

# RESEARCH PRESENTATION

*Peter Felten, [pfelten@elon.edu](mailto:pfelten@elon.edu)*

On December 8th, each of you will participate in a creative group presentation of research findings. The presentations are designed to help all of us learn more about and make connections between specific 1960s themes. The presentation will account for 10% of your course grade.

I'd like your presentation to be in the form of a "digital story." If that's really scary for your group, talk to me. Soon.

The "digital storytelling" movement has been around for about 10 years, but it's just beginning to be noticed in academia (visit [Berkeley's Center for Digital Storytelling](#) if you'd like more background). This approach involves using technology to enable the writing of stories that integrate words, images, and music.

Why digital storytelling? I have three reasons:

1. We've studied social and cultural experiments all semester. It's time we enact one.
2. You are writing a traditional research paper already for this course. Digital storytelling will give you an opportunity to explore a different approach to writing history, one that relies more heavily on images and music than your papers likely will. If that's not reason enough, there's some (albeit early) evidence that writing in multiple media improves overall writing skill and confidence.
3. Unlike typical class presentations, a digital story can be preserved. You can show your parents or your friends. I can show future students in this course. In other words, we can continue to learn from your digital story after the semester is over.

Your digital story might be a "true" story or it might be a fictional composite, but in either case it should be based on research done by your group. Your digital story should be about 3-5 minutes long, and it should include the central elements of any digital story (a point of view and a dramatic question as well as images, words, and music). After showing your digital story, the class will discuss it for about 15 minutes. Your digital story does not have to be technically complex, but you should use sound and images effectively. Many digital stories are constructed using PowerPoint or I-Movie. We will have class on November 17 in a PC lab so your group can begin thinking about and constructing your story.

The seven elements of a digital story - adapted from [www.storycenter.org](http://www.storycenter.org)

1. **A point** - Stories are *not* simply a list of what happened (“This happened, and then that happened, and then the other thing happened”). Instead, stories are told to make a point. Stories help us find meaning that transcends a particular situation.
2. **A dramatic question** - Making a point, however, doesn't necessarily grab and hold people's attention. A story also should hook the reader/listener/viewer to want to keep going—why did something happen, what did it mean, who cares? Those kinds of questions raise curiosity and emotion, making the story worthwhile not only for the storyteller but also for the audience.
3. **A distinct voice** - Every story is told from a perspective; it has a point of view. This perspective is part of "voice," but so is the sound of a person's voice (or several people's voices). The voice of the storyteller is crucial in shaping how the audience experiences the story.
4. **The power of a soundtrack** - A soundtrack can establish the mood, meaning, and rhythm of a story, transforming the way an audience perceives everything about the story.
5. **Images that matter** - Images can serve as a background, doing little more than illustrating the story. However, when used thoughtfully, images can move a story beyond its text and soundtrack - illuminating the meaning in a way that words and music do not.
6. **Economy** - A story should use as few words, images, and sounds as possible to effectively convey its meaning - less is more.
7. **Pacing** - The rhythm of the words, images, and sounds shape and reinforce a story's point. Storytellers often use pacing to help the audience feel a part of the story - for example, a quick pace feels exciting and urgent, while a sudden change in pace can feel disorienting.