
THE NEW COMMONS PROJECT

CULTURAL MEMORY PODCAST ASSIGNMENT

OVERVIEW

In groups, you will propose and record three 10-20-minute podcast episodes analyzing the concept of cultural memory with concrete examples. The first episode will use George Orwell's *1984* as a point of departure by considering how its representation of cultural memory speaks to present-day social anxieties (notably, sales of the novel have spiked in the early 1980s, 2013, and 2017). The following two episodes will be about either (1) historical events of your choosing that occurred in Maine and have been misrepresented in or erased from historical memory (2) an event that you remember from your lifetime that appeared extraordinarily impactful within your community at the time of its occurrence, but that has seemingly disappeared from the horizon of our cultural awareness. In each of these episodes, you must discuss how awareness of the historical event you have selected might inform the conversation surrounding an important present-day issue broadly related to one of the themes of the novel (policing, surveillance, technology, history, sexuality, education, austerity, detainment/imprisonment, patriotism, etc.). You are welcome to reference other concepts from the novel in any of the episodes, but are not required to do so. Your group should incorporate typical features of the podcast genre and demonstrate a lively engagement with each topic you select. Your individual analytical essay will explain how the submissions typify the podcast genre and approach key elements of the novel.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1) Gain an understanding of the construction of cultural memory and the factors that shape it, as well as a greater understanding of our specific community history
- 2) Explore elements and themes of *1984* in a meaningful way
- 3) Familiarize one's self with practices for effective media presentations and standard features of the podcast genre

RATIONALE

One striking aspect of *1984* to a modern-day reader is the ease with which institutions in power revise current and historical events and how quickly the majority of public accepts these revisions. Through this aspect of the novel, Orwell examines issues of communication, information transmission, epistemology, and public awareness. This assignment provides you the opportunity to explore some of these themes with depth in collaboration with your

classmates. Moreover, the podcast format will require you to produce this content in a popular, albeit nontraditional, genre. This process will increase your compositional flexibility and skills for approaching new media.

REQUIRED ELEMENTS

- 1) You will work in small groups for writing, recording, and editing of podcast episodes.
- 2) Each group will produce three podcast episodes: one focused on how its cultural representation of memory speaks to present-day social issues and two on a distant or recent historical event that has fallen from cultural memory and could shape a present-day issue related to one of the themes of the novel.
- 3) Each episode will be 10-20 minutes in length.
- 4) You will submit an individual analytical essay (two to three pages) at the end of the project sequence that reflects on your group's treatment of key concepts and incorporations of the typical features of podcasts.
- 5) You will each submit a completed version of the self-assessment document at the end of the project sequence.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Keep in mind that the video should be created for a broad, general audience. Avoid jargon and briefly define or explain any concepts or terms that might be unfamiliar to a general audience, as needed.

You should render each podcast episode in MP3 format at 320 kbps. You should feel free to use any software you like to record your podcasts, but Audacity is a highly accessible free program.