Assignment #4: Researched "Anthropocene Artist" Project

Assignment Overview

So far this semester, we've discussed whether there is such a thing as "green" art, and what forms such art might take. In upcoming weeks, we'll turn our attention to a related matter: what is "Anthropocene" art? This assignment invites you to identify a living figure you'd characterize as an "Anthropocene artist" or "artist of the Anthropocene" based on criteria you specify. You'll prepare and publish online a researched argumentative profile of your artist. You'll also prepare a brief presentation introducing your artist to the class.

Quick Instructions

This assignment entails four main tasks:

Step #1. You'll conduct research to develop a defensible definition of Anthropocene art, and to discover an artist whose work fits, or mostly fits, your definition.

Step #2. You'll write and submit a brief (2-pg) project proposal + working bibliography by **F 11/3 at 5PM**.

Step #3. You'll prepare a 10-minute presentation introducing your artist to classmates; this presentation will include visual / multimedia elements and/or other elements such as a handout. You'll present on a panel with 2-3 classmates; you'll field audience questions and conduct a brief panel conversation after all 3 or 4 of you have presented.

Step #4. Finally, you'll publish a 1500-word, media-enhanced argumentative profile of your artist on Scalar by **F 12/8 at 5PM**.

You'll work steadily on this research project over the next six weeks; we'll have class time set aside for research, meeting in your panel, and digital/tech troubleshooting.

*A hyperlinked version of this packet is available on Canvas

Some Details: Research & Project Proposal (Steps #1 & #2)

Your project proposal should accomplish 3 major things: 1) it should offer your preliminary argumentative definition of Anthropocene art; 2) explain, in brief, why you think your artist counts as an "Anthropocene artist" or "artist of the Anthropocene"; and 3) explain how you anticipate incorporating the sources you've found so far into your profile.   It will also include a working bibliography with MLA-style entries for at least three of your secondary sources, and at least two works by your artist that you plan to feature in your digital profile.

Aim for 2 pages + your working bibliography. There's no specific organizational scheme you must follow, except that your proposal should be divided into paragraphs and should accomplish #1, 2, and 3 described in the previous paragraph. Standard MLA formatting is fine. Submit your proposal to Canvas by 5PM 11/3.

You'll earn a score out of 50 points for your proposal. Strong proposals will:

- accomplish the aims outlined above

- evidence the quality of your research efforts thus far: it's clear that you've engaged in in-depth searching, reading, and synthesizing of sources, giving thought not only to your artist, but also to refining your definition. You've clearly gone beyond pulling things off of a first page or two of Google hits. You've made every effort to track down the best possible renderings of your artist's work, too (see details below).

- be carefully-prepared: it's clear that you've been working toward this document over time

Finding an Artist

Your options for an artist are virtually unlimited: the only hard parameters are that this person / group must be living, and must be a professional artist. Also, let's be sure everyone is working with a different artist: as soon as you find an artist you'd like to profile, claim them on the Anthropocene Artist Profiles Page on Canvas. Some possible kinds of artists include:

poets	graphic designers	composers / songwriters
novelists	digital artists	filmmakers
essayists	sculptors	actors
memoirists	installation artists	playwrights
photographers	architects	clothing designers
painters	dancers / choreographers	
print makers	musicians	

You may have in mind an artist you'd like to work with. If not, some possible starting places:

- *The Ecopoetry Anthology*: you're welcome to work with a poet we've read in class, or browse the anthology for another poet.

- Google: go beyond searching "Anthropocene art." If you're interested, for instance, in fiction, search "Anthropocene fiction."

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- Academic databases: check out what artists scholars are writing about (and then you can run these names through Google).

Some Considerations about Artists

- It's important that you have access to enough of your artist's work to write a persuasive profile. If you choose to work with a visual or performing artist, verify that works / images of works / performances by your artist are available in high-resolution versions online, or in some other format you can reference.

- If you choose to work with a writer, you'll likely need to obtain printed copies of their work. For example, if there's a poet you'd like to work with from the *Ecopoetry Anthology*, you'll probably want to check out one of his/her collections of poetry from the library, in addition to checking on whether some of their poems are available online. If you choose to work with a photographer, see if a collection of their works is available through OhioLink.

