

Final Project – Creative Visual Project

MA in Urban Affairs

Urban Studies Department, Queens College-CUNY

Overview: The creative project allows students the opportunity to analyze a contemporary urban topic, issue, or problem in a culminating project that incorporates visual techniques. The final project option allows you to devise creative means of storytelling to explore an issue that intrigues you through your choice of media. Such projects, which are expected to be original works by the student, might include a documentary video or film, a photographic exhibition or other form of creative visual output. Students should conduct independent research, use critical thinking, and apply knowledge and skills gained in Urban Affairs to answer specific research questions in their creative project. At the same time, students should aim to tell a compelling story about the topic they explore. Key skills include gathering, synthesizing, analyzing and presenting information to an audience in an ethical manner.

While many final projects can – and are encouraged to – be based on a topic or idea from an earlier Urban Affairs course that a student wishes to examine more fully, the final project shall not duplicate work, written or creative, from that earlier course.

Although every project is unique, all non-traditional creative projects must be research-based.

As a general rule, the amount of time invested in researching, designing, producing and editing the creative final project generally takes at least **one semester**.

Project Advisement

- Students should consult with the graduate advisor on final project guidance.
- Alternatively, the student may find an Urban Studies faculty advisor who agrees to provide guidance for the final project.
- The student is responsible for knowing and meeting all deadlines and meeting the requirements for an acceptable thesis.
 - a. If a student has a faculty advisor who will review and approve the creative project, then the student and faculty advisor should mutually agree upon deliverables and deadlines.
 - b. Note: To graduate at the end of a given semester, the Final Project must be **approved** no later than that semester's last day. But since the creative project needs to be reviewed, students should expect to submit the final project at least 4 weeks before the end of the semester.
- **Proposal:** Prior to commencing work on the final project, students will need to submit a **4- to 5-page written project proposal** to their project advisor. In this proposal they should provide a detailed description of the proposed project that includes:
 - a. a presentation of the thesis and an articulation of the purpose and objectives of the project
 - b. a discussion of relevant theory, if appropriate, and methodology
 - c. an overview of the likely line of development
 - d. an assessment of the ready availability of resources related to your topic

- e. a preliminary working bibliography
- f. a schedule of deadlines to ensure the timely completion of the project
- The Graduate Advisor and/or the Faculty Advisor will evaluate the project proposal for approval.
- Based on feedback to the project proposal, students will address the comments and complete a revised final project description.
- Students will then engage in producing and submitting the final version of the creative project to the faculty advisor and/or graduate advisor. At the same time, they will submit the final draft of their literature review.
- The faculty advisor and/or graduate advisor may require the student to have additional deliverables and deadlines, depending on the quality of the first drafts of your planning document and literature review.
- Your advisor will NOT be able to give you technical support in producing and editing your project.

Creative Project Guidelines

The required length or size of the final project should be determined to a large extent by the nature of the topic itself, as well as matters of focus and format. These questions should be discussed in detail and decided with the graduate or project advisor as part of the advisement process.

Your creative project assignment will have the following components:

I. Title and Graphic

- The title should be catchy and inspire the viewer to spend time engaging with the project.
- The graphic/cover art might be a photograph, drawing, or simply text.

II. Introduction

- There are many different kinds of visual creative projects, but for the purposes of your final project, you will be telling a story about a research question.
- Your introduction, whether text or video/film, should be a statement or story that engages the viewer and encourages them to view the full project. It should implicitly describe the topic and address why anyone should care about this problem.

III. Body

- Much like other non-traditional projects, the body of creative projects should alternate between “action” and “reflection.” The “action” might be a quote from a course reading, newspaper article, or city council hearing. It could also be an excerpt from an interview or recording from a protest. The “reflection” corresponds to your analysis, which also serves as an opportunity to move your story forward. The precise components will depend on your topic and your final project description.

IV. Conclusion

- The conclusion should bring a satisfactory ending to your story. It should simultaneously underscore the urgency of the issue and suggest further questions the podcast provokes.

V. Literature Review

- As part of your final project, you will submit an 8-10 page literature review in addition to your creative project.
- In your literature review, you should discuss what the existing literature says about your particular topic by analyzing what is known and also highlighting problems and gaps in the existing knowledge. By doing so, your literature review explains how and why your project contributes to existing knowledge on your topic. Your literature review should evaluate scholarship with a clear focus and a critical perspective.

VI. Bibliography

- Your bibliography should cite all of the works in your literature review in addition to any other sources included in your project.
- Referencing: The bibliography should use a formal referencing system. For example:
 - APA style: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>
 - Chicago: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/717/01/>
 - Harvard style: http://www.isa-sociology.org/publ/sociopedia-isa_harvard-style-guidelines.pdf
 - MLA Style: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

Evaluation of the Final Project

The Graduate Advisor and/or Faculty Advisor will approve your Final Project if it meets the following standards:

- The project successfully analyzes a pressing issue related to Urban Affairs.
- The project sufficiently addresses all the required sections under the **Project Guidelines**.
- The project has a coherent narrative.
- The project presents original content and answers a research question through storytelling.
- The evidence—including interviews, found audio or visual material, and quotes from written materials—is on topic.
- Your reflection/analysis advances the project's story.
- The project's technical production is of sufficient quality.
- The literature review is thorough, analytical, and clearly written. The literature review must also be appropriate in terms of style, grammar, and spelling.

Disseminating your project

- Upon completion, you may discuss the possibility of circulating it through Queens College websites, including that of the Urban Studies Department, as well as other sources such as YouTube.