

Unit Prompt

In this first project, you and a group of your classmates will decide on an issue affecting students on UK's Campus – preferably one that is relevant to incoming students like you and your classmates. Throughout the course of the entire semester, your team will investigate who is participating in the public discussion about this issue, analyze what is being said, and, eventually, voice your own opinion(s) on the topic. But we will start by getting to know more about the issue itself.

Project 1 will allow you (and a team of 4-5 students) to develop an expertise on one significant issue so that you can speak with authority on the topic with those affected by it and with those already attempting to address it. This unit will center on the following documents:

1. A persuasive pitch that lays out the significance and relevancy of an important issue;
2. An analytical research essay that explores one aspect of the central issue in greater detail; and
3. A collaborative proposal that situates your team's perspective among a larger community of people on campus invested in (or attentive to) this issue.

Because of the interrelated nature of these assignments, the topic you choose for Project 1 should be intriguing and rooted in the problems facing students as they live, study, and prepare for life after they graduate. Furthermore, this should not simply be a hot button issue (like underage drinking or tuition inflation) but should allow for the nuanced and considered debate that is central to public conversations of all types. It helps to choose a topic that you find intriguing, that is resonating at both the national and local level, and that you have a vested

interest in understanding. Each element of this first project, as well as the material produced for Project 2, will be closely connected, *so you should choose your topic carefully.*

Part 1: Project Pitch Presentation

The first major project in our course will be a 4-5 minute presentation on a debate that you are interested in. This is your chance to convince your classmates that an issue that you are concerned about needs broader public attention (or at least attention from your classmates). In order to do this, you will conduct some preliminary research into your chosen campus problem (or opportunity) - who is talking about it, and what is at stake (*why it matters*) – and use this newfound understanding to craft a persuasive pitch.

This may seem like a lot, but if you want to convince your classmates to join your team, you will need to present a well-rounded understanding of the public controversy. After all, this will be at the center of the next four months of the course.

For example, if I wanted to propose a project focused on the University's [Crisis Management and Preparedness Plan](#), I would need to do more than simply rant for 4 minutes about how I felt after I learned of the threats made to campus [last November](#). That is too subjective and personal, plus it does little to acknowledge the various perspectives or opinions that have shaped UK's reaction to threats of this kind. In order to effectively claim that this issue matters, I need to dig a little deeper. Why, for instance, did the university remain open despite the apparent crisis? When did they decide to communicate their concerns with the students? Did they follow best practices or wing it when responding to the threat? While you do not need to have all of these answers, persuasive arguments, as we will talk about, rely on a clear understanding of the issue at hand and why it should matter to the audience being addressed.

Once you have found a public debate that you are passionate about, your goal will be to prepare a **4-5 minute** speech, with a corresponding PowerPoint Presentation, that persuades your classmates to pay attention to this ongoing issue. This will be presented *in class* with a short (1 min.) feedback period.

After everyone has presented, you will be asked to rank the campus issues (other than your own) that you find intriguing. Based on this feedback, I will assign each person in our course to a collaborative team that will be centered around a topic of shared interest.

Parameters

Your presentation should be **4-5 minutes** long. You will need to compose a speech outline (uploaded to Canvas) and develop a corresponding PowerPoint Presentation.

It will be presented on **January 29th** and **31st**. Your presentation time will be determined using a Canvas Scheduler link that I will provide later in the semester. (If you are not sure how to use Canvas Scheduler, please let me know.)

This presentation will be worth **10%** of your final grade and will be assessed using the rubric found on Canvas.



Evidence

Your persuasive presentation requires at least **three credible sources** that help you explain the debate to the class. These should be valid and trustworthy sources that help you contextualize and explain the urgency or relevancy of your chosen topic.

All research must be appropriately cited, both orally and in the body of your slides, and should be incorporated into your presentation in a significant and meaningful way.

A final slide should present a Works Cited list, similar to those found in traditional written essays.

Part 2: Individual Short Report

After we consider the various debates put forward in the Project Pitch, you will be grouped with 4-5 other students into teams centered on a shared interest. As a team, you will spend the rest of the semester delving into and engaging with this problem (or opportunity) facing the campus community. But before entering the debate yourselves, you will be asked to take a closer look at the issue – to become an authoritative expert on *one aspect* of this issue.



