COMM 491: Digital Writing And Design Transcript

Student: Megan Marzzacco

Advisor: Dr. Blevins

Hi! My name is Megan Marzzacco and this semester I've been working on an individual study with Dr. Blevins called Digital Writing and Design.

Overview

Throughout this semester, I've been exploring creative writing in our digital age. I researched and read about topics such as, the writing process, techniques, and sharing, which helped me improve my writing. For my projects and assignments, I took my own written pieces and original poems, and transformed them into a digital design; typically using Adobe Illustrator. I also posted most of these graphics to a public Instagram account, as a way to digitally publish my work. Throughout this presentation, I'll be going over some of the most valuable lessons from my research, as well as sharing a few samples of my digital projects.

change slide

Critical Parts Of The Writing Process

First I want to talk a little bit about the writing process, and some things I learned when researching this topic. This is just a summary of what I learned, but I've included a list of citations on the final slide of this presentation and at the end of the transcript, if you'd like to read further. We've all been taught about the writing process since grade school, so instead of reiterating the basics of brainstorming, drafting, revising, and finalizing, I want to stress how important the first draft is, no matter how bad it is! It is completely okay, and often beneficial, for your first draft to be terrible! The point of the first draft is to get your ideas from your head to the page. It's important to just jot all your thoughts down because you can revise or take things out later. If you stress too much about getting everything right the first time, then you may miss out on ideas and forget what's in your head. If you remember one

thing after this presentation, it should be write all your thoughts down in your first draft! The next step is revising, and I did quite a bit of reading on this step because it's what I struggle the most with. Most of what I write is poetry, and sometimes if you revise poetry too much, it can take the life or emotion out of the poem. Two of my favorite techniques for revising are rearranging/cut-and-paste revising and rewriting. Rearranging and cut-and-paste revising help to keep the life of the poem by only requiring you to take unnecessary words. Once you've done that, you rearrange lines and play around with the sequence and structure of the piece until you're satisfied. Another option is rewriting, and this can be especially helpful if you have time to do this right after your bad first draft. You write down what you want to say, and then as soon as you finish the poem, you flip a page and write it again, this time using any words that you wanted to include in the last poem but didn't. Writing is ultimately about choosing words to convey your message, so the rewrite method allows you to quickly write multiple versions of the same message then choose the best one. You can also rewrite using different rhyme schemes, or see how it sounds free verse. You can set rules for counting syllables or words in each line. There's a lot to play around with!

Change slide

Sharing Is Caring

One of the biggest challenges I had to overcome with this project was simply the act of sharing my writing. I already had an Instagram account for my writing prior to this individual study, but I rarely posted to it. Gradually I gained more confidence in sharing and try to post as regularly as possible, at least a few times a week. Writing can be a gift; it's a gift of our thoughts. We often ask for feedback on writing, but it can also be a way to express and share with someone our thoughts and feelings about something. It's also beneficial to, as a writer, see what other people have written because if you find yourself thinking, 'Oh, I wish I'd written that.' Well you could've. Almost all of us have the ability to write, it just takes practice, inspiration, and motivation. Sharing allows you to take responsibility and ownership of your

work. It also provides relief from the solitude of writing and allows you to connect with others; even if not many people respond to your work, you can still get satisfaction from sharing it with others. Slowly I've grown more comfortable with sharing my work on Instagram and with friends. Last, but not least, there's a lot to be said about the relationship between the writing and speaking voice. If you read a piece of writing aloud, you can emphasize the proper words and points you want to get across. As I share a few of my projects, I'll be reading the poem aloud and then talking about my design process.

Change slide
*read from photo
This was one of my first designs of the semester, and again all of the projects I'm presenting today were made with Adobe Illustrator. I used some of the basic shape tools to illustrate the beehive and little bumblebee. I liked how when I typed the poem out and centered it, it almost made the shape of a small beehive. Since I mention 'honey,' I thought it would be punny to illustrate a bee flying away. It's kind of cheesy, and honestly took me a while to draw, but I was happy with how it came out.
*read from photo

This one I actually did a few different designs for, but these were my favorite two. I found the photos from Unsplash, and placed them behind the text. The one on the right, I also added a gradient to make it more readable. I like both of them, but I ended up only posting the design on the left because I felt like the photo fit the poem better.
*read from photo
This one is actually one of my favorite designs, and it almost was created on accident. I love mixing paint colors and making abstract brush strokes. I've always found it relaxing. My favorite color is red, so that was the color I went with and I think I actually wrote the poem while the paint was drying. I don't remember the exact order, but I know I painted, wrote the poem, and made the digital version all in

the same night. I took a picture of the painting and uploaded it into Illustrator, then typed the poem on top. I had to slightly lower the opacity of the photo in order to make the poem readable, and this was the final result. I like how it combines a traditional art medium of acrylic paint, with digital typography and light editing in Adobe Illustrator.

This next one started as a single poem that I wrote back in December, but I added updates or almost like sequels to the original, and it kind of turned into this mini series. I'll read it in order from left to right.

*read from photo

I find it funny how this kind of accidentally turned into a mini series, and I'll probably add to it more in the future. This is also kind of mixed media. I found two dice, placed them on a blank page in my sketchbook, shined a warm light above it, and then took a few pictures. I placed the photos behind the text and chose the one that had enough blank space for the text to fit. Another note, I intentionally placed the dice to be showing two and one because 2+1 = 3, which is my lucky number and the lucky number of the person who inspired me to write each of these poems. The third was also our former anniversary. I just realized too that as of now there are three parts to this series; Funny how that all worked out. I'm only adding these details because I think the most fun part of designing is adding greater meaning to the words in the piece. Some of my posts are text only because I feel like a graphic or image would distract from the intensity of the words; however, this was definitely one of those cases, where the imagery is part of the story. I grouped these into one post on Instagram, which is why the dice is only on the first poem and I kept a plain background for the latter two.

*read from photo

I consider this to be one of the cheesiest poems and graphics I've ever made, but I included it here because I think it's one we can definitely all relate to due to

Coronavirus! I wrote this when classes first went online, and found the image of Earth from Unsplash. If you look closely, you'll see I rotated the photo, so the world is upside-down as described in the writing. I like how this design came out, and how the words naturally shaped around the world. I also like how the spacing of everything came out, and I think the photo and design adds more meaning to the writing.

Last, but not least here are my citations. I hope you enjoyed my writing and sharing tips, as well as some of my digital writing and designs! I did not include the Instagram account name where I post my work, as a lot of it is personal; however, if you are interested in following me, feel free to reach out and I can share it with you individually. Thank you for listening to my presentation and I hope you stay safe!

Citations

Elbow, Peter. *Writing with power: Techniques for mastering the writing process*. Oxford University Press, 1998.

Lamott, Anne. "Shitty First Drafts." *Language Awareness: Readings for College Writers*. Ed. by Paul Eschholz, Alfred Rosa, and Virginia Clark. 9th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005: 93-96.

Miller, Peggy. "Revising Poetry." The Writer, Apr. 2000, p. 12. Gale Literature Resource Center, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A61234296/LitRC?u=viva_mwc&sid=LitRC&xid=b68bd902. Accessed 6 Feb. 2020.