

# **Beyond the Essay: Project-Based Multimodal Design**

**A Workshop on Inclusive, Creative, and Critical  
Pedagogy Using Adobe Express**

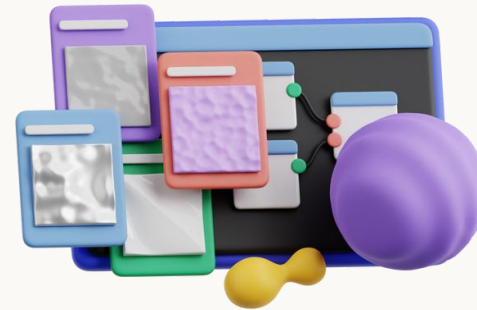
# Workshop Overview

Welcome to today's workshop. We are here not to replace the essay, but to expand our teaching toolkits by integrating project-based multimodal design into our pedagogy.



## **Pedagogical Foundations**

Explore research-based justifications for multimodal assignments in the age of generative AI, equity imperatives, and shifting communication literacies.



## **Practical Application**

Demonstrate Adobe Express tools and facilitate collaborative design time to draft meaningful assignments that enhance critical thinking and creativity.



## **Sustainable Innovation**

Embed accessibility, inclusion, and AI resilience into assignments while building momentum for continued pedagogical development.

# Workshop Objectives

**Promote Inclusive  
Pedagogy**

**Connect Theory to  
Practice**

**Evaluate  
Digital Tools**

**Design Meaningful  
Assignments**

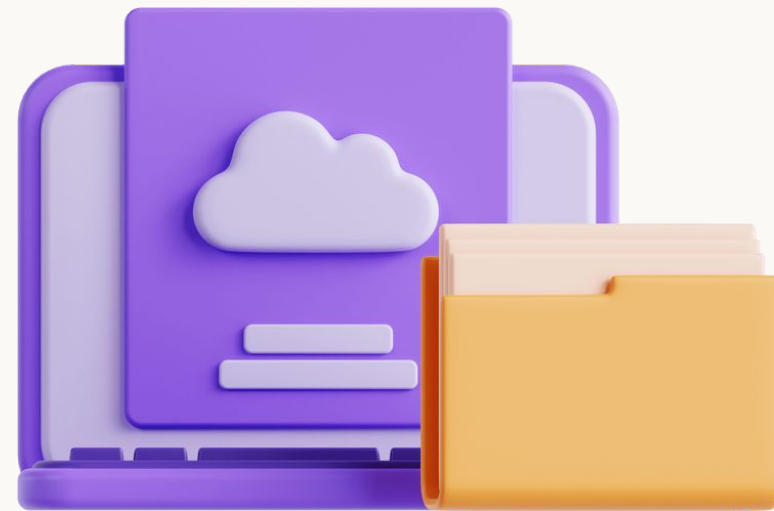
**Integrate  
Accessibility & AI  
Literacy**

**Build Community**

# Opening Reflection – Your Practice

## Consider Your Current Assignments

- What are the **goals**?
- Where do students thrive or struggle?



## Reflect on Disciplinary Definitions

- How does your field define "**rigor**" or "**academic expression**"?
- Are these definitions static or expandable?



Share your reflections in the chat or out loud.

# Why Multimodal, Why Now?

## Enhanced Learning

Research shows multimodal composition increases rhetorical awareness, critical thinking, and audience engagement (Fodrey & Mikovits, 2020).

## AI Resilience

With the rise of generative AI, multimodal assignments require unique human judgment, creativity, and synthesis that resist automation.

## Equity & Access

Students who think visually, orally, or kinesthetically can demonstrate learning in culturally resonant ways.

