

Aesthetics vs. Algorithmics in Digital Media Topics in Media Informatics

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A few general comments on the essays 17 June 2014

Essays are short text dealing with a question or statement from a particular position. An author uses such form to make a point. Usually, there is not a long introduction to the topic, or an explanation of the fundamental assumptions, concepts, or history. This makes it necessary that the topic is *present*, which is to say that many of the expected readers will have an immediate understanding of the question or topic.

In a scientific context, this may be seen in a bit relaxed way. But, by and large, it here also holds. Your essays for our seminar should, nevertheless, state in the very few first lines (say, three to five) what the question or the statement is. In all likelihood, it must be a simple statement.

So if your topic is about how weather conditions influence the morning choice of cloths for the day, the start into your essay should say this. Perhaps, like this:

When in the morning, you leave for a day of work, your choice of your clothing may turn out to have been totally wrong. It is raining all day, the temperature is falling, but you are wearing a very light and sexy white dress. It may also be that after a cloudy and a bit chilly beginning, the sun was shining brightly and in your woolen autumn sweater and pants (that you like much) you were isolated among your colleagues. This must not be.

Trivial: Your submission must show your name, the context (our seminar), and a date. Most of you forget the latter.

In our context, you need some references. There must not be many, one is enough. But you must refer from the text to the references. All literal quotes must be keyed down to the page of your source. This is difficult when you use sources from the Internet. You should avoid them as much as possible. If you use one, you must say when you last accessed it.

Tables, images, individual data that are not generally known, are literal quotes, i.e. need precise source reference.

An essay argues. So you must argue. You must develop your point by discussing contradicting and conflicting aspects. The richer you enter into a controversy, the more interesting and, hopefully, enlightening is your essay.

Avoid as much as you can (best: to one hundred percent) bullet point lists, or other ways of just adding one aspect under the next. Why? Lists are analyses (at best), not argumentations.

In our case, we have a roof topic (the algorithmic principle), a domain (everyday life and society), and your topic. You do everything from your topic's perspective. But you should not forget the more general.

Always keep in mind: you are designing when you write, you create a thing to be used as a medium.