

Assignment: Hoax Podcast or Article with Images



Photo courtesy of Wikipedia page: Mumler Mary Todd with ghost of Lincoln.

So far this semester, we've processed a lot of material about hoaxes—we've read stories and articles, seen pictures, listened to radio broadcasts, and watched television shows and films. We've considered how people attempt to establish authority and believability in each of these media. For this assignment, **you will apply those tactics in order to attempt to convince an audience (us) about the "true story" of a hoax.**

Working with two other students, you will produce either a short podcast or a newspaper style article with accompanying (somehow doctored or misleading) images. The assignment has two parts. Overall, this project is worth 15% of your grade. 5% will come from the project proposal, and 10% will come from the finished project and your reflection on it.

First, you and the members of your group will **submit a proposal**. You need to outline your plan for either a mini-podcast or a news article with supporting visuals that addresses a hoax we've discussed to this point—perhaps something from our class-built archive. You should each choose a role: the "impartial" reporter, the believer or eyewitness, and the doubter. For the proposal, write out a plan (i.e., a script or an outline of the article and plan for "doctoring" images). Along with this plan, you should each write a brief reflective paragraph explaining what methods you'll use to fulfill your role—why might it work? Where have you seen the tactic before? So, you will need to turn in **one document as a group**—the script or outline and image plan—and **additionally will each need to write me a**

paragraph about your contribution to the project in your designated role. There will be a great deal of overlap as you work on this project, and you can certainly contribute beyond or ask for help with your role.

Second, the week after turning in the proposal, you will post your artifact to your website. If this is a podcast, it needs to be **between two and five minutes**, and if it is an article it needs to be **one single-spaced page accompanied by two to three images**. Don't worry about a super-sophisticated set-up: for example, a good recording on a cell phone could get the project done. I will be looking for artifacts that put the hoax in context and frame the competing claims (impartial reporter), provide "evidence" of the veracity of the hoax that is tailored for maximum effect through appeals to the audience (huckster), and present how a doubting witness would contest the evidence (doubter). In a particularly strong project, the three elements will in dialog, talking back and forth, and building on one another's claims and objections. In addition to the artifact, each of you must submit a one-page reflection on your process. How did you establish authority in your role? What models did you draw on? Do you think it was believable? How involved were you in your group? Did you pull your weight? How? What challenges did you face and how did you resolve them? If you could redo your project, what would you change?