

**BU General Education Committee (GEC) Interpretive Document on
Digital/Multimedia Expression (DME)
May 19, 2021**

Communication through means other than words—whether spoken or written—requires a distinct set of skills. In a world where messages are routinely conveyed through audiovisual media, BU students need to develop an understanding of the role and impact of color, composition, rhythm, and acoustics that matches their mastery of verbal syntax and rhetoric. Today, in addition to live performances and installations, BU graduates receive information and experience the world through websites, videos, and podcasts. They must be able not only to consume and appreciate these and other forms of digital expression, but to evaluate and produce them.

Courses and cocurricular activities in this area must have all outcomes.

Learning Outcomes & Interpretation:

Outcome 1: *Students will be able to craft and deliver responsible, considered, and well-structured arguments using media and modes of expression appropriate to the situation.*

The GEC believes that the term “argument” in this outcome can be interpreted somewhat broadly. Students may actually be advancing a claim or opinion, and providing supporting evidence, as in, for example, the case of a visual op-doc. Or they may articulate a perspective or point of view that shapes what content they provide and how they arrange and style it, as might be the case in a podcast interview or a creatively expressive work.

The media and modes of expression should be appropriate to their discipline, subject matter, purpose, and proposed audience. As some examples, students may be learning to produce podcasts in a communication course or being taught how to visually design and produce an e-poster for an academic conference in the sciences, or taught to use Adobe Premiere to make a documentary short in a rhetoric and composition class in order to produce a persuasive visual/oral argument.

Outcome 2: *Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the capabilities of various communication technologies and be able to use these technologies ethically and effectively.*

In terms of ethical use of technologies, the GEC considers two primary domains: attribution of source material and the respectful treatment of individuals and groups portrayed in digital products. When applicable, students will be instructed on how to properly acknowledge all borrowed visuals and sounds and how copyright, permissions, and licenses work. Students may learn how to access archival imagery and sound in the public domain as well as be directed to places where they may acquire materials free of copyright fees or permissions. Students will learn how to properly cite all borrowed information and will understand that the formatting and placement of these varies according to medium. When portraying human subjects, students will be instructed on how visual media can both focus interest and distort viewpoint and be asked to consider the ethical considerations of negative online content (e.g., “fake” news, flaming, trolling).

The Hub strives to make what students are learning explicit and, as a result, the syllabus and/or course calendar should clearly identify examples of programs or applications that students could use in creating their projects, and how and when the process of creating a digital project in these will be taught so that students will know how to use the assigned technology effectively.

Outcome 3: *Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the fundamentals of visual communication, such as principles governing design, time-based and interactive media, and the audio-visual representation of qualitative and quantitative data.*

The GEC interprets this outcome as indicating that students require some instruction on one or more digital technologies and guidance in using them effectively in digital expression, yet it does not require instructors to be proficient in multiple technologies. Faculty should therefore choose digital platforms accordingly and be explicit in the syllabus and/or course calendar regarding how they will provide students with improved understanding of how to use them. Students could be instructed in form/style and the technological skills necessary to create those forms as well as introduced to models they can analyze and evaluate in preparation for creating their own projects.

As examples, not meant to be comprehensive, if students are asked to compose a digital movie, they could have some instruction in Premiere, Rush, iMovie, or another program/app and be taught how to do such things as edit video clips, add voiceover, create transitions, include soundtracks, and transfer files as well as taught the formal concerns of filmmaking (coherence/cuts, lighting, effective shot angles and camera movements, etc.). If they are creating an e-poster, they could be introduced to the appropriate program for composing it and taught some elements of effective visual design (balance, alignment, proximity, rule of thirds, etc.). If they are writing blogs or creating websites, they might be taught WordPress, or a comparable program, and expectations for use of embedded materials such as links, comment boxes, and interactive infographics will be addressed. If they are designing an online magazine article, they might be taught InDesign and some journalist conventions such as pull quotes, drop case, use of white space, and font design.