

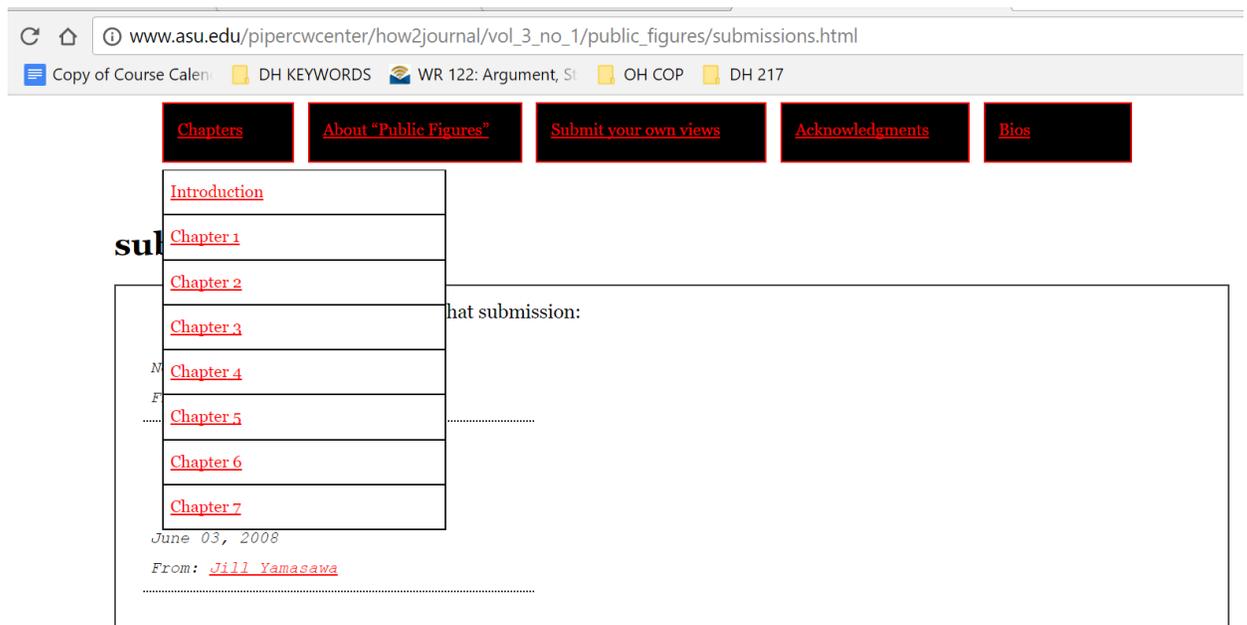
Eng 217 “Synthetic Selfies”: Jena Osman’s *Public Figures*<sup>1</sup>

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THIS WEEK’S PROJECT

1. Begin by watching Jena Osman’s presentation, *Public Figures*. You may need to wait for it to load.

[http://www.asu.edu/pipercenter/how2journal/vol\\_3\\_no\\_1/public\\_figures/intro.html](http://www.asu.edu/pipercenter/how2journal/vol_3_no_1/public_figures/intro.html)

Here’s a screencapture of the home page for Jena Osman’s *Public Figures* with the chapter headings:



2. As you listen/watch Osman’s presentation, pay attention to the following:

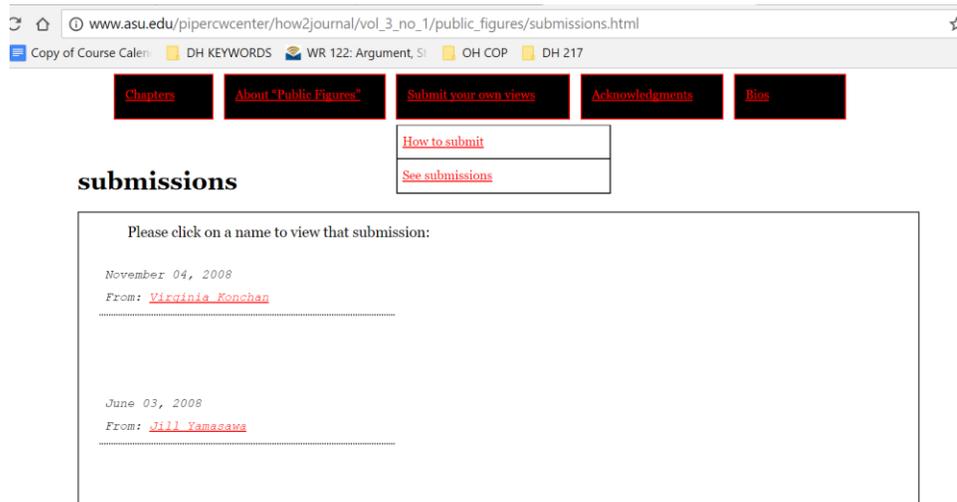
- **Notice** that she begins by rigging a “gaze-capturing apparatus.” This is now called a “selfie stick.” If you have one, it will be easy to do this exercise. If you don’t, you can create a “gaze capturing apparatus” like Osman.
- **Watch** as Osman captures images of the gaze of a monument. She says about the statues, “They have a gaze, but they don’t have a need for it.” Then she quotes poet George Oppen, “There are things we live among, and to see them is to know ourselves.” This exercise is to engage you in this process of seeing more closely what you live among and to know yourself a bit better because of it.

