type size variation, etc. Use only one or two typefaces (generally sans-serif). Use only 1–3 colors supported by neutrals (whites, grays, browns).

