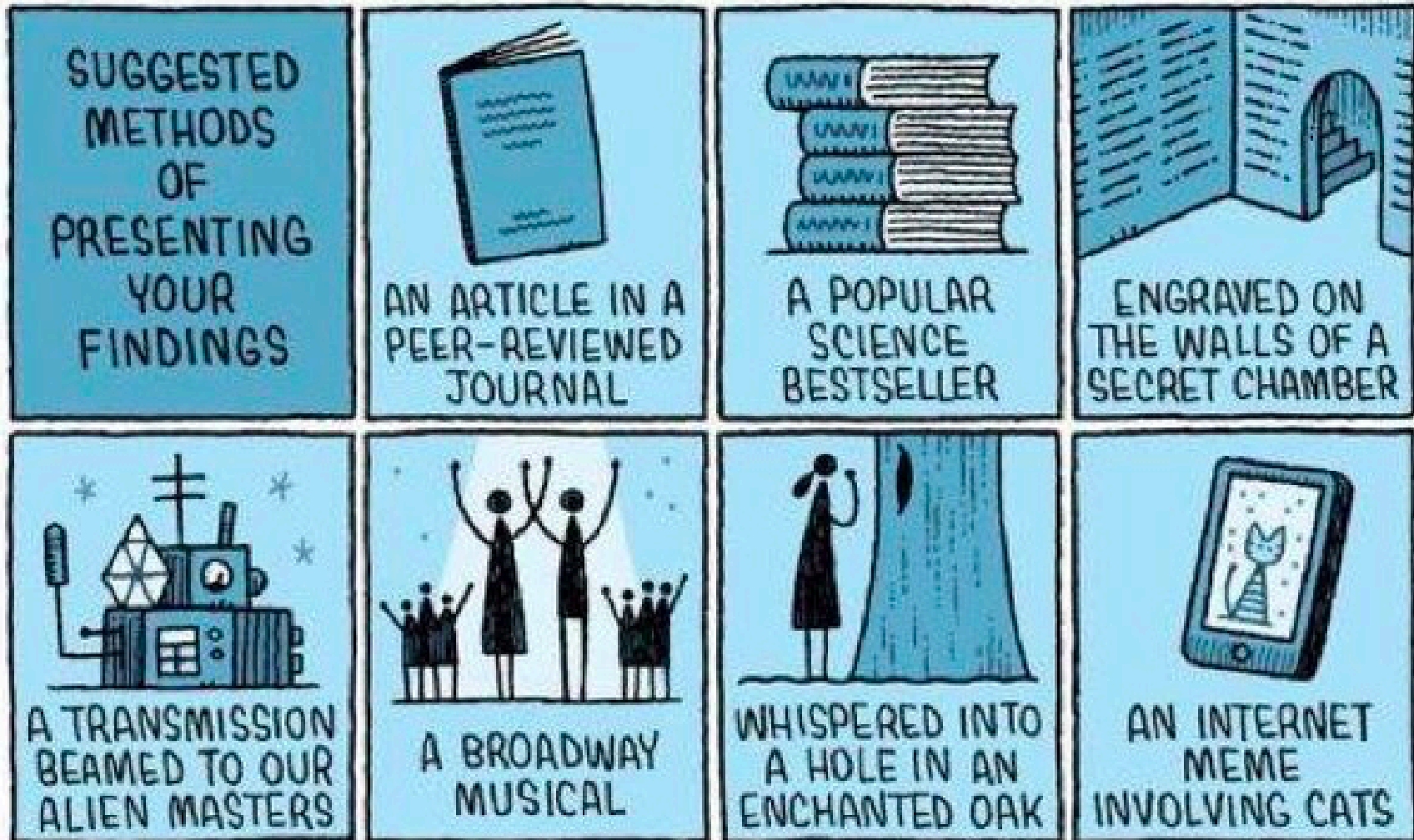


GETTING READY TO DO PUBLIC-FACING HUMANITIES WORK



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NHC 2023 Winter Podcasting Institute: Emergent humanities / podcasting

Emergent strategy principles (from *Emergent Strategy* by adrienne maree brown)

Emergent strategy: Adaptive and relational leadership and organizing strategies driven by respect for collaboration, complexity, change, adaptability, interdependence, and sustainability.