## Real-World Preparation

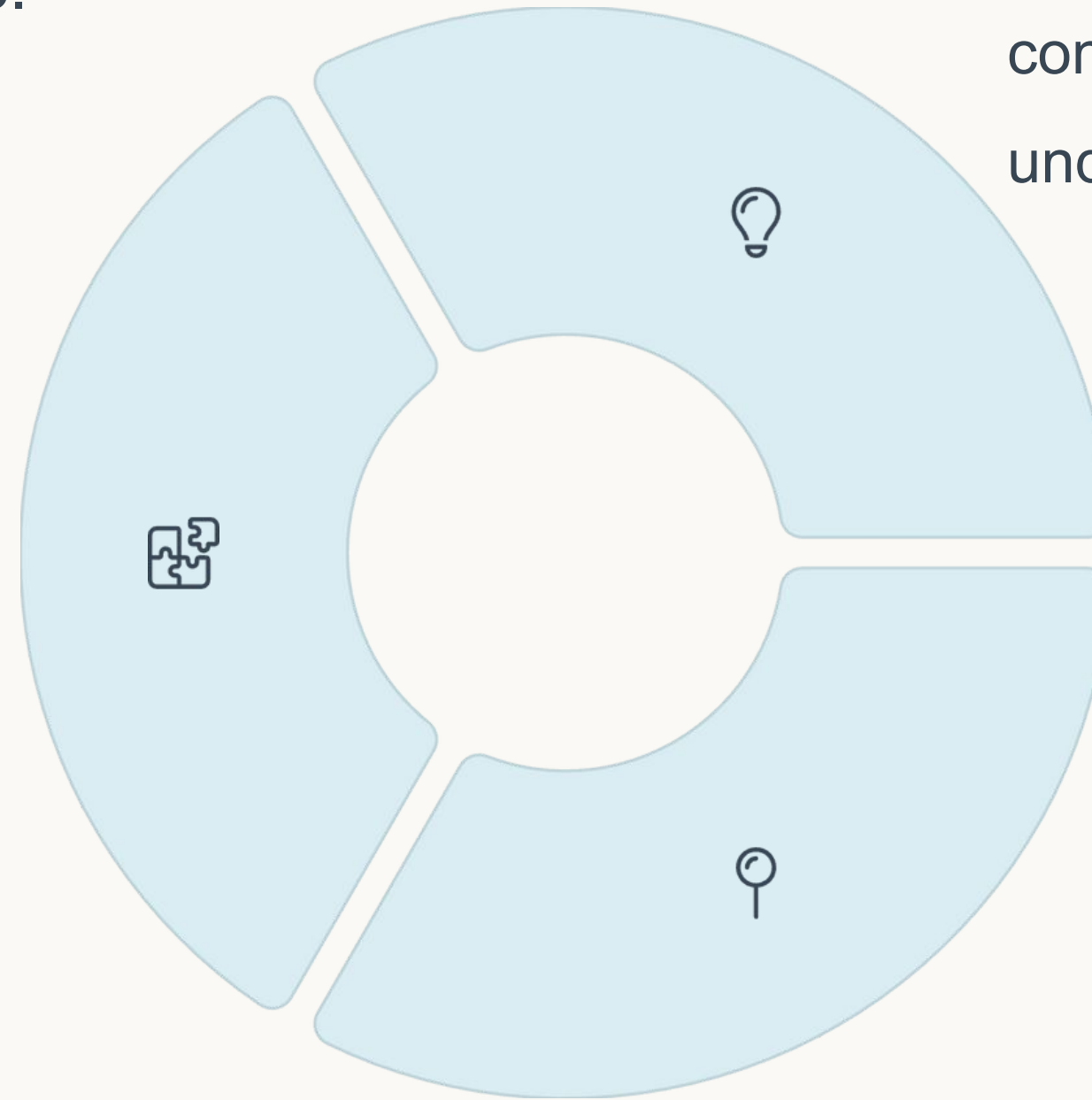
Professional environments increasingly value infographics, podcasts, and digital storytelling as communication norms.



# Pedagogical Frameworks

Using these frameworks helps keep our focus on learning, not just tool use.

