# CAM Climate Change PSA Student Script Assignment (Higher Ed)

## Overview

This project includes several steps:

1. Pre-production (components marked with an asterisk [**\***] are to be done **by every student, before production groups are formed**)
   1. Background reading**\***
   2. Writing a script**\***
   3. Pitch presentations**\***
   4. Class voting to select pitches to be produced
   5. Group pre-production planning
2. Production
3. Post-production
4. Distribution

## Pre-production assignments

### Read background material

Students are encouraged to read Chapter Three in Randy Olson’s book “Don’t Be Such a Scientist,” on using storytelling as a means to convey scientific content:

Olson, R. 2009. Don't Be Such a Poor Storyteller. In *Don't Be Such A Scientist: Talking Substance in an Age of Style*. Washington D.C.: Island Press.

Take a few minutes to look at some of the student videos at the CAM (Climate Education in an Age of Media) Project website: <http://cleanet.org/cced_media/cam_tv> .

As you view videos, questions to consider include:

* Who is their target audience?
* What is their key message?
* Were they effective in conveying their message? What changes could they have made to make their piece more effective?
* What resources did they need to produce this video?

### Write a PSA script

Using storytelling techniques as described by Olson (2009), write a **one-page script** with a clear three-act structure.

First, consider the following questions:

1. **Who is your target audience**? What type of communication approach and aesthetic style will appeal to them?
2. **What behavior are you hoping to change** (what is your ‘ask’)?
3. **What information does your audience need?**
4. What is the **core idea** that you want to communicate?

Use a **three-act structure** for your script:

1. **First act**: introduce your subject, then, end by establishing a source of tension or conflict by posing your question.
2. **Second act**: explore possible sources of resolving the tension, meaning possible answers to your question. By the end of the third act you are pointing towards the answer.
3. **Third act:** you answer the question, thereby releasing the tension.

Your script must have a title. See if you can come up with a title that prompts your audience to think. Questions almost always make for good titles.

Both **humor and sincerity** are powerful and effective elements in film, but need to be used judiciously. If in doubt, keep them out. But if they work, use them.

Plan for a PSA that is no more than 60 seconds long (which is the time slot that media outlets typically leave for PSAs).

Plan ahead for production:

1. **Who will** you recruit or ask to **act** in your PSA? It can be helpful to have an effective, charismatic spokesperson.
2. **What are the key assets you will draw on for your “B roll.”** The B roll refers to supplementary visual material your subject can provide or you can film yourself. The B roll can include any stock video material, still images, or proposed footage you’ll film or download from online sources.

Two script exemplars, written by former students, are given below.

### Pitch presentations to the class

Each student will prepare and deliver a three-minute presentation to pitch their PSA idea to the entire class.

Here are some guidelines for your three-minute pitch presentations:

1. Try to use the basic simple rule of “arouse and fulfill” for the structure of your presentation. Begin by presenting something – a question, a hint, a piece of logic – that will make your audience want to hear more (the arouse part), then describe a film that would fulfill that curiosity.
2. You are allowed to show three images total in your pitch. You are not allowed to include video, although you can use still frames from a video.
3. Try to have something close to a written ending sentence for your pitch so that you end on something more than just, “um … that would be my film.” Have something closer to, “This film, structured around the temperature database I’ve mentioned, will reveal the scope of change over long time scales.” You will get EXACTLY THREE MINUTES to make your pitch presentation to the class. We will be using a stopwatch to make sure you don’t go over. Be sure to rehearse it a number of times. Your classmates will vote to determine the top pitches (the top 1/5 will be produced by the class).
4. After all the pitches are presented, we will all vote for our top 1/5. Based on the class vote, the top 1/5 pitches will be produced (with the scriptwriter of those pitches becoming directors) and everyone else will be randomly assigned to be crew members for each film.

### Group pre-production planning

Once groups have formed, you need to work together to improve the script, decide on resources and assets you will bring to production, and define production roles. An effective PSA takes a lot of work to produce, so it is best to ‘divide and conquer’ – i.e., make sure everyone in the group has a clear role to play and that multiple tasks are being completed simultaneously. Your first step will be to create a storyboard and a list of shots.

The storyboard pairs key elements of the script, or narrative, with sketches of the visual components of the PSA - e.g., what will the viewer see (sketch of visual component) and hear (script) during each part of the PSA? You should also create a list of extreme close-ups, close-ups, medium shots, long shots, and extreme long-shots for your PSA. You should be working on these documents **as a group,** so that your piece can benefit from everyone’s ideas and talents. Use a whiteboard or paper taped to a wall so that **everyone in the group can see and contribute to the storyboarding process** (rather than having one person holding the plans).