This Individual Short Report will help you develop the research and background knowledge necessary to collaboratively create an effective response to your chosen topic – the ultimate rhetorical goal at the center of this course. Though each team member will complete a report of their own, your topic should contribute to a unified understanding of the issue (See Figure 1).. In other words, you will need to coordinate with your team members' reports to develop a nuanced and effective understanding of your shared issue.

For example, if a team had decided to explore the Crisis Management Plan for UK, then each member would choose a research topic that both explores a smaller aspect of the larger issue *and* contributes to the team's understanding of UK's approach to developing crises (See Figure 1). One report might analyze and investigate the current plan, exploring the history of the plan and how it compares to other universities' strategies (Student A). Another student might consider whether the current plan succeeded in responding to the threats of November 8, 2018 (Student E) or how instructors are typically advised to respond to crises in their own classrooms (Student D). When combined and well-coordinated, these reports should give each team member a much better understanding of the issue as a whole and how it affects the University of Kentucky community in particular.

As each team's topic can be divided differently, I am happy to help you find a topic that works for your specific issues. Feel free to talk to me in class, during office hours, or via email.

Figure 1: Sample ISR Topic Coordination Plan

**Parameters**

The Individual Short Report must be **1,800 words** (minimum), excluding any headings, figures and bibliographic material. It must include an informative title and appropriate in-text and terminal citations.

This project will be worth **20%** of your final grade and will be assessed using the rubric provided on Canvas. This individual essay will be submitted on Canvas by **midnight** on **March 4th**.

Evidence

At least **6 well-chosen and credible sources**, cited in an appropriate style (MLA, Chicago, APA, etc.). These sources should come from professional/scholarly journals, academic books, trade magazines, or other credible sources. Do not use sources derived solely from Google or Wikipedia. Each source must be cited, as a lack of appropriate documentation is considered plagiarism and will negatively impact your grade.