Principles of emergent strategy:

- *Small is good, small is all. (The large is a reflection of the small.)*
- *Change is constant. (Be like water.)*
- *There is always enough time for the right work.*
- *There is a conversation in the room that only these people at this moment can have. Find it.*
- *Never a failure, always a lesson.*
- *Trust the People. (If you trust the people, they become trustworthy.)*
- *Move at the speed of trust. Focus on critical connections more than critical mass--build the resilience by building the relationships.*
- *Less prep, more presence.*
- *What you pay attention to grows.*

Octavia Butler

All successful life is

Adaptable,

Opportunistic,

Tenacious,

Interconnected, and

Fecund.

Understand this.

Use it.

Shape God.

amb

Fractal

Adaptive

Nonlinear / iterative

Resilient / Transformative justice

Interdependent / Decentralized

Creates More Possibilities

Scholarship, Reflection

Practice / Experiment

Intention

Emergent humanities:

What would it look like to grow a compelling future for the humanities together? How are collaboration, complexity, change, adaptability, interdependence, and sustainability valued in context of the academic humanities? What changes

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are afoot in the academic humanities that merit our respectful attention and understanding? Where are the spaces where trust, interconnectedness, and relationships are growing? How can we nourish these spaces?

DAY 1 DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Talk to each other. Share your stories about where you come from, your education, your work, and what brings you to this workshop (Hour 1)
2. Discuss the questions outlined above. Find the conversation only your group can have; if you know simple tools like Google doc, Google [Jamboard](#), [Padlet](#), [Wordle](#), [Miro](#), or even the [draw and annotate tools on Zoom](#), you can play with and visualize patterns. (Hours 2 – 3)
3. Day 1 logistics
 - a. Agree on your communication channel(s) - via your Slack channel or similar
 - b. Set up a cohort Zoom space and share with your Tech Lead

DAY 2 DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. What you pay attention to will grow. What points of conversation from Day 1 have stayed with you? What would you like to explore more deeply together as you contemplate growing a compelling future for the humanities together? Go to the space where your connections—expertise, experience, relationships—are most dense. What cultural forms and histories live here? What possibilities for understanding does this space hold?
2. Identify the approach to *emergence* your podcast will take:
 - AMPLIFY: Use your platform to lift up a story, cultural form, phenomenon, or shared experience that holds new possibilities for understanding?
 - CONTEXTUALIZE: Use your platform to deepen understanding by illuminating connections between a phenomenon and its contexts.
 - HISTORICIZE: Use your platform to reveal connections between past and present or present and emerging phenomena.
 - OTHER? - - - -
3. What kind of humanities content will you utilize to do this?
 - Story
 - History
 - Testimony
 - Artifact (textual, musical, sound, visual. . .)

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- Captured sound
- Found sound
- Conversation
- Interview
- Field recording

Planning Discussion

By the end of the Day 2/start of Day 3, your cohort should:

- Finalize your communication channel(s) - via your Slack channel or similar
- If you haven't already, establish a cohort Zoom space and share with your Tech Support Lead
- Agree on your file management strategies, including naming conventions
- Define roles and responsibilities
- Begin mapping out your podcast
 - Hone in on a topic, with the understanding that you will continue refining and scoping
 - Identify what you need/what you have
 - Make a plan to get everything you need
- Experiment with recording sound; get comfortable listening to the sound of your voice

