



Multi-Genre Research

Challenging the Boundaries of the Traditional Research Essay

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What is Multi-Genre Research (MGR)?

“A multi-genre paper arises from research, experience, and imagination. ... [It] is composed of many genres and subgenres, each piece self-contained, making a point of its own, yet connected by theme or topic and sometimes by language, images, and content. ... The skill is to make such a paper hang together as a whole.”
~Tom Romano, *Blending Genre, Altering Style*

Research & Proposal (Controversy Analysis)

- Conduct research on a topic of controversy and/or interest.
- Locate traditional sources (books, journals, online database articles, etc.) and less common sources (interview and survey data, brochures, reports, popular magazine articles, personal sources, chat-room or blog comments, popular Internet sources, etc.).
- Submit an academic research proposal that synthesizes the researched content and indicates one’s plans for the MGR project.

Composing & Combining Multiple Genres (Public Argument)

- Using information from research for the Controversy Analysis, design and compose multiple genres that support a central argument (or thesis) for the project overall. Identify a target audience for the public argument your MGR project will advance.
- Each genre entry should function on its own, as well as fit with the work as a whole. Genre possibilities are nearly endless: memo, comic strip, poem, resume, speech, business letter, brochure, greeting card, collage, obituary, AIM conversation, map, flyer, advertisement, calendar, newspaper article, illustration, etc.
- Within each genre entry, use endnotes—instead of parenthetical citations that do not meet the conventions of many non-academic genres—to identify content that was derived from research.
- Unify the project as a whole. Example unifying concepts: magazine, information packet, website, professional presentation materials, newspaper, scrapbook, edited collection, hyper-textual essay, etc.

Rhetorical Explanation (Reflection)

- Submit a Rhetorical Explanation (academic style and tone), separate from the MGR project, that does the following: 1) identifies a specific audience, 2) explains the central argument, 3) explains why each genre was chosen and how each contributes to the overall argument, and 4) explains how the project is unified.
- Because the project is grounded in persuasion and rhetoric, students should use the Rhetorical Explanation to articulate and reflect upon what they have learned about making conscious and informed rhetorical decisions when selecting genres, designing genre documents, and combining them to make a persuasive argument for a specific and public audience.

⇒ Options for the Instructor:

- Assign a traditional essay for the controversy analysis; then ask students to translate or re-write that essay into a MGR project for the public argument.

Can limit the amount of student choice by requiring a combination of the following:

- a certain number or type of sources,
- a certain number or type of genres,
- a certain form for unifying projects,
- common elements to facilitate readers’ experiences of the often non-linear MGR project: cover or title page, table of contents, letter or note to readers, conclusion, source list, etc.

Potential In-Class Activities

- Collaboratively brainstorm and ask students to free-write about a range of potential topics.
- Brainstorm a diverse list of genres. Examine rhetorical conventions of common genres and how to be “true to the genre.”
- Conduct several in-class collaborative workshop and peer review sessions in the early, middle, and final stages.
- Work through the research process: locating sources, evaluating sources, synthesizing content, citation, etc.
- Read sample MGR student projects and/or published works that employ multiple genres.
- Provide students with evaluation criteria or grading rubric.
- Help students prepare students for the visual/spatial showcase in May.

See SVR² CD or website (<http://www.u.arizona.edu/~kimmehea/svr/event.htm>) for sample assignment sheets, activity handouts, and other helpful teaching resources.

Instructor Source List

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- LeNoir, W. David. “The Multigenre Warning Label.” *English Journal* 92.2 (Nov. 2002): 99-101.
- Mack, Nancy. “Ethical Representation of Working-Class Lives: Multiple Genres, Voices and Identities.” *Pedagogy* 6.1 (2006): 53 – 78.
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- Wysocki, Anne Frances. “Seeing the Screen: Research into Visual and Digital Writing Practices.” *Handbook of Research on Writing: History, Society, School, Individual, Text*. Ed. Charles Bazerman. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2007. 599-611.

