Example 2: Creating Multimodal Video Arguments
Assigned by Megan McGrath in Technical & Professional Writing

This assignment is created for students in a core technical and professional communication course, with an expectation that students are comfortable with ambiguity and open to learning about new technologies. This assignment is made up of two parts. The first part introduces students to Google Glass by asking them to envision the kinds of tasks Google Glass might serve in technical communication practices. The second part of the assignment requires students to produce multimodal video arguments using the first-person point-of-view recording function of Google Glass.

Assignment Descriptions

Part 1: Introducing students to Google Glass and its use in technical communication

Why Are You Using Google Glass in a Technical Communication Classroom?

As technical communicators, you are mediators between experts and novices, between producers and consumers, between intention and action. In this way, you are visionary: you must anticipate how people can and will use a technology based on its unique affordances. In other words, you're pretty important.

To prepare you for your intermediary role, and for the complexities of a technology-driven world, I believe that you should have the opportunity to engage with emerging technologies and envision their possibilities, since our ways of communicating should evolve in response to the specific technologies about which we are communicating. You will be given the power to envision where, when, how, by whom, and for what purpose this technology can be used. In our next class session, you will then test your visions' feasibility. Engaging with Google Glass is one way for you to harness your role as a technical communicator – one that negotiates between objectives and outcomes, and between the present and the future.

The Task: How Can Google Glass Be Used in Technical Communication?

After you have used Google Glass and begun to determine its affordances, you will then work in your groups to envision how this device might be used to facilitate communication in some way. Use the following questions to guide your envisioning process:

1.) First, what are the hallmarks of effective communication?
2.) Then, what can Glass do?
3.) Next, what are particular communication-related needs that Glass could address?

The goal is for you to identify a concrete way that Glass could be used to enhance communication. As we've discussed, the goal is not to impose technology on existing situations;

the goal is to let needs and voids guide this technology's use. Use the following table to organize and work through your identified scenario/need:

Scenario/Need	Glass's Use	Advantages	Disadvantages	Questions for Developers

In our next exercise, you will test the feasibility of the scenario you have envisioned. Thus, this scenario must be one that you and your group members could actually enact in our classroom.

Sample Scenario Excerpts from Students

Scenario/Need	Glass's Use	Advantages	Disadvantages	Questions for Developers
Tying a tie	Those who need to learn how to tie a tie will be able to watch a live video tutorial while simultaneously attempting to tie a tie themselves.	You will pretty much be looking at the video while looking at yourself tying the tie. You won't have to move your head back and forth and miss a step because it will all be right there before you.	It could potentially be confusing with all the activity going on in front of you.	Is there a feature that allows you to slow down the video? If you miss a step is Glass easy to pause or rewind? Can you bend the earpieces for better fit? Marketing to people with disabilities - audio enabling, in particular?

Part 2: Creating multimodal first person point-of-view video arguments

Scenario

A high school senior needs your help. They've been accepted to multiple schools and need to decide where they'll spend the next 4+ years of their life. They've narrowed it down to two schools: the University of Minnesota and Ohio State. They've already gotten the University of Minnesota Admissions Office's pitch. It's crunch time, and they want to know what the university has to offer from the perspective of real students. They want to see what it's like to be a student through your eyes. What will you show them?

You could tell them, of course, in a paragraph or two. But you want to really win them over by making them feel like they're here and experiencing the campus through your eyes. So, you're going to use Google Glass to video record your response. Why? Glass is a technology with affordances that can allow you to show in ways that are particularly helpful for this purpose, context, and audience.

Purpose

Your audience wants to "see" the campus through your eyes. Glass allows you to film from your point of view, so that it really feels like you're showing your audience what the campus looks like through your eyes. Glass is also hands-free, allowing you to bring in the gestural semiotic system that we discussed on Tuesday. In fact, this device allows you to bring in all five semiotic systems.

Context

This student needs to make a life-altering decision. They're coming to you because they think that you'll be able to offer an insider perspective that they haven't gotten from the Admissions Office. They hope that you'll be more cool and honest than Admissions because you don't have the same interests guiding your communication. In other words, this student is expecting a response that's unique and authentic. Again, with Glass's ability to capture your point of view, how can you use this device to create the illusion of minimized distance?

Audience

Your audience is a 17-year-old student who is technology-proficient and has grown up in an increasingly multimodal world. This student is used to getting information from a variety of platforms and appreciates the way that technology can make communication seem more realistic and interactive. For example, this person prefers YouTube tutorials over a traditional set of instructions.

So how will you show this student what it's like to be a University of Minnesota student through your eyes? Work through this exercise in groups of four. Here are some questions to help guide the response you create:

1.) What is the experience that you are trying to capture?

a.) As we've seen, appeals to values are a key way to engage a person. What are some values that you would attach to the student experience at the University of Minnesota?

b.) How can you make these values tangible? How can you show them?

2.) How would you fill in the following blanks? "At the U, I can do _____." "At the U, I can be _____."

3.) If you had to give the university a personality/persona, what would it be? In other words, if the university were a character, what would it embody?

4.) Where would you go on campus to really capture the experience of a student here? I encourage you to think outside the box. Since context is an essential part of effective communication, really think about how the places you choose will shape what you are saying in your argument. The goal is not to simply write an argument, and to then film it in any location. The goal is to let the environment dictate what you do and say with the device, not to have the device dictate what you do with and say about the environment.

5.) Glass can capture all five semiotic systems (linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, and spatial) that we discussed on Tuesday. Which systems are going to help you make the most convincing argument?

See sample work from students below >>

Sample Work from Students

The following is an example in which a group of students have envisioned how they would use Google Glass in a prospective-students recruitment scenario:

Image from http://www.glassappsource.com/google-glass/google-glass-can-used-education.html

The experience we want to showcase is one of opportunity and discovery, which is captured in the school's motto: "Driven to Discover." To showcase this experience, instead of going for the "a-day-in-the-life" approach, we're taking an "a-year-in-the-life" approach to show a student's evolution over their freshman year, which can be a pretty tough one. We would start filming with a fairly classic "bad day" where everything goes wrong, and then start showing how the student is able to turn their year around by getting involved at the U through some of the many student clubs, since the U has almost 900 clubs on campus. We would film the billboards on the skyway connecting the campus banks to give a quick visual of all the student clubs, and the variety of what they represent. This skyway shot would also show the U's closeness to downtown Minneapolis, which is a big advantage of this school. We would then film little snippets of students interacting with each other throughout the campus to capture how friendly and accepting the school is--and, finally, how much it allows you to grow over the course of a year by giving you space to be independent and self-driven.