

Final Project – Podcast

MA in Urban Affairs

Urban Studies Department, Queens College-CUNY

Overview: The podcast gives students the opportunity to analyze a pressing urban topic, issue, or problem in a format that is easy to disseminate. Students should conduct independent research, use critical thinking, and apply knowledge and skills gained in Urban Affairs to answer specific research questions in the podcast. At the same time, students should aim to tell a compelling story about the topic they explore. Podcaster Alex Blumberg recommends this formula to guide your production: “This is a story about X and it’s interesting because Y.” Another famous podcaster, Ira Glass, has described the basic structure of each podcast as alternating between “action” and “reflection.” The “action” might be a quote from a course reading, newspaper article, or city council hearing. It could also be an excerpt from an interview or recording from a protest. The “reflection” corresponds to your analysis, which also serves as an opportunity to move your story forward. We encourage students to engage relevant faculty in advisement and experts on the development of your podcast. Please note that you will need to submit a written literature review alongside your podcast. Designing, recording, and editing the podcast generally takes at least **one semester**.

Project Advisement

- Students should consult with the Graduate Advisor on Final Project guidance.
- Alternatively, the student may find an Urban Studies faculty advisor who agrees to provide guidance in producing the podcast.
- **Note:** You must have a Final Project proposal **approved** by the Graduate Advisor before beginning your Final Project work. Please see the Proposal Guidelines. A faculty advisor may approve the student’s proposal in consultation with the Graduate Advisor.
- The student is responsible for knowing and meeting all deadlines and meeting the requirements for an acceptable thesis.
 - If a student has a faculty advisor who will review and approve the podcast, then the student and faculty advisor should mutually agree upon deliverables and deadlines.
 - Note: To graduate at the end of a given semester, the Final Project must be **approved** no later than that semester’s last day. But since the podcast needs to be reviewed, students should expect to submit the podcast at least 4 weeks before the end of the semester.
- The Graduate Advisor and/or the Faculty Advisor will evaluate the Final Project for approval. For evaluation of a podcast, students should expect to:
 - Submit a detailed, written overview of the podcast to the graduate advisor and/or faculty advisor. It should include the following components:
 1. Research Question
 2. Is there a narrator? What is their role?
 3. Will you interview anyone? Who? Using what questions? Where?
 4. What other kinds of “action” will you use? How will you collect that audio?
 5. Will the podcast include storytelling? What stories will be included?
 6. Will the podcast include sound effects or music? Make a list.
 7. What ideas do you have for the beginning and ending of the podcast?
 8. Make a comprehensive outline of your podcast.

- With the first draft of the planning document, students will also submit the first draft of the literature review, which will analyze the state of academic literature about the research topic.
- Based on feedback to the planning document, students will address the comments and complete a final podcast planning document.
- Students will then record and edit their podcast, submitting the final version to the faculty advisor and/or graduate advisor. At the same time, they will submit the final draft of their literature review.
- The faculty advisor and/or graduate advisor may require the student to have additional deliverables and deadlines, depending on the quality of the first drafts of your planning document and literature review.
- Your advisor will NOT be able to give you technical support in recording and editing your podcast. As you edit, you'll be able to answer most, if not all, of your questions using free web guides as well as YouTube videos. Be forewarned: editing podcasts is very time-consuming and may be one of the most difficult parts of your final project.

Podcast Guidelines

Your podcast assignment will have the following components:

I. Title and Graphic

- The title should be catchy and inspire the reader to spend time listening to your podcast.
- The graphic/cover art might be a photograph, drawing, or simply text.

II. Introduction

- There are many different kinds of podcasts, but for the purposes of your final project, you will be telling a story about research question.
- Your introduction should be a statement or story that excites the listener about the rest of the podcast. It should implicitly describe the topic and address why anyone should care about this problem.

III. Body

- As noted in the **Overview** section, the body of your podcast will alternate between “action” and “reflection.” The precise components will depend on your topic and your detailed planning document. Here are possible pieces of “action”:
 - Quote from an academic article (which you or someone else reads)
 - Found audio footage (from YouTube or other sources)
 - Excerpt from an interview you conduct
 - Quotes from a public hearing transcript (which you or someone else reads)
 - Your recording of a public event, such as a rally

IV. Conclusion

- The conclusion should bring a satisfactory ending to your story. It should simultaneously underscore the urgency of the issue and suggest further questions the podcast provokes.

V. Literature Review

- As part of your final project, you will submit an 8-10 page literature review in addition to your podcast.
- In your literature review, you should discuss what the existing literature says about your particular topic by analyzing what is known and also highlighting problems and gaps in the existing knowledge. By doing so, your literature review explains how and why your podcast contributes to existing knowledge on your topic. Your literature review should evaluate scholarship with a clear focus and a critical perspective.

VI. Bibliography

- Your bibliography should cite all of the works in your literature review in addition to any other sources discussed in your podcast.

Podcast Format

- Length: Urban Affairs podcasts are expected to be approximately 40 minutes. You may fulfill the requirement by producing two related 20-minute podcasts. Your literature review should be 8-10 pages.
- Referencing: The bibliography should use a formal referencing system. For example:
 - APA style: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>
 - Chicago: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/717/01/>
 - Harvard style: http://www.isa-sociology.org/publ/sociopedia-isa_harvard-style-guidelines.pdf
 - MLA Style: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

Recording and Editing Resources

- Recording
 - You can use any kind of microphone to record your podcast, but higher quality microphones usually sound better. We encourage you to set up recording sessions in the Queens College Department of Music, which offers a music production minor. By emailing recordingstudios@qc.cuny.edu, you can schedule a session in a Music Department studio where a student will take care of the recording's technical components.
 - To use your smart phone for recording, you'll need a voice recording app, like RecForge II or Audio Recorder on Android OR Voice Memos on iPhone. Make sure you know the location of your phone's microphone.
 - Have a plan for transferring your audio file to your computer via AirDrop, Bluetooth transfer, email, or Google Drive upload.
- Editing
 - You need access to a computer to edit your podcast.
 - On Apple computers, you can use GarageBand. On Windows devices, Audacity is a free, open source editing software. For both, you can find tutorial videos online.
 - You can also acquire Adobe Audition for free through Queens College.
 - Queens College students in the music production minor can also assist you in editing your podcast.
- Royalty-free music and sound effects
 - You can make your own beats and melodies.
 - Or you, can find some on Bensound and Freesound.

- Disseminating your podcast
 - Upon completion, you may upload your podcast onto Soundcloud and discuss the possibility of circulating the podcast through Queens College websites, including that of the Urban Studies Department.

Evaluation of the Podcast for your Final Project

The Graduate Advisor and/or Faculty Advisor will approve your Final Project if it meets the following standards:

- The podcast successfully analyzes a pressing issue related to Urban Affairs.
- The podcast sufficiently addresses all the required sections under the **Podcast Guidelines**.
- The podcast has a coherent narrative.
- The podcast presents original content and answers a research question through storytelling.
- The evidence—including interviews, found audio material, and quotes from written materials—is on topic.
- Your reflection/analysis advances the podcast's story.
- The podcast's technical production is strong, with smooth transitions as well as consistent and clear volume.
- The podcast has a catchy title and attractive graphic art.
- The literature review is thorough, analytical, and clearly written. The literature review must also be appropriate in terms of style, grammar, and spelling.