

MANIFESTO PROJECT

ASSIGNMENT OVERVIEW

THIS PROJECT IS DUE ON BLAZEVIEW BY 11:59 PM ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 5

In Toni Cade Bambara’s “Broken Field Running,” a teacher named Ndugu Jason articulates a radical teaching philosophy where book knowledge and lived experience both serve as essential tools for imagining social justice as a reality for Black communities. With this final assignment, I will ask you to similarly envision justice for Black Americans in the form of a manifesto—a genre that prompts readers toward social change. In other words, I want you to select an issue or theme that has emerged from your readings and craft an urgent call to take up that particular cause. This is not a typical argumentative essay; indeed, as the literary scholar Mary Ann Caws argues, it is a revolutionary act of writing that metaphorically “demands blood.” In giving you a creative project, I am providing you with tremendous flexibility and inviting you—*encouraging you*, even—to violate the forms and norms of academic writing. That said, you must still build a case for social change by drawing on the texts and contexts that have angered, inspired, saddened, or otherwise affected you over the course of this semester. Please note that a strong manifesto accessibly lays out its demands and clearly articulates methods for achieving them.

WHAT IS A MANIFESTO?

A manifesto is a declaration in writing in which a person, group, government, or organization conveys their intentions, motivations, and/or opinions. It endeavors to answer the questions: “What are my/our beliefs? And what kind of activism can help create polities and places that engender a better world for everyone?” The word manifesto is derived from the Italian word *manifesto*, itself derived from the Latin *manifestum*, meaning clear or conspicuous. Artists have written manifestos, as have philosophers and politicians. Corporate manifestos are written by businesses and organizations, and individuals write personal manifestos. While the length and content of manifestos vary, a well-written and organized manifesto not only presents a clear (and new!) worldview that deviates from the status quo, but also offers readers a practical and methodical plan for achieving and implementing action and change.

GETTING STARTED ON THE MANIFESTO PROJECT

As you begin brainstorming ideas for your manifesto (start early!), you should consider some of the claims that Mary Ann Caws makes about manifestos in her scholarly research on the form:

- “The manifesto was from the beginning, and has remained, a deliberate manipulation of the public view.”
- “At its most endearing, a manifesto has a madness about it. It is peculiar and angry, quirky, or downright crazed. Always opposed to something, particular or general, it has not only to be striking but to stand up straight.”
- “As if defining a moment of crisis, the manifesto proclaims what it wants to oppose, to leave, to defend, to change.”
- “The manifesto is by nature a loud genre... [it] is often noisy in its appearance, like a typographical alarm or an implicit rebel yell. It calls for capital letters, loves bigness, demands attention.”

You will want to be thought-provoking in creating your manifesto; voice will be a critical element in your writing—you will want to prompt readers toward social change. You will need to build your case for the social change you demand as well as lay out methods for achieving it. How you apply the rhetorical situation in your writing is crucial; your audience should feel intensity vibrating from the page.

CORE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MANIFESTO PROJECT

The written portion of your manifesto should be 1250–1500 words. The manifesto should be presented in a visual form (ideas included on the next page). Please submit your final manifesto to BlazeVIEW by 11:59 PM on Wednesday, May 5. I *highly* recommend that you show me your manifesto while working on it.

IMAGINING THE FORM OF YOUR MANIFESTO

Your final manifesto may include or take the form of any of the following:

- Advertisements
- Album Cover
- Catalogue
- Collages
- Comics
- Diary Entries
- Essays
- Flowcharts
- Illustrations
- Interviews
- Journalism
- Letters
- Listicles
- Manifestos
- Narratives
- Photography
- Picture Book
- Playlists
- Poetry
- Postcards
- Quizzes
- Rants
- Report
- Reviews
- Scripts
- Short Stories
- Transcripts
- Visual Art
- Zine
- *Surprise Me!*

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

Research has shown that assigning creative, public-facing projects can shed light on non-academic modes of reading and writing. As a non-traditional form of media, the manifesto invites you to consider a broad spectrum of narratives to be shared, while also promoting rhetorical awareness and self-expression. Moreover, by asking you to develop a manifesto, I am inviting you to take ownership of your intellectual voice in ways that other types of writing—especially in an academic setting—may not provide. As you develop your manifesto, you will explore multimodal forms of meaning-making that serve as a bridge between the writing skills we emphasize in the classroom and the creative work that you produce in your everyday lives. Finally, with a an assignment like this, you are given the agency to share and distribute your work through non-corporate channels—thus creating your own localized publishing communities.