

# Media Project 1 (MP1): Looking In

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## Project Learning Outcomes

- Learn and apply skills of narration, story-building, and exposition in a personal narrative
- Connect your personal narrative to a larger social, cultural, or political issue
- Use basic research and web search skills to provide a context for your personal narrative
- Use specific, concrete details to construct a compelling narrative in both written and audio form
- Familiarize yourself with the genre of *academic writing* and its associated moves: signal phrases, attributive tags, qualified claims, “they say/I say,” summary, direct quotation, paraphrase, use of sources to build a context, etc.
- Discover how all information—all *media* (plural)—frame events, people, stories, and ideas
- Experience the collaborative, social nature of learning and idea-building through peer review, workshops, and class discussions
- Learn how to develop a “pitch sheet” for a podcast script
- Listen to and critique other readings and podcasts to discover new takes and ideas and “moves”

## Your Situation

Imagine that you've been invited to attend a virtual undergraduate student podcasting festival entitled, “This Time It's Personal: Crafting Effective Personal Narratives for Self-Understanding.” The conference has been organized by a national non-profit organization whose mission is to examine the social, cultural, and political issues that impact today's college students, as well as promote podcasting. How can undergraduate students, even first-year college students like you, address contemporary social problems in fresh and interesting ways? What advice or insights might other college students learn from your own past experiences?

The conference organizers believe that bringing together undergraduate students with significant stories to tell about themselves will help strengthen society by creating aware citizens who can communicate with each other peacefully and effectively through creative audio texts (i.e., podcasts). At the same time, the organizers want to include personal narratives that connect to larger social, cultural, and political concerns. Therefore, this undergraduate conference is about both (1) telling a personal story about a significant or meaningful life event through podcasting and, by doing so, (2) addressing some of the larger social, cultural, and political issues that affect college students like you in the 21st century.

The organizers of “This Time It’s Personal” have invited students like you from colleges and universities all over the US to gather (virtually) in an online space and share 10- to 12-minute podcast projects that explore college students’ personal experiences related to overcoming life’s challenges and gaining self-knowledge. The virtual conference is an exciting opportunity for you to hear ideas and arguments from students from all walks of life—and to share your own. After your podcast presentation, each presenter will stick around for 3 minutes or so of “Q & A,” which is conference-speak for a brief question and answer session about your podcast.

Here’s your *exigence*, or reason for writing a script and producing a short podcast: you have been invited to the virtual conference to present your podcast, which is a personal narrative that has a *purpose*—to tell a story about your life that is (a) compelling and (b) connects to a larger social, cultural, or political issue, especially one that affects today’s generation of college students.

### [Your Genre](#)

Over the last decade, podcasting has emerged as a fun and easy way for people to share their experiences, stories, and ideas with the world. While some podcasts are quite fancy and include polished interviews with famous people and clever sound effects and music, this one doesn’t have to be. (In fact, a podcast, at its core, is really just an audio recording with some thought and planning put into the process ahead of time.) The conference organizers will put you on a panel with other students whose podcast projects address a topic similar to yours. When it is your turn to present, you will briefly introduce yourself and your podcast project; then you will play the podcast and take questions from the audience when it is over. To make your podcast as compelling as possible, you will prepare a script of around 1,500 words or approximately six double-spaced pages in MS Word. Your script should be narrative-based and engaging, considering your live (though virtual) audience, but it should also include credible and timely sources cited in MLA format, with a Works Cited page of three key sources. (The conference organizers will ask students to publish their podcast scripts on the conference website as essays, and they are asking that all submissions be formatted the same way: 12-point, Times New Roman or Calibri font on double-spaced pages in MLA format.)

Podcasting is a unique genre in that there are no visuals—you have to use words and sounds to create images in the minds of your listener. Since this podcast is aimed at an audience of college students who are presumably interested in your topic, we recommend making the following “moves” in your podcast:

- Capture your audience’s attention with an anecdote, news event personal story, question, problem, paradox, or common (but interesting) human experience;
- Present your personal narrative about a significant or meaningful life event in such a way that will be of interest to your audience and that will connect to a larger social, cultural, or political issue of some importance to that audience.

- Review several perspectives from credible people who have written or researched about this larger social, cultural, or political issue in order to create a context or *research space* (you will return to this “research space” in Media Project 2);
- Conclude by suggesting how your personal narrative and the research you’ve done matters to your audience (i.e., its implications, the “so what?” of your podcast and personal narrative).