Assess what knowledge your assignment teaches: rhetorical awareness, genre knowledge, process strategies, disciplinary conventions, and audience understanding.



Technology must meaningfully align with both content knowledge and pedagogical approaches.

Tools like Adobe Express should serve your disciplinary goals, not distract from them.

Begin with the end in mind: What should students know or be able to do, and what type of artifact best captures that learning?

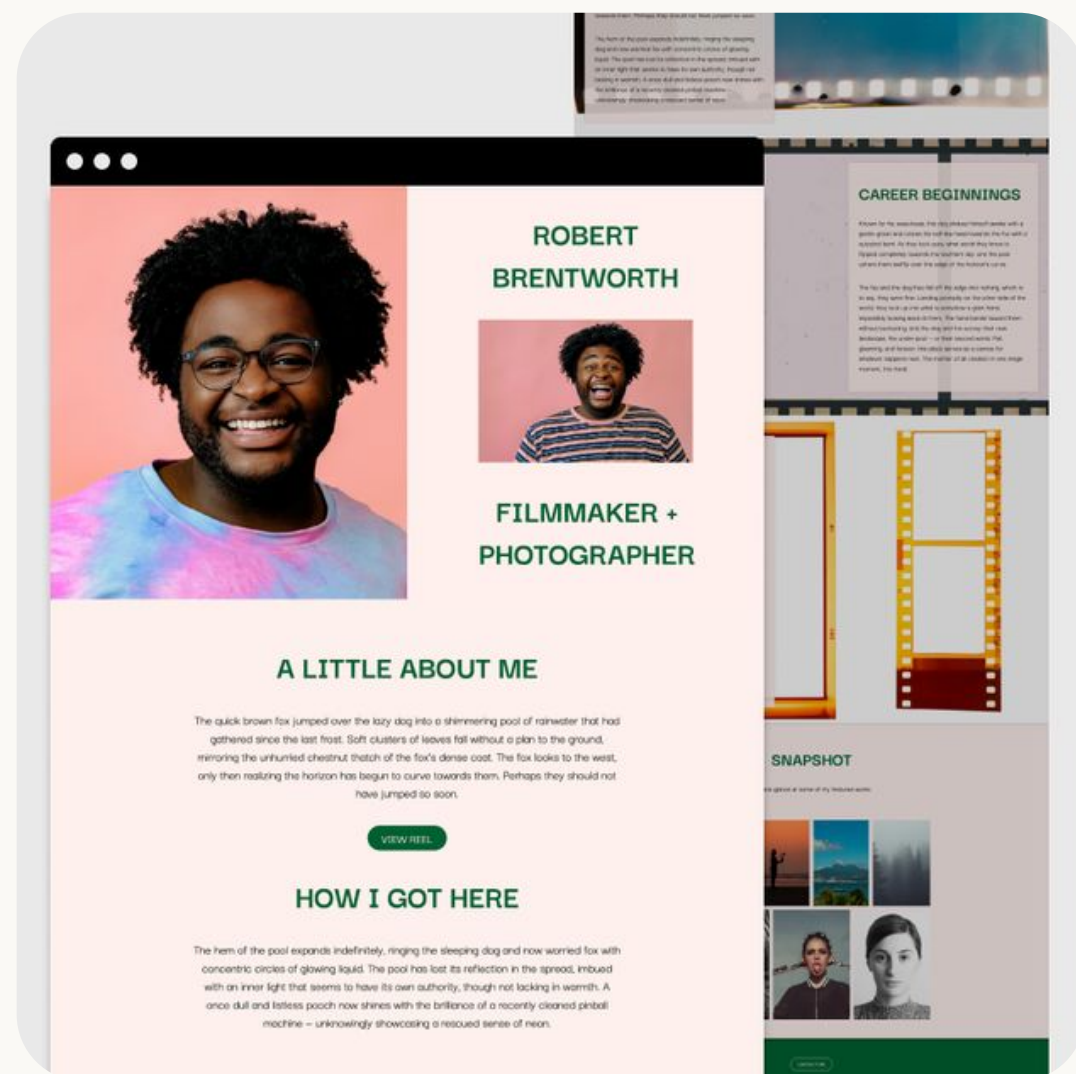