Student Source List

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- Myers, Walter Dean. *Monster*. New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1999.
- Ondaatje, Michael. *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1984.
- Mack, Nancy. *Multigenre Report Writing*. 2 Dec. 2008.
<<http://www.wright.edu/%7Enancy.mack/multigen.htm>>.

Investigating Genres

For the Multi-Genre Research Project, you will need to use a variety of genres to convey a rhetorical message. However, it is important for you to understand the particular aspects and conventions of these genres as you use them. Johnson and Moneysmith define genres as “types of writing that adhere to definite conventions of style, form, and structure, and that set up certain expectations of the reader” (178). During group work today, I would like for you to investigate a particular genre, defining its typical characteristics or genre conventions, in other words what distinguishes it as that type of genre.

Each group will be assigned to rhetorically analyze one of the following genres:

- Brochure
- Obituary
- Resume
- Advertisement
- Academic Abstract
- Comic Strip

First, establish group roles: manager/time keeper, recorder, presenter, on-task coordinator. Then, discuss the following issues and write your answers on a sheet of paper:

1. Identify the purpose this genre usually has.
2. Identify the context(s) in which this genre is usually found.
3. Identify the possible audiences for this type of genre.
4. Which of the following categories does your genre fit into (it could be more than one): personal, public, professional, academic, other? Why?
5. What are some of the key features or genre characteristics of this type of writing?

Examples:

Menu = prices, explanations of dishes, name of restaurant, etc.

AIM Conversation = pseudonyms, abbreviations, incomplete sentences

6. Come up with a definition (2-3 sentences) of your genre, which includes key features/qualities that distinguish it from other types or genres of writing. Identify what form and structure your genre takes.
7. Develop a list of tips or steps that students should be aware of or take into consideration if they were to choose to compose this type of genre for the Multi-Genre Project.

Johnson, Cheryl L. and Jane A. Moneysmith. “Multigenre Research: Inquiring Voices.” *The Subject is Research: Processes and Practices*. Eds. Wendy Bishop and Pavel Zemliansky. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001. 178-192.

Looking at Sample Multi-Genre Works

Sample Student Project:

- Go to this Website: <http://www.wright.edu/%7Enancy.mack/multigen.htm>
 - Explore the “Hospice” project. Spend some time reading it, and then answer the following questions.
 - Once you’ve finished answering the questions for “Hospice,” take some time to explore other projects linked from the website.
1. List the genres present in the piece. How “true to the genre” were each of the entries?
 2. Explain how the “Cover Letter” helped you understand the multi-genre piece.
 3. Based on what you can tell from this project, what are endnotes? What purpose do they serve in this project?
 4. Which genre do you think was most effective for you as a reader? Why?
 5. In what ways could you tell that the student’s multi-genre project was informed by research? Offer one specific example.
 6. As a reader, could you discern an argument/thesis/message after reading this project?
 7. Was this project visually engaging for you as a reader? What suggestions might you offer to this student to make the project more visually impressive?
 8. In what ways does this student’s fit with the Multi-Genre Research Project assignment expectations for our course? In what ways does it deviate?
 9. What other comments or questions do you have about this student’s project?

Sample Published Work:

- Read the excerpt from Walter Dean Myers’ work *Monster*. Then answer the following questions.
 1. What genres do you see present?
 2. What information do we learn from reading these passages?
 3. What effect does this form of multi-genre writing have on us as readers? What was your experience of reading this text?
 4. How is this different from a traditional novel?
 5. From the excerpt you have read, can you ascertain an argument coming through the writing?
- Using the excerpt from Michael Ondaatje’s *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*, answer the above questions as well as the following:
 1. What similarities do you see between Ondaatje’s multi-genre work and Myers’?
 2. What differences do you see?
 3. Which is more effective for you as a reader and why?
 4. In what ways do the works fit with the Multi-Genre Research Project assignment expectations for our course? In what ways do they deviate?