For this genre, you will write and speak in a comfortable but intelligent style suited to the college students in the audience. Think about the kind of podcast you’d like to hear, and then write and produce that podcast. *And don’t worry*: you don’t have to a tech-savvy person to do any of this, nor should you be concerned about producing a podcast worthy of NPR. If you have some familiarity with podcasting and the many free tools available on the web like Audacity or Anchor.fm, that’s great. If you just have a smartphone with the voice memo function—or a laptop with a built-in microphone and the voice recording program that comes with it—you’re all set. In other words, *you are not being evaluated on your ability to use technology*. However, once you get used to this work and see how truly simple it is, you will probably find that you want to learn more about these digital tools, and there are many remote and in-person opportunities provided by IU Kokomo to help you learn more about these tools (for free!). We will take time in and out of class to learn about some of these.

### [Your Audience](#)

Imagine logging in to a Zoom meeting and finding 100 other college students already there, logged on, fully caffeinated, and ready to hear your podcast. The audience is made up primarily of college students (the mean age is 22), but is overwhelmingly diverse: the only thing bringing you together is your interest in exploring contemporary social, cultural, and political issues affecting today’s college students through the “vehicle” of personal narrative. You each desire to learn more about how to understand and address social challenges, especially those faced by college students.

What useful information can be gleaned about this audience? Because this conference runs concurrent sessions (i.e., panels of presenters that happen at the same time), you can probably assume that those who chose to attend your particular session are interested in your topic. After all, they chose to attend your session over 5 or 6 others that they could have attended at the same time. However, it should be said that the audience may not share your own views and your personal narrative will certainly be new to them. Because of the diversity among your audience, it will be a challenge to imagine an exact audience. You know this much: they are undergraduate college students interested in podcasting, personal narratives, and engaging academic conversations with other students. (Not everyone gets invited to the conference.) Among the attendees there is a palpable sense of energy and optimism mixed with anxiety for the future. You see yourselves as engaged citizens, collaborators, creators, future leaders, makers, DIYers, and problem-solvers. This crowd is not interested only in getting a degree

quickly and earning money; they want to make a difference in the world they will soon inherit—along with all its problems and inequities.

### [Your Purpose](#)

Your purpose in your podcast is twofold: (1) craft a personal narrative about a significant or meaningful life event/experience and (2) fold that narrative into a brief discussion of a larger social, cultural, and political issue of your choosing that affects college students like you in the 21st century.

You want your audience to feel, think, or do things specifically related to your topic; remember from the readings we've covered in *Everyone's an Author* that *rhetoric* is about influencing attitudes and judgments about shared concerns. That does not always mean changing their minds. More generally, your purpose in this podcast project is to share something of value to your audience about yourself, give them a compelling experience listening to your podcast, teach them something about the larger issue you are exploring, and convince them that you know what you're talking about and that you are credible. (Of course, it goes without saying that you will want to use not only credible sources, but *high-quality* sources for your research—the Canvas modules we complete on SIFT, framing effects, the paradoxes of authority, and mindful web consumption will certainly help with this.) As in every other writing task, you'll use rhetorical strategies you've learned already in this class to connect with your audience and make allies of them.

### [Possible Topics](#)

This year the conference organizers are especially interested in podcasts that connect a personal narrative about a significant or meaningful life event to a larger social, cultural, or political issue of interest to today's college students and college-aged people (18 to 25 years old). For example, on the call for papers (or "CFP"), they've listed the following topics as potential ideas to get presenters thinking about their significant life event or personal experience and the overall topic of college life, overcoming challenges, and personal well-being. Here's the list from the CFP:

- Student finances and debt
- Student health and sexuality
- Mental health
- Ability and disability
- Political identity and activity
- The value of general education
- Relationships and dating
- Volunteerism
- Alcohol
- Sexual misconduct and violence
- Sports programs and budget cuts to universities

- Social life (including fraternities and sororities)
- Work life
- Academic challenges
- Spiritual life
- Multitasking, study habits, academic challenges for first-year students
- Cheating and academic dishonesty

While they are open to a variety of topics, it is important to the conference organizers that each podcaster connect their personal narrative to a topic with three essential characteristics: (1) they feel passionate and personally invested in the topic, (2) the topic is sufficiently narrow that it can be adequately explored in a brief podcast script (six pages) and podcast (10-12 minutes), and (3) it will be of interest to other college students because it is connected to a larger social, cultural, or political issue.

As we discuss possible topics, you may want to join with 3-4 other students in class to form panels on similar topics for the conference.