# Case Study: Writing Across the Curriculum

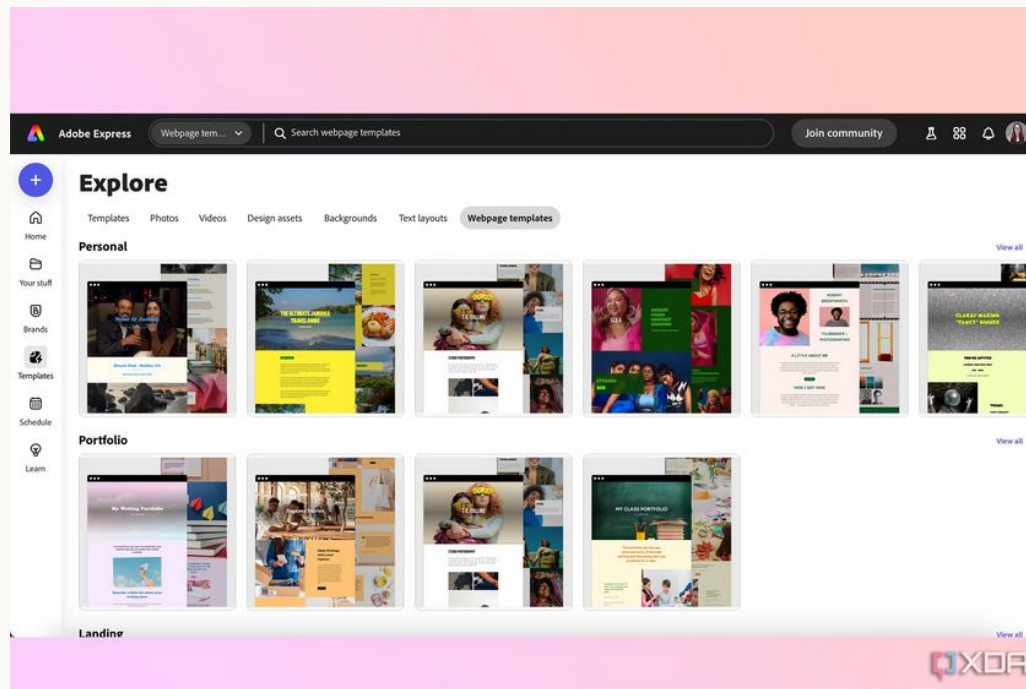
In English composition and rhetoric courses, instructors are increasingly assigning student writing portfolios in digital form.

These portfolios include revised essays, personal reflections, and creative work like short videos or visual arguments, all curated into a cohesive whole using tools like Adobe Express.

Students reflect on their growth across assignments, articulate rhetorical choices, and demonstrate their ability to compose in varied modes.