Multi-genre Research Project

Final Draft Due:

Percentage of Grade:

Assignment and Purpose

You will create a multi-genre project in which you convey an argument to a specified public audience on an issue of your choice. You will be working with the same issue you conducted research on for the Controversy Analysis and Research Proposal. As Cheryl Johnson and Jayne Moneysmith explain, “A multi-genre research paper allows you to combine your own creativity with scholarly investigation, and leaves your reader with a clear answer to a research question [or clear rhetorical message / statement] to a research question” (179). Your multi-genre project will include several different types of writing; however, I want to emphasize that “these different types of writing do not come together in a haphazard collage; they are combined for the purpose of reaching a specific audience, which you define” (Johnson and Moneysmith 178). In the rhetorical explanation that will accompany your multi-genre project (see separate assignment sheet), you will explain the choices you made in composing your multi-genre piece, as well as defining your audience, purposes, and intended message. Your final multi-genre project should make an argument (a persuasive one for your audience) about your issue. You will continue to apply skills you’ve learned about effective argumentative strategies and rhetorical appeals.

Required Parts of the Multi-genre Project:

1. A title page, home page, or front cover
2. An introduction or note to readers – no more than one page typed – in which you set a tone and offer guidance for how to read your project.
3. A table of contents identifying the type and title of each genre entry and its corresponding page number
4. At least one visual element (picture, drawing, graph, etc.)
5. At least eight genre entries
6. A list of endnotes (with corresponding superscript numbers throughout your project) that explain how you are using researched source material throughout your mgr project
7. A bibliography, using MLA citation, with at least ten sources
8. Unity – you can do this in different ways from having a common formatting theme, to explaining unity in your introduction, to having a narrator speak between genre entries, etc. Use examples on pages 188-90 in your “Multigenre Research” article to help you.

Genre Possibilities: (Don’t limit yourself to this list, though.)

e-mail	pro/con list	brochure
letter	ransom note	greeting card
restaurant menu	personal narrative	memo
obituary	recipe	outline
phone conversation	song	illustration
IM conversation	poem	comic strip
postcard	fantasy	collage

Multi-genre Research Project

business card	advertisement	cartoon
choose your own	scrapbook page	invitation
adventure	resume	trivia game
dialogue	application (i.e. for a	survey
editorial	job)	directions
eulogy	memory	timeline
autobiography	interview	essay
award certificate	newspaper article	skit
speech	graph	descriptive paragraph
tabloid article	letter to the editor	proposal
photograph	report	book review
travel poster	magazine article	syllabus/calendar
wanted poster	abstract for an article	academic summary
flashback	poster	
top ten list	advice column	

Remember! These are simply suggestions. If you have other ideas, please feel free to experiment! Also, you should plan to balance some of the more “demanding” and genres, such as a mini-essay, book review, or article, with the “less demanding” genres such as a certificate, business card, or outline. In other words, all entries will require a different amount of work and text on your part, so choose a good mix.

Defining Audience

You choose the audience that your paper speaks to. Depending on the genres and content, it could be an audience of a certain time period, a certain age level, or simply a contemporary audience. Keep this in mind while you write. As it is a class assignment, your peers and teacher will be reading your paper. However, I want you to keep a particular group of readers in mind as your audience.

Be Creative and Take Risks

I strongly encourage you to try new technologies with this project. If you’ve never created a Website, try it. If you don’t know what a hyper-textual essay is, but it sounds interesting, see me and we’ll create a plan for you. I expect you to be challenged and to take risks with this project but to have fun doing so.

Evaluation

See the grading rubric. You will be graded on whether you followed the guidelines (at least eight entries, at least ten sources, etc.). I will also be looking at how well your introduction/note to readers introduces your multi-genre piece and how unified the piece is overall. I will consider the level of creativity, document design, and visual representation. You will be evaluated on how effectively your entries conform to the genre conventions and expectations of that genre. Most importantly, evaluation will involve how well your research comes through your multi-genre writing; this means you need to use your endnotes effectively.