- If you work with a fiction writer / novelist / memoirist, you probably won't be able to incorporate full-text versions of their work into your profile, and that's okay. Instead, you'll probably incorporate some illustrative passages, just as you might for a regular literary analysis. There may be Google Books previews available of some novels or short story collections that you can link to.

- To write a good profile, you'll need to engage deeply with your artist's body of work, reading, watching, or experiencing more works than you'll present or write about. Choose an artist whose work you want to spend time getting to know well.

- Not all of your artist's works need to fit your definition of "Anthropocene art." You could make a convincing case that an artist with merely *some* works that fit your definition can count as an Anthropocene artist. Similar to how it might be odd to call a poet with one poem about the American South a "Southern poet," it's probably unconvincing to argue that an artist who is only peripherally concerned with the Anthropocene an "Anthropocene artist." Still, your artist can be someone who would easily fit into other categories, too (for example, you can choose a poet who might be characterized as both a Southern poet and, by your definition, an "Anthropocene poet.")

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Some Details: Panel Presentation (Step #3)

Once everyone has submitted a project proposal, I'll group you into panels of 3-4 people. You'll prepare an approximately 10-minute presentation on your artist, to be delivered 11/27-12/4. Your presentation should:

- introduce your artist: offer some brief background/context about the artist
- explain, persuasively, why you believe your artist can be seen as an Anthropocene artist / artist of the Anthropocene; and
- introduce us to at least one (perhaps more) exemplary work by your artist

Your presentation should also have some visual, multimedia, or interactive component/s.   Options include, but are not limited to:

- images / video / audio of your artist's work
- a handout
- slides or another presentation device such as Prezi

For example, if you're profiling a poet, you may wish to distribute a short poem to us on paper and also share a sound clip of your poet reading their work. I'll ask you to pull up any media you wish to project on my laptop before class. Come prepared to find online content quickly; bring files on a thumb drive.

There will be class time for you to meet as a panel: during this time, make note of shared ideas, themes, etc. between your presentations so that you're prepared to field questions addressed to the entire panel. I recommend also practicing your presentations for one another as a panel.

Some Tips

- You're welcome to use notecards or other aids; avoid reading pre-written text (except for important quotes you want to capture exactly). Run your presentation by others to make sure you're speaking both clearly and naturally.

- Timing is important: practice your full presentation at least a couple of times, including time for tech setup. I'll have to cut off presentations that run beyond 12 minutes.

- Aim for a presentation persona that's confident, engaging, and enthusiastic. Think of this as a chance to "pitch" your artist as interesting/cool/intriguing. If you're excited about your artist, we will be, too.

- Keep media brief: most of your presentation should be you talking, rather than video or audio running.

- For any long quotes—by your artist, about your artist, or about something else—make a handout that people can follow along with.

- If you choose to make slides, they need to be *good*. Click here for some tips.

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Some Details: Argumentative Digital Profile (Step #4)

Your Argumentative Digital Profile will be somewhat like an artist profile that you'd encounter in an online magazine, except that it will make an argument about why your artist's works count as "Anthropocene art." While you can think of this as a paper similar to one you might write for ENGL 101/115, try instead thinking of it as digital writing (which seldom follows the 5-paragraph or other structures you use for academic papers).

In general, your profile should introduce your readers to your artist, offering some background on his/her/their works; you'll highlight key works to make a persuasive case for why your artist's productions should be considered "Anthropocene art" or "art of the Anthropocene." Assume that your audience is general readers who are interested in your argument, but needing to be persuaded of its validity.

You may structure your analysis as you'd like, though all profiles must have:

- **an MLA-style Works Cited section**. This should include entries for your secondary sources, as well as citations for media linked to your profile. All entries that can be linked to the source itself should be linked: see example below. (Note that links from behind a library database paywall aren't accessible to general readers).

Bryant, Ben. "We Spent 90 Minutes at 1,500 Feet with Artist J. Henry Fair." *Vice*, 16 Nov. 2016, https://www.vice.com/en_uk/article/7bam3z/90-minutes-at-1500-feet-with-artist-j-henry-fair

All profiles should also:

- **cite a minimum of 6 secondary sources**: these can include course secondary readings (such as Cronon). "Secondary" sources are thing such as books, articles, and websites; "primary" sources are things such as actual works by your artist, or your artist's personal website. There are no restrictions on what kinds of sources you may use, though in general, the more ambitious you are with your use of sources, the more credible you'll seem to readers. Some of your sources will probably help you to develop your definition of Anthropocene art, while others may help you comment on your artist. For print sources, please provide in-text citations for quotes and paraphrases. Online sources should be linked directly within the text. See me for questions about in-text citation.