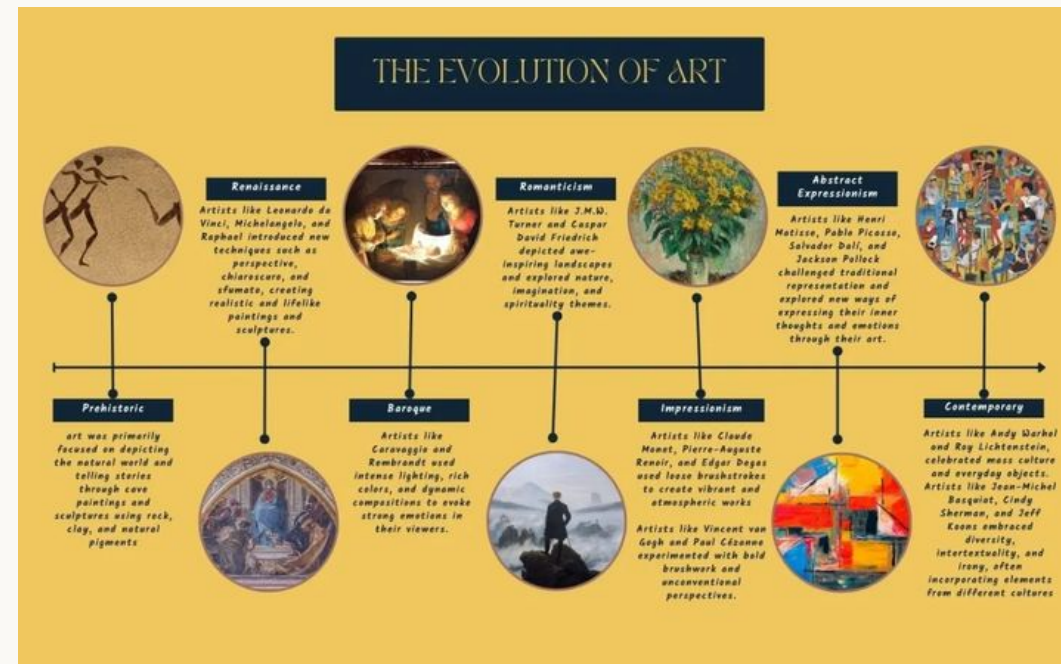


# Case Study: Digital Humanities & Art History



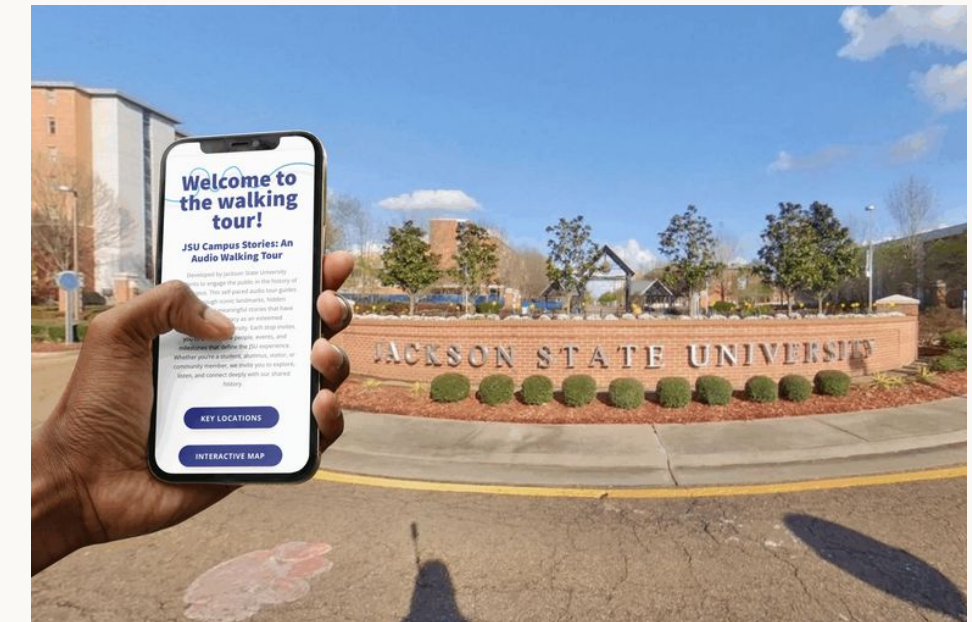
## Digital Exhibits

Students curated online collections with critical analysis, developing both disciplinary knowledge and digital literacy.



## Annotated Timelines

Learners created visual chronologies that connected historical events with artistic developments across periods.



## Virtual Walking Tours

Projects combined geospatial awareness with historical context.



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## **Content Understanding**

Does the project demonstrate accurate, thoughtful engagement with course concepts and appropriate depth of understanding?

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## **Rhetorical Strategy**

Is there clear purpose, audience awareness, and persuasive structure? Does the composition achieve its communicative goals?