Sample Topics for the Multi-Genre Research Project

Projects from students in past semesters included arguments for the following:

- higher teacher pay
- more U.S. intervention in Darfur
- insurance companies to cover counseling costs for persons with eating disorders
- the need for more government aid during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina
- the value of sending your child to a boarding school based on student's personal experiences and research
- the importance of eating breakfast for college students
- more environmental awareness and action on campus
- a moratorium on the death penalty
- (argument against) placing too many pressures on young ballerinas based on the student's personal experiences and research
- why there should be more Asian American actors on television, in movies, and on Broadway
- parents to take more responsibility for preventing childhood obesity
- people purchasing diamond engagement rings to find out if their diamond is "conflict free"

I often provide students with a list like this to help them see the diverse possibilities for this project. In-class we free-write and collaboratively brainstorm possible research topics and issues.

Planning for the Multigenre Research Paper

Write ideas or any notes for yourself in the appropriate grid. Note: these are the required pieces of the multi-genre project.

Title page / Cover	Table of Contents	Note to Readers	
Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Entry 4
Entry 5	Entry 6	Entry 7	Entry 8
Endnotes	Bibliography		

Audience:

Overall argument (thesis)

Planning for the Multigenre Research Paper

Supporting points:

a.

Entries that will reveal this supporting point:

b.

Entries that will reveal this supporting point:

c.

Entries that will reveal this supporting point:

d.

Entries that will reveal this supporting point:

e.

Entries that will reveal this supporting point:

Planning for the Multi-Genre Project: Collaborative Group Work

Group Member's Name				
Issue/Topic				
Stance/Thesis/Argument				
Ideas for Genres				

Writer's Name: _____ Reviewer's Name: _____

Peer Review: Multigenre Research Project

Read through the entire project from start to finish. Then answer the following series of questions, looking back at various parts of the project.

Comment on each of the genre entries separately:

Criteria with Room for Comments Below	Needs Improvement or Not Present	Adequate	Strength of Project
<p>Entry #1: How "true to the genre" is the entry? How well does the research come through in the entry? Does the genre seem appropriate? Does the entry effectively use images and text? How creative is the entry? Does the entry advance the argument of the multigenre project?</p>			
<p>Comments and Suggestions:</p>			
<p>Entry #2: How "true to the genre" is the entry? How well does the research come through in the entry? Does the genre seem appropriate? Does the entry effectively use images and text? How creative is the entry? Does the entry advance the argument of the multigenre project?</p>			
<p>Comments and Suggestions:</p>			
<p>Entry #3: How "true to the genre" is the entry? How well does the research come through in the entry? Does the genre seem appropriate? Does the entry effectively use images and text? How creative is the entry? Does the entry advance the argument of the multigenre project?</p>			
<p>Comments and Suggestions:</p>			
<p>Entry #4: How "true to the genre" is the entry? How well does the research come through in the entry? Does the genre seem appropriate? Does the entry effectively use images and text? How creative is the entry? Does the entry advance the argument of the multigenre project?</p>			
<p>Comments and Suggestions:</p>			

Writer's Name: _____ Reviewer's Name: _____

Criteria with Room for Comments Below	Needs Improvement or Not Present	Adequate	Strength of Project
Entry #5: How "true to the genre" is the entry? How well does the research come through in the entry? Does the genre seem appropriate? Does the entry effectively use images and text? How creative is the entry? Does the entry advance the argument of the multigenre project?			
Comments and Suggestions:			
Entry #6: How "true to the genre" is the entry? How well does the research come through in the entry? Does the genre seem appropriate? Does the entry effectively use images and text? How creative is the entry? Does the entry advance the argument of the multigenre project?			
Comments and Suggestions:			
Entry #7: How "true to the genre" is the entry? How well does the research come through in the entry? Does the genre seem appropriate? Does the entry effectively use images and text? How creative is the entry? Does the entry advance the argument of the multigenre project?			
Comments and Suggestions:			
Entry #8: How "true to the genre" is the entry? How well does the research come through in the entry? Does the genre seem appropriate? Does the entry effectively use images and text? How creative is the entry? Does the entry advance the argument of the multigenre project?			
Comments and Suggestions:			