### [What Do People Mean by Research?](#)

The word *research* means different things to different people in different settings or “contexts.” A chemist might concoct an experiment in a laboratory, while a sociologist might gather census data and perform statistical analysis on birthrates in Indiana post-COVID-19 to learn about reproductive patterns in the time of a pandemic. An anthropologist would think of research as collecting data from careful observations of human behavior in everyday life. Historians or literary scholars will visit archives and scholarly databases for much of their research.

For this conference, however, *research means finding effective, “key” sources to help you explore a larger cultural, social, or political issue*—one that is related to your personal narrative. As you prepare your podcast script, you should read widely on your topic and find three or four key sources that are credible, timely, convincing, and with limited bias. Some, but not all, of these sources will come from peer-reviewed academic journals. You’ll present these sources as evidence in your podcast and your script that your argument is acceptable, and you’ll weave those sources into your argument using a citation style guide (in this case, MLA), which is a common practice in academic writing.

### [Your Criteria](#)

Here are some general guidelines for how your podcast and script will be evaluated and graded:

- First and foremost, *you are not being graded on your ability to use technology*. If you can press record and speak clearly, you have the technological capacity to complete this media project. If you have more advanced skills with digital tools, however, you should feel free to use your knowledge and offer to help others during class workshops.

- The primary focus will be on the personal narrative you construct and on how you connect your significant life event to a larger social, cultural, or political area of concern for contemporary college students.
- Yes, you can use first-person (“I,” “me,” “we,” etc.).
- I will also be looking closely at the written script you develop and the quality and credibility of the sources you use as you develop your podcast. Remember that you are not solving a problem per se or even making an argument, but you are trying to answer a question—a question that you do not yet know the answer to—through the mixture of personal narrative and academic research. There are many possible questions, but one such question might be, “Are today’s college students more or less politically engaged than previous generations?” Remember that you will need to connect your question to your personal narrative, so you may want to begin with a sense of a personal story to share and then think about a larger issue to which you can connect that narrative.
- You will need to use at least three key sources to build your podcast and inform your research on the social, cultural, or political issue. These sources can be a mixture of scholarly, popular, print-based, and web-based. The Mind over Chatter Canvas modules you complete will give you useful tools and strategies to find the highest-quality information available. We will also visit the IU Kokomo library to learn more about how to use article databases and IUCAT, the online catalog of books and other resources.
- Both the podcast and the script/essay that accompanies it should be free from major errors in grammar and syntax and should indicate that a high level of care has been taken to ensure that both final products have been carefully copyedited and proofread.

## Accessibility

As digital media like podcasts, websites, apps, social media, and other online texts have become essential to how we learn, play, work, and communicate, experts continue to focus on building accessible and inclusive media environments for all people, regardless of disability. Indiana University is committed to accessibility, as are the organizers of “This Time It’s Personal.” With the help of your instructor, you will learn more about what accessibility means and how to ensure that all of the documents you produce are fully accessible. For a podcast, accessibility typically means making sure that you attach a transcript of the podcast for the hearing-impaired or that you include subtitles with your podcast (most podcasting software/websites make this easy, even automatic). Your instructor will help guide your choices as you plan and develop MP1.

## Supporting Assignments

To help you prepare your podcast and complete MP1, your instructor will guide you and the rest of your colleagues through several in-class activities (ICAs), in-class writing projects (ICWs), required course readings, and in-class (or online) discussions. You will also complete several Mind over Chatter (MoC) modules on developing web literacy and the making of knowledge, fact, and opinion. The MoC modules will help you learn some basic web research techniques to

find credible, high-quality sources, as well as introduce you to some complex questions about the framing of media and information in the digital era. Everything we do in class these first six weeks of ENG-W 131 will directly inform and impact the building of your MP1. To help workshop your personal narrative, write your script, and produce your podcast, your instructor will assign the following smaller assignments:

1. 25 points = MP1 assignment review w/ introduction (ICW, Class 1-2)
2. 25 points = Writing a Personal Narrative (ICW/ICA, Class 2-3)
3. 50 points = "Pitch Sheet" for MP1 (ICW/ICA, Class 3-4)
4. 25 points = Paradox of Authority w/ activity (MoC ICW, Class 4-5)
5. 25 points = Framing Effects w/ activity (MoC ICW, Class 6-7)
6. 50 points = podcast script w/ sources in MLA (ICW, Class 7-10)
7. 50 points = finished podcast (MP in Canvas, Class 12)

= 250 *points total*

#### [Works Consulted](#)

Jackson, Brian. *Teaching Mindful Writers*. Utah State UP, 2020.

Levine, Sarah and Johanna (Jones) Franzel. "Teaching Writing with Radio." *The English Journal*, vol. 104, no. 5, May 2015, pp. 21-29.