Things to consider during group planning:

* **Locations:** setting up a new location takes a lot of time. In order to save time, get all of the shots needed from a given location before moving onto another one and avoid having too many locations.
* **Use Post-it not**es to sketch out your storyboard or shot list if you’re not sure what the order of scenes will be. This approach will enable you to easily move scenes or shots around until you settle on a plan.
* **Divide labor:** What are each group member’s strengths and interests? Can you divide labor accordingly? Examples include:
  + Knowledge about science/content and resources
  + Ability to find or record sound and music
  + Acting
  + Camera work
  + Editing
  + Creating graphics or text
  + Creating a setting (may include make-up, costumes, finding actors, using a green screen).

**Present your group’s plan to the class.**

Each group will present their plan to the rest of the class, so that we can all contribute resources and ideas and have the strongest set of pieces possible for the class film screening event. Your group will make a much better impression if **all group members contribute to the presentation.** You will have <**10 minutes per group** to present your plan, which should include:

* An overview of your storyboard and shot list
* Plans for sets
* Major changes to the pitch presentation, if there were any
* Overview of division of labor
* Questions you may have for the class, including requests for resources or help (e.g., is our message clear? Are science concepts accurately described? Does anyone have costumes for …? Does anyone know good music for …? Etc.)

**As you watch other groups’ presentations, consider:**

* Who is their target audience?
* What is their key message?
* What are they asking their audience to do?
* Do they have resources to execute the plan they have presented?
* Do you know of any resources that could make their piece stronger?

## Video Script Example 1

**Title:** *“Blinded”*

**Subject:** Climate change impacts given inaction to address climate change

**Question:** What are the consequences of our refusal to face climate change?

*Four individuals stand before the scene. All blindfolded. Alternating close ups on their faces. Words spoken in the background and so the faces are expressive: solemn, confused, angry.*

*Below, A, B, C, and D refer to each blindfolded individual.*

**ACT 1:**

A: What if I asked?

B: What if I asked?

C: What if I questioned?

D: What is climate change?

A: What is climate change?

B: Just what does a 4 degree increase in temperature really mean?

C: Does it really mean crop failure?

A: Drought?

D: No food on the table?

A: World Wide Famine?

B: What about my health?

C: your health?

D: Health of my children?

A: Diseases such as malaria

B: West Nile

C: Air pollutants

D: All increasing

A: What about increasing extreme weather?

B: Tornadoes

C: Floods

D: Fires

A: More and More

B: Until we couldn’t stop it

C: Until we could not stop it

D: Until we pass the tipping point

**ACT 2:**

A: But what If I didn’t want this

B: What if we all didn’t want this

C: What if we stood up

D: To fossil fuel corporations

A: To Chevron

B: To Shell

C: To Exxon

D: What if we switched

A: To Solar

B: To wind

D: To Biking

C: To less

D: to Less

A: To lessen our Carbon Footprint

**ACT 3:**

Narrator: Because if we don’t …

CLOSE UP SHOT OF YOUNG GIRL OUTSIDE, HOLDING A BLINDFOLD AND ABOUT TO PUT IT ON. SLOWLY PAN AWAY FROM GIRL

Narrator: what will we be doing to her?

## Video Script Example 2

**Title:** Gas Zapper

**Subject:** Promoting awareness of how difficult it is to “solve” the climate change problem

**Question:** Is climate change easy to solve?

**Act 1:** PICTURES OF SOME OF THE DAMAGE CLIMATE CHANGE CAUSES (BLACK AND WHITE)… SALES PERSON WALKS TOWARDS THE CAMERA “Aren’t you sick of this crazy weather flooding your fresh cut lawn? Aren’t the food shortages just killing you? And aren’t you just saddened by all those commercials about cute dying polar bears?”

**Act 2:** Well lemme tell you, so are we. That’s why we invented Gas Zapper! HOLD PRODUCT IN HAND. This state of the art product lets you clean up the environment, and have fun! The lightweight machine zaps away heat trapping gasses in our atmosphere with just one shot! On an extended car trip? Zap away all your emissions quickly and effortlessly. It’s even safe for the kids.

Watch this demonstration as the laser comes in contact with the evil greenhouse gas and it strips it of all its heating power. With this product you can feel like you are part of a global initiative. Now other competitors claim that you can’t stop climate change that easily. They know nothing because they obviously haven’t seen what this baby can do.

Don’t be fooled because it’s like a video game this is not only for teens. Your mom will love it! Your eighty year old neighbor will love it! Everyone will love it!

TURN TO OLD GUY TALKING: “I love zapping, I never thought I could do anything to help the Earth but now I can get rid of harmful green house gases and get some great exercise too. What else could anyone ask for?” THUMBS UP

Get this amazing gadget for just 2 easy payments of 19.95! That’s 2 easy payments of 19.95. Do your part! If you call now you will get a free mini zapper for you car, an 80 dollar value, with your purchase!

Order now at 1-800-zap-a-gas

**Act 3:** If you were super excited and wanted to start killing harmful gases right away… then we are sorry because this product does not really exist. Unfortunately, this is a totally made up commercial and this CO2 zapper POINTS TO PRODUCT is just a piece of cardboard and nothing more. But you can put forward this excitement to find out what you can actually do to help against climate change. There is no easy solution to climate change. We have to change our habits to change our world. Act now.