- **take advantage of the online medium by incorporating visual, audio, and/or audio-visual media, and links**. There are endless possibilities for how media might enhance your profile. Some examples:
    - if your artist is a visual or performing artist, consider inserting images of key work/s or videos of a performance
    - if your artist is a poet, link to an exemplary poem that you analyze online, or a recording of your poet reading his/her work
    - if your artist has a Twitter feed, consider incorporating Tweets that are relevant to your aims

Because everyone's project will be different, I can't offer one-size-fits-all guidelines for media or source use: rely on your experience as an internet user to anticipate what kinds of media and links readers might find interesting, useful, and credible.

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Some Tips:

- It might make sense to lead *not* with bio information on your artist, but with a brief analysis of an exemplary work. There are other possibilities, too: for example, if your artist is a novelist, you might lead in with a quick overview of the debate on what counts as "cli-fi" before proposing your own definition of Anthropocene art and introducing your artist.

- If you wish, you may divide your profile into titled sections. Other formatting decisions are up to you, too: bullet lists, callout panels, or any other formatting choice that enhances the persuasiveness or usability of your profile is acceptable.

- Media and links should work with and enhance your profile: don't include stuff with no clear function. I recommend captioning media and linking images, videos, etc. to their original source.

- It's fine to use "I" in your analysis. Though your profile is researched and argumentative, it's also okay for it to take a more informal tone than a conventional academic paper. Aim for a writer persona that's inviting.

- 1500 words is a general guideline; somewhat more or less is fine. Because the length of your profile is modest, details matter (see the Project Criteria for Evaluation).

Some Example Profiles

Lots of publications profile different kinds of artists. Here are a few examples from mainstream media:

from NPR: a profile of SF writer Octavia Butler

from *The New York Times*: a profile of comic book artist Gary Panter

from *Smithsonian* Magazine: a profile of graffiti artist Banksy

from *Spin* magazine: a profile of musician Jlin

Again, your profile needn't necessarily read like/resemble any of these profiles; however, like these profiles, your profile should be accessible, compelling, and media-enhanced. Come see me if you'd like to talk over these examples.

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Getting Your Profile Online

You'll be building your profile on a class book on Scalar, an open-source platform designed by the Alliance for Networking Visual Culture. Scalar is designed for publishing long-form, media-enhanced scholarly work online. Click here to see examples of projects created on Scalar.

I've constructed a class book to which I'll be adding you as "editors"; you'll receive an email inviting you to join Scalar. From there, you'll be free to log in anytime to edit your particular page. As we'll discuss / demo in class, Scalar allows you to create "paths" to help readers navigate your work; I'll group your panel into a path which you and your panel members will be responsible for titling.

We have class time set aside for working on Scalar. You'll likely need to experiment with it on your own, too. Help each other—share tips. You can also get help on using Scalar from Christian Sheehy, our Digital Initiatives Librarian.

*Note: if you prefer *not* to have your name or full name attached to your project online, see me.

Overall Project Criteria for Evaluation

Strong / A-range projects are:

- high-quality: both the profile and presentation are polished, user-tested, and of an indisputably "honors" caliber.

- ambitious: they go beyond meeting bare minimum requirements. It's clear that the project author tried to engage deeply with the idea of Anthropocene art, with the works of their artist, and with the research process itself, rather than simply trying to complete the project as quickly as possible.

- persuasive: both the profile and presentation offer a convincing definition of the project author's definition of "Anthropocene art," and show how specifically the artist profiled fits this definition.

- completed according to assignment guidelines: they adhere to the parameters listed in this packet. This includes parameters for choosing an artist, preparing and submitting a proposal, preparing and submitting a profile, and preparing and delivering a presentation and panel discussion.

- completed over the span of six weeks: intermediate project steps have been completed on time. It's clear that no part of the project was assembled hastily. The project author has used in-class work time and other resources wisely.

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