Writer's Name: _____ **Reviewer's Name:** _____

Evaluate these aspects of the project overall:

Criteria with Room for Comments Below	Needs Improvement or Not Present	Adequate	Strength of Project
Title page, Note to Readers, and Table of Contents			
Comments and Suggestions:			
Use of Endnotes (evaluate this after reading through the entire piece)			
Comments and Suggestions:			
Bibliography (evaluate this after reading the entire piece also)			
Comments and Suggestions:			

Below, write a brief paragraph back to the writer noting at least one strength and one area they should focus most on for improvement. You should also state what argument(s) or persuasive claims you saw emerging in the project or what impression the project as a whole left you with as a reader.

Working with Readers review questions

Trade one of your draft genre entries with one person in your workshop group; then answer the following series of questions about that entry.

Writer: _____ Reviewer: _____

What kind of document / genre does this appear to be? How can you tell?

- Can you suggest ways to make it read more like the chosen type of genre? Can you suggest any areas that are not consistent with the conventions and expectations of that type of genre?

What would you say is the purpose of this document? How can you tell?

- Can you suggest some ways to make the purpose of the piece clearer?

How would you characterize the writing style, tone, and voice of this document?

- Can you point to some places where the style, tone, or voice is particularly apparent, not apparent, or inconsistent? Can you suggest some ways to make the style, tone, or voice more consistent with the expected conventions of that genre?

If visuals are used in the document (as in images or layout/design/formatting features) comment on how effective they are and whether you have any suggestions.

What other general comments and suggestions do you have for the student writer about this draft genre entry?

Using Endnotes

Endnotes are an important part of your work for the multi-genre project. As Johnson and Moneysmith state in their chapter “Multigenre Research,” “For genres such as letters, diaries, and monologues – really anything that’s not an essay – parenthetical citations may be disruptive, yet you still need to document your sources” (190). You should use endnotes to “indicate your sources so that your creative work looks more *authentic*” (190).

Formatting

Endnotes have two parts: 1) superscript numbers throughout each of your genre entries, and 2) a corresponding numbered list at the end of your project with explanatory notes and citations. The endnotes page is separate from your bibliography page, which lists the bibliographic citations for all sources consulted (not necessarily referenced) as part of your project.

Sample genre page:

Letter to the Editor

Golf has evolved considerably over the past 50 years.¹ There are more female players than ever before.²

Corresponding endnotes page at the end of your project:

Endnotes

1. (Smith and Jones 85)
2. To create my letter to the editor, I used notes from my interview with Prof. Occhino

Purpose and Usage of Endnotes

- **Purpose 1: To indicate the source of a direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary**
Simply place a superscript number at the end of the directly quoted, paraphrased, or summarized material – just as you would a parenthetical citation. Then, on your list of endnotes at the end of the document include the parenthetical citation for that source (see example 1 above – (Smith and Jones 85)). You would also need to have a complete bibliographic citation for the source on your bibliography (author name(s), title, date of publication, etc.).
- **Purpose 2: To offer explanations for the reader**
Endnotes also give you the opportunity to offer explanations to the reader. Since this project is so non-traditional, it’s important that your readers (at the least me as your instructor and evaluator) understand your intentions in creating each genre and all the purposeful choices you made. Some possible areas that you may use endnotes for explanation are as follows:
 - **How you used source information** – if you need more than a parenthetical citation to explain, and/or
 - **General commentary** that would help the reader understand the claims you’re trying to make.

Commonly Asked Questions

How many endnotes do I need to meet the assignment requirements?

It really depends on how detailed your endnotes are. Some students have a paragraph per endnote, whereas others only include a sentence or two. You should try to strike a balance – if your endnotes are fairly short, you’ll probably want more; if your endnotes cover a lot of information and detail, you probably don’t need as many.