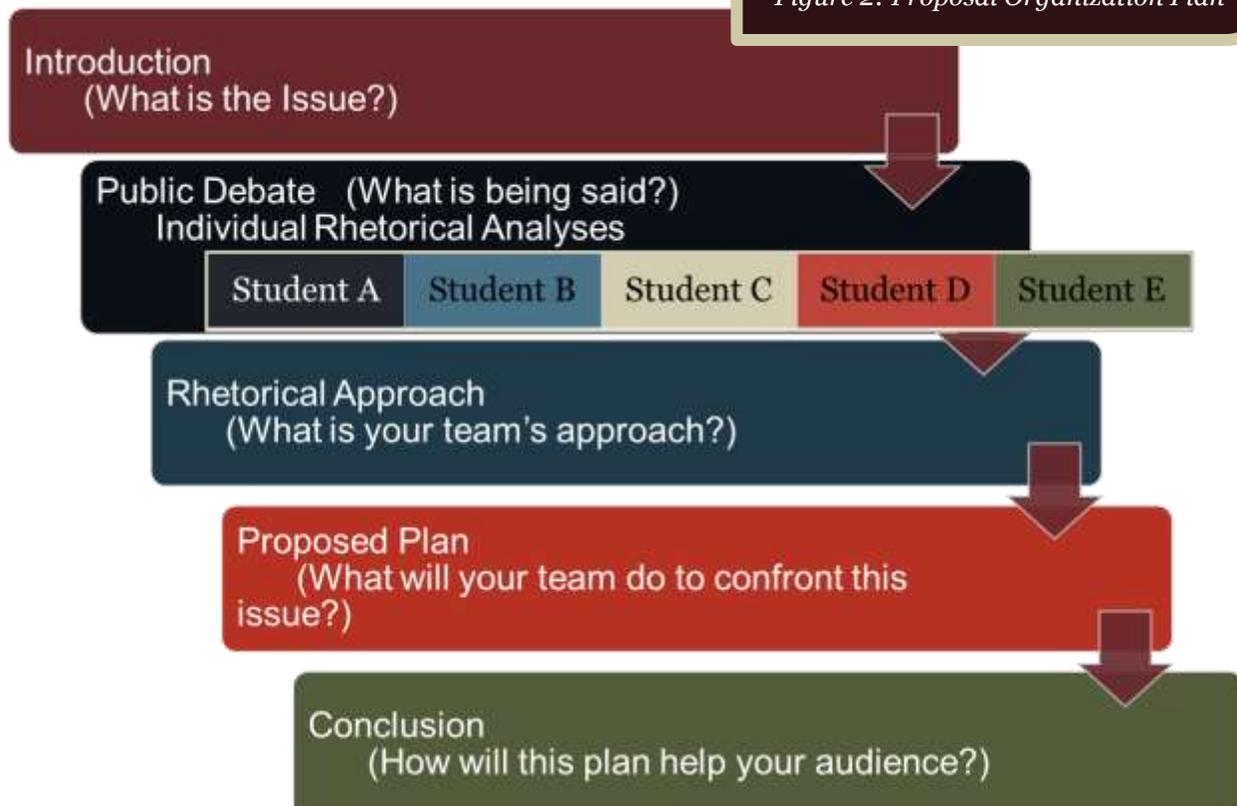
Part 3: Collaborative Project Proposal

Having developed a deeper understanding of an issue college students are facing today, you will then be asked to marshal that expertise and develop a clear and cohesive rhetorical position from which you might join the campus debate on this issue. In other words, you will compose a plan for how you will enter a larger public sphere and influence those concerned about the problem (or opportunity) you have been investigating. This Collaborative Project Proposal will ask you to work as a team to develop a well-coordinated, well-supported and actionable plan for how you can utilize your newfound knowledge to craft an effective multimodal resource for students troubled by this issue.



In order to do this, you will need to develop a clear sense for *who* on campus is already working with students (or others) to address your team's central issue and *how* they are talking about it. As a result, you and your team will need to analyze the rhetoric of various campus stakeholders involved in this debate – looking at how they define the problem (or opportunity), what appeals they rely on to reach their audience, and what they think should be done about it. Each member of your team will write a rhetorical analysis of a specific stakeholder document (preferably from your ISR) as a separate section of your larger document.

Figure 2: Proposal Organization Plan



After you understand how the principle stakeholders are talking about this issue, you and your team will be better able to reach the students impacted by it. Alongside an individual section of rhetorical analysis, you and your team will be asked to develop a plan for how you will compose an interactive and effective resource for UK students dealing with your issue (See [Project 2 Prompt](#)). For example, you might decide to construct an informative website that informs incoming students about the importance of UK Alert – building on the university’s current educational material – and provides a curated forum for students to discuss their concerns with campus safety or crisis preparedness. This plan should be well-supported and positioned in a well-defined rhetorical situation.

Parameters

The Collaborative Project Proposal must include an actionable and well-supported plan, but there is no minimum length requirement for the text. The length will depend entirely on your team’s proposal, your depth of understanding about the project and how many people are in your team. That said, each team member is responsible for an **800 word** (minimum) rhetorical analysis positioned in a labeled section of the larger report (See Figure 2).

This project will be worth **20%** of your final graded. **10%** will be derived from your individual rhetorical analysis and **10%** will come from the cohesive proposal of the entire team. Both the individual and cooperative elements of the assignment will be assessed using the corresponding rubrics provided on Canvas. This proposal will be submitted on Canvas by **midnight on March 27th**.

Evidence

While most of the report should not require additional research, all support should be cited in an appropriate style (MLA, APA, etc.). All secondary research should come from professional/scholarly journals, academic books, trade magazines, or other credible sources. Do not use texts derived solely from Google or Wikipedia. Each source must be cited, as a lack of appropriate documentation is considered plagiarism and will negatively impact your grade.

For the Individual Rhetorical Analysis at the center of your proposal, you should be providing a critical evaluation of the rhetoric employed by a pivotal stakeholder. Because of this, you will be required to utilize at least **one primary text produced by your stakeholder**. This could be a formal document (an article, a speech, a blog post, etc.) or a casual or temporary “text” (social media, an interview, a conversation, etc.), but it *must be written, spoken or produced by* a pivotal stakeholder in the public debate of your team’s chosen issue. In addition to this primary text, each team member will need to incorporate **two** additional sources to corroborate their rhetorical analysis.

As a group, you will also be required to integrate **4 figures** (graphs, images, etc.) to support your proposal. These may be original or from a source, but they should be credited or cited as needed.