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## **Design Elements**

How effectively does the project use visual/audio modes? Do design choices enhance meaning and support the overall message?

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## **Reflection & Process**

What did the student learn from composing this? How did they navigate challenges and make intentional choices?

# **Assessment – What Counts, and Why?**

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**Multimodal work requires  
reconsidering how we  
assess rigor and  
demonstrate learning.**

# Multimodal Genres Across Disciplines



## English

Video essays analyzing literary adaptation and visual rhetoric, allowing students to demonstrate critical analysis through multiple modes.



## STEM

Infographics summarizing environmental research for public audiences, teaching data visualization and science communication skills.



## History

Interactive digital timelines incorporating archival sources and oral histories, developing research and narrative competencies.



## Sociology

Podcasts unpacking structural inequality through lived experience, blending theoretical frameworks with ethnographic approaches.



## Nursing

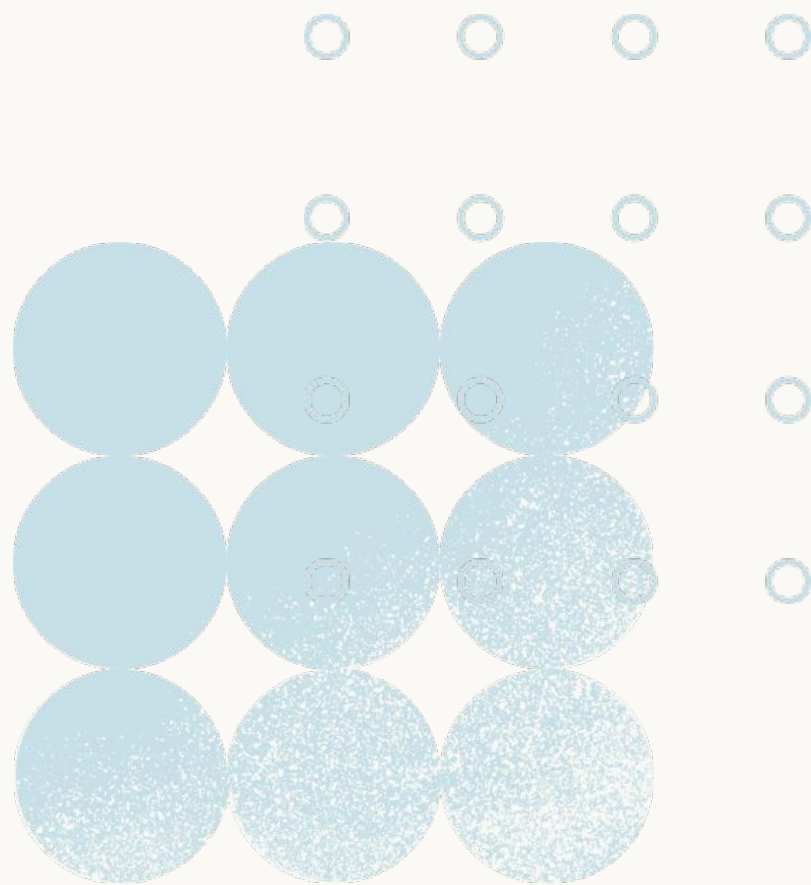
Culturally responsive brochures or explainer animations for patient education, connecting clinical knowledge with communication practice.



What does multimodal communication look like in your field? What would count as rigorous evidence?

# Designing for Accessibility & Inclusion

*What is wrong with this slide?*



Accessible design isn't just about compliance. It's about enhancing learning for everyone through Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles:



Inclusive multimodal design empowers all learners to participate and thrive while preparing them for communication in diverse contexts. When we design with accessibility in mind from the start, we create better assignments for everyone.