Using Endnotes

Do I need an endnote for every genre?

Yes, I expect that you'll have at least one endnote per genre, though most students find they need to include more than just one per genre entry. I expect to see at least one, though, because you should really have research associated with each genre entry, as well as a bit of explanation. That said, some students use only one endnote per genre, but include lots of detail with explanations and all the sources used in that genre. Other students have 5-10 endnotes per genre, each brief in citing a source or offering a bit of explanation.

Do I start over with number 1 on the endnotes list with each genre, or do I keep adding on to the numbered list?

Either way is fine. Most students continue on from 1 and don't restart the numbering.

I can't figure out how to insert the superscript numbers on my Word Processor. What do I do?

If you're having trouble figuring out how to insert the numbers – or are just frustrated with the technology of the process – simply hand-write in your numbers on your genre entries and then type up a numbered list to correspond as your Endnotes list.

Where do I look to insert Endnotes in MS Word 2007?

Look under the "References" tab. You'll probably need to use the "Insert Footnote" and then search the help (upper, right corner – question mark) for how to convert footnotes to endnotes.

Examples of Endnotes from Past Student Projects

This shows the range of information that could be used on an endnotes list. These are pulled from different projects, but I wanted to show you the format, so I included them as one list.

Endnotes

1. The information for this article came from the website titled *Masters 2007*. It explained the changes that have been made to Augusta National over the years. It also had some quotes from six-time Maserts Champion Jack Nicklaus saying his opinion on the changes made to Augusta.
2. The information used to create this quiz came from the book *The Rules of Golf*, specifically the section on clubs and balls. I used this, as well as the section on the newest additions to rules, to develop a quiz and answer key on technology regulations.
3. I always see advertisements for diamonds, yet I have never seen an ad encouraging conflict free diamonds. I thought that a picture of a famous celebrity with a big engagement ring on her finger, sine 79% of the world's diamonds go towards engagement rings, would make a big impact against a picture of a boy with no hands. This boy lost his hands to the RUF because they often mutate civilians' hands as a symbolic way to get back at the government. Most people...are unaware of what people are going through to have access to diamond jewelry. It thought this ad was a good way to educate people and force them to know what is going on in the world.
4. I chose to write a personal narrative for this genre on a boy that had been kidnapped by the RUF so my audience could really see what life is like for people living in conflict zones. As much as I describe what is happening, the reader may not connect and fully understand the significance of it. However, when someone is reading a story about a young boy who is forced to join a rebel army, it appeals to their ethos. This particular genre helped me to get the message that life in these conflict areas is not livable; innocent people are suffering because of other people's desire for dominance. ... I expect that after reading this, readers will feel horror, disgust, and guilt towards what is going on in West Africa and will want to do something to help. Most of the knowledge I had on what these people go through came from the movie *Blood Diamond*.

Using Endnotes

5. All dates and events were found on the Amnesty International website, as well as Daniel Harmon's book *Sudan*. Before becoming an independent nation, Sudan was a British colony. There has never been a period of stability since this time.
6. Story based on the personal accounts of two women, Toona and Zara, as reported by CBS news.
7. I conducted a survey through the Internet using surveymonkey.com. I designed the survey to see how long people had been aware of the genocide occurring in Darfur and if they thought more should be done to stop it. The survey was completely anonymous so people could give their honest opinions.
8. All the images used in this collage are from the Google image search for "schizophrenia."
9. For this article, I used a true story, but changed the name of the child. In the first paragraph, I mention a boy who has experienced many changes in behavior. This story was from one of the websites I cited, and it leads into the article well.
10. The title for this flyer conveys the overall theme of my project and the real purpose of group homes. I wanted to mention the residents' "peace of mind" because it is a mental disease. These homes focus on creating an easier living situation for patients.
11. This diary entry was written from the viewpoint of someone suffering from schizophrenia who has been treated in a hospital and is ready to re-enter society. It showcases the hardship of being confined to a hospital. Much of this genre was generated from personal experiences in my family.