GENERAL TIPS FOR PUBLIC-FACING WORK

1. PREP: Effortless-sounding "tape" is not spontaneous. It reflects hours, weeks, months, even a lifetime of preparation. We spend six years writing books that 300 – 700 people will read. It is critical to spend a few hours prepping public-facing content for that thousands of people will hear and see.
2. PREP FOR AN AUDIENCE: It is critical to prep with actual audience(s) in mind. Your work will have multiple, sometimes overlapping audiences or constituencies. Think about where each one is located—socially, physically, politically, what each one hungers or needs to hear, and how you can organize your knowledge to best meet that hunger or need. Our academic training teaches us to work within conventions of expression specific to our profession. These

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can be comforting, or limiting, or both. Work to find a voice that manages to convey complex ideas in non-academic language. That language is often available in vernacular sayings, clichés, cultural truisms, and so on. Meet your audience where they are. Find the common language.

3. **BE BOLD AND GENEROUS IN YOUR EXPERTISE:** You don't have to know more than 90% of people in your subfield to speak to a topic; you have to know more than 90% of people in the country, and say it with more fluency. Academic credentialing means being modest, slow, and perfect, but the content industry prioritizes being accurate, responsive, flexible, and effective. I once heard the advice: "Get out and play in traffic." Even if you blow it, so long as you don't say anything legally actionable or truly regrettable, within 48 hours, the ever-spinning content cycle will have consigned your honest flubs to oblivion.
4. **FOCUS:** Forget the 50 minute class session, 3 hour seminar, or 20 minute conference paper. In the media, we have to make our point in 140 characters, or three-sentence soundbites. Your audience (remember your audience!) is going to give you just a minute or two to connect and make them care—while they are (in all probability) multi-tasking. Be respectful of their attention. Let them know through your tone, accessibility, and preparation that you care just as much about them as they hope they care about your subject. And be efficient. No warm up, no wasted breath: know what you want to say, and say it right away. When you have made your point, stop.
5. **CLICHES ARE MORE EFFECTIVE THAN JARGON.** Jargon has a purpose: it allows scholars to jointly explore complicated questions in a richly nuanced shorthand. Using it in public-facing work means risking the opportunity of failing to connect with your audience and meet their needs. Your audience will generally trust that you know what you're talking about by the fact that you are in the media, that you have "Professor" or "Dr." in your title, and that you are affiliated with a university. If there is a word that may not be familiar to your audience that you find useful and think will enrich your listeners, define it, and explain why you find it useful—what realities does it uniquely catch? But you can't do this more than once or twice during any media opportunity.
6. **SHAPE THE CONVERSATION:** An interview is not an examination. Play nice, but remember you are actually under no obligation to answer the question put to you. Sometimes interviewers don't even know the most salient questions to ask, because they are not experts. The questions they ask are opportunities for you to convey critical parts of your message and reframe issues for the public. Lead. If they ask the wrong questions, pivot, using a phrase like, "I

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hear you; the bigger question is . . . ” If they use the wrong words or facts, don’t repeat them. Repetition reinforces. Restate in your own terms and move on.

7. **SHAPE THE CONVERSATION 2:** You can help shape the public conversation even more broadly by getting to know producers, editors, journalists, and other content-makers in the social and legacy media venues that touch your audiences. Every public radio station has 24 hours a day to fill. Reach out and introduce yourself. Pitch a show idea or story angle. If something happens in the news cycle or the calendar (an important historic anniversary, a holiday, women’s history month, etc.) reach out and pitch another idea. The best part of this work I found is that it has helped me learn to “hear” the broader constituencies and audiences for my work and do projects that put my scholarly skills to use to connect with authentic needs.

8. **STAY IN THE GAME:** Social media –Twitter, Instagram, Facebook--is good practice for staying in shape to do work that connects and matters. Some days you will hit with likes and retweets and some days you will miss. Practice. And don’t forget to be in social media for the good: retweet and like others’ posts, respond constructively, signal boost and amplify important work, and don’t waste time with trolls or negative comments.