- Use readable fonts and high contrast colors for all visual materials. Avoid decorative fonts that reduce legibility.
- Caption all video and audio content and provide transcripts to support diverse learning needs.
- Add alt text to images and graphics so screen readers can convey visual content effectively.
- Offer flexible submission formats (e.g., infographic, video, audio, or text) to accommodate different student strengths and access needs.
- Model accessibility expectations by providing students with accessibility checklists and supporting tools as part of the assignment prompt.

# Tool Demo – Adobe Express



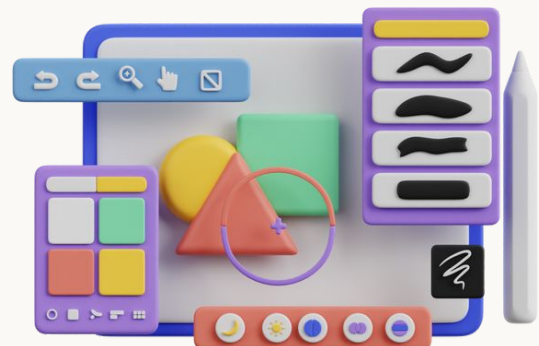
## Webpage Templates

Ideal for digital exhibits, portfolios, or story maps. Students can combine text, images, video, and links to create comprehensive multimedia presentations.



## Videos

Simple drag-and-drop interface with voiceover and image syncing capabilities. Perfect for storytelling, explainer videos, or constructing visual arguments.



## Graphics

Access to poster templates, social media formats, and flyers for advocacy or data visualization. Enables professional-quality design with minimal technical knowledge.



## Design Studio – Hands-On Work

Now we move from theory to practice. This is your opportunity to experiment with multimodal assignment design.

**1**

### **Draft an Assignment Prompt**

Create a multimodal assignment aligned with your specific course goals and student learning objectives.

**2**

### **Identify Platforms & Support**

Determine which platforms students will use and what technical or conceptual support they'll need for success.

**3**

### **Outline Scaffolding Plan**

Plan workshops, tutorials, or peer review sessions that will guide students through the composition process.

**4**

### **Sketch Assessment Approach**

Draft a rubric or reflection prompt that evaluates both content mastery and effective multimodal communication.

# Assignment Design Framework

Create rigorous and inclusive multimodal assignments using this scaffold:

## Learning Outcome

What conceptual, rhetorical, or disciplinary skills will students develop through this assignment? Connect to your course objectives and broader learning goals.

## Genre/Mode

What real-world format will students use (e.g., infographic, explainer video, digital narrative)? Consider authentic contexts for communication in your field.

## Scaffolding

What drafts, templates, or feedback loops will support student learning? Break complex tasks into manageable steps with appropriate guidance.

## Access & Inclusion

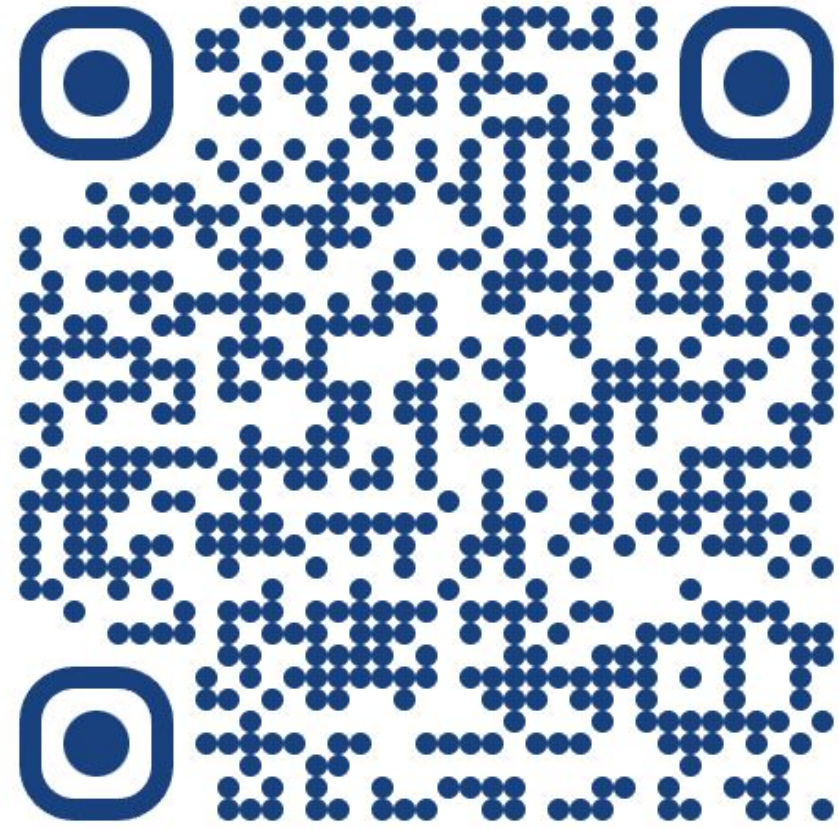
How will the assignment accommodate varied learning styles, abilities, and cultural perspectives? Design with diversity in mind from the start.

