

## RESEARCHING LOCAL VETERANS ASSIGNMENT

**Distributed:** *Thur., Jan 29, 2009*

**To Be Completed By:** *Tues, Feb. 12, 2009*

### **Overview:**

The final project for this course is to complete a short documentary film, at least 5 minutes in length, that deals with a topic related to the Iraq War. For example, you could do a portrait of another veteran, a veteran's family member, or even a veteran's counselor or an army recruiter. You could also do a theme-based film that is more about a topic than a person, such as veterans' support groups, or how veterans readjust to student life. Of course, a portrait could also touch on themes, and a theme-based documentary could also focus on a person. While this project is not due until April 21, to complete it successfully, you do need start thinking about what you'd like to do early. To get you started, this assignment will help you articulate potential subjects for your documentary. This preliminary exercise will help you brainstorm some ideas, begin initial research, and do some early troubleshooting.

### **Assignment:**

1. In at least two paragraphs, describe your preliminary idea for this documentary and why you chose it
2. For each idea described above, identify 2 potential interviewees
3. Select one interviewee for each topic and write a 250 word biographical sketch of the person. Include as much of the following information as possible: Name, date and location of birth, occupation, MOS/NEC and Rate (where appropriate), details about service, relationship to service member, and achievements. Also consider questions such as, what makes this person a good subject to include? Why choose him or her? What role will this person play in your documentary?

### **Strategies for locating veterans:**

You probably know of more ways of contacting local veterans than we do, but below are a few strategies you might try. Remember, one of the web blog assignments is to post additional strategies we may not have listed of here.

- Contact local student-veterans organization
- Contact the university's Office of Veteran Programs
- Contact the local VA office
- Contact the local National Guard Offices

- Talk to each other about your projects and see if your classmates know someone that you might consider talking to
- Facebook
- Consider contacting folks that you may have served with
- Talk to Nathan and I. We can likely put you in touch with student-veterans who were interested in the class, but couldn't fit it into their schedules

**Strategies for identifying and developing ideas for your documentary:**

*Themes*

1. Reflect on your own experience. What did you observe, learn and feel that you think might be relevant to larger issues impacting veterans or otherwise related to the Iraq War?
2. Read various articles (there are several links to related articles on the class blog) and/or watch documentary films on the Iraq war in general, and veterans' experiences in particular, to get ideas. Then ask: how might these trends be represented here at Penn State and in Centre County?
3. Talk to other vets, and their friends and families. What did they experience? If you talk to enough of them, ideas will begin to emerge.
4. As you consider themes, also ask: which of these are the least known, or the most important, or the most compelling, or the most intriguing? What are the choices vets make that are critical to their experience?
5. What would the visuals be? What kinds of scenes might you shoot? What perspectives would be important?

*Portraits*

1. Who do you know? Who do they know? Ask around and find out about the roles other vets have played. While you probably share similar experiences with the vets with whom you will talk, likely there will be more to learn about the particulars of difference vets' experiences. Ask lots of questions; you may be surprised what you learn.
2. Who is impacted by the war that we might not normally think to profile? Family members? Recruiters? Friends?
3. Is the person comfortable being on camera?
4. Does anyone you know have upcoming significant events or important moments related to their service that you could incorporate?