## Assessment

What rubric categories will capture both content and design? Will you include a process reflection? Create transparent evaluation criteria.

Use this framework to sketch your initial draft. You can iterate as we continue exploring possibilities together.

*Here we go!*



### **Purpose & Genre**

Is the purpose and genre of the assignment clearly articulated? Would students understand what they're creating and why?

### **Scaffolding**

What scaffolds are in place for students new to multimodal composition? Are there sufficient supports for various skill levels?

### **Equity & Access**

How does the assignment support equity and access? Are there barriers that might disadvantage certain students?

### **AI Considerations**

How might generative AI be misused vs. meaningfully incorporated, in this assignment? What guardrails exist?

### **Assessment Clarity**

Are the assessment criteria clear, inclusive, and rigorous? Do they balance content knowledge with communication skills?

# Peer Feedback Exchange

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Exchange your assignment draft with a colleague and provide constructive feedback using these guiding prompts:

Use this feedback to revise or clarify your assignment. Remember that constructive criticism strengthens our pedagogical approaches and benefits our students.



# Integrating Generative AI Thoughtfully

Faculty concerns about AI are valid, but banning it entirely misses an opportunity for deeper learning. Instead, design for **AI resilience**:



## **AI as Tool, Not Replacement**

Ask students to use AI as a brainstorming or drafting tool, but require critique, revision, or extension that demonstrates their own intellectual engagement.

## **Choose AI-Resistant Formats**

Assign media forms AI can't easily replicate, such as video with personal narration or media that incorporates students' unique experiences.

## **Document the Process**

Encourage process documentation through notes, screenshots, or reflection. "Show your work" becomes valuable evidence of learning.

## **Teach Critical AI Literacy**

Embed lessons on AI bias, credibility, and authorship. When students engage with AI critically and transparently, they become better thinkers.

# Long-Term Impact – From Project to Practice



## 01

### **Start Small**

Pilot your multimodal assignment in a single unit this term. Begin with a low-stakes implementation to build your confidence and gather student feedback.

## 02

### **Share Results**

Present your experiences and student work with peers. We would love to see your ideas and outcomes!

## 03

### **Join Our Community**

Participate in our Faculty Fellow workshops and mentorship programs. Collaborative learning accelerates your development as a multimodal educator.

# Wrap-Up & Next Steps

## Today We:

- Reframed multimodal composition as a critical, inclusive, and academically rigorous practice
- Used pedagogical theory and real-world models to guide assignment design
- Explored Adobe Express as a flexible, student-centered tool
- Embedded accessibility and AI resilience into project planning

## Exit Ticket:

- Write one idea you will test this semester
- Identify a colleague to share your design with for accountability
- Share quick feedback on today's session

## Resources:

- Multimodal Assignment Guide (Fodrey & Mikovits)
- Adobe Express canvas modules and educator hub
- Rubric bank and design templates
- Accessibility checklist (WCAG 2.1)