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<sup>1</sup> This assignment was taken in part from a course designed by professor Kaia Sand (Portland State University). You can view Jena Osman’s presentation on *Public Figures* here: [http://www.asu.edu/pipercenter/how2journal/vol\\_3\\_no\\_1/public\\_figures/ch2.html](http://www.asu.edu/pipercenter/how2journal/vol_3_no_1/public_figures/ch2.html)

3. For this week’s assignment, your work is to find a public monumental subject—some “non-human” subject. This can be anything that has a gaze. It can be a figure of a person or a figure of a creature that can look with eyes. It can’t be simply a bronze plaque with text. It must be a “figure” of something that represents a living, seeing creature. (Human or animal.)
4. Jena Osman’s Public Figures gives you several examples in Chapters 1-3.

*Here’s a screencapture of the page with some examples of how others have submitted their own work*



5. Bring your camera, “selfie stick” or “gaze capturing apparatus” and a notebook or other writing device to your site. First thing is to take photographs and then take notes
6. **Selfies:** Take your photographs:
  - a. First, attempt to take a **selfie as the monument**. This will take some maneuvering. **Be sure to respect all private property rights and other restrictions as you take photos.**
  - b. Then, if you wish, take a **selfie with the monument**—or “photobomb” the monument and take this picture (or have a friend take it). You don’t have to include your face if you wish to remain anonymous. You can include an artifact of yours—a wallet, purse, hat, umbrella, bike, etc.)
  - c. Then, take a **picture of the monument** from your point of view as an observer—the “tourist view.” (Take caution when taking photos if the monument is high or hard to access.)
  - d. Finally, take a picture of the view **from the gaze of the monumental** subject. What do they see? (See Jena Osman’s *Public Figures* for examples of this.)
7. Now, spend some time observing and taking notes. Observe the monument and include the following in your blog entry:
  - a. **Physical Description:** How tall is it? What material is it made of? What does it look like? What is the figure depicting (and, aside from knowing what it is supposed to depict, what does it look like to you?). Is there wear & tear/decay? Is there a base/foundation/pedestal? Is there any language on it? Dates?

- b. **Physical Context:** Where is it located in the city/town/campus? What is the space like (is it in a park? An intersection? Etc)? Describe it. Do humans move among it? Is there foliage? Buildings? How does the monument/fountain mesh with its surroundings?
- c. **Social Context:** Look out at the city/town/campus from the monument's vantage point. Consider what it sees. Take a picture of the view from the monument if you can—but don't take any physical risks with your person and respect any property laws etc. Spend some time around the monument, noting if or how people interact with it, notice it, ignore it, move around it, etc. Come at different times of the day if you can. Does the action or interaction change?
- d. **What can you learn about this monument from the monument itself?** If there's a plaque near the monument, take a picture of it and include it in your blog. What does the plaque tell you? (How was the stature acquired? When? Who was the architect/builder? Sculptor? Do you know anything about the person depicted? Why was this particular figure selected? What do you know about the actual history of the figure depicted? Do you know why it was acquired/sited there? Is there record of more history after the monument was acquired? Were there controversies?)
- e. Finally, consider what has changed from the time of the monument's installation (if you can find that out) – in the city or the neighborhood, to the monument, about the relation between the two?
- f. **Write an observation of your surroundings from the position of the monumental subject.**
  - i. Once you've gotten a story of the monument from your own perspective, take a moment to write from the monument's point of view. What does the monument "see" each day? What might such a monument "think" about what it "sees"? How is this different from what **you** see and think as you stand next to/walk around it?
  - ii. Think about the monument's place in the park or public space. What do others think as they walk by it? What fantasies would such a monument have?

### Assignment Rubric

1. You post your blog with four photos: a selfie of the monument, a selfie of you (or something of yours) with the monument, and a selfie as if taken "by" the monumental subject herself/himself/itself.
2. You use the prompts 7a-7f above to describe the public figure and its contexts
3. You respond to the line from the George Oppen poem "There are things we live among, and to see them is to know ourselves." How does seeing this monumental subject from a different perspective help you to know yourself in some new way?

### Grading Rubric

You complete #1-3 in the Assignment Rubric above, and you post the project to your blog on time, posting the link in Moodle. Your work demonstrates that you watched Jena Osman's presentation and you understand the assignment. **Grade of B**

You complete #1-3 in the Assignment Rubric above, and you post the project to your blog on time, posting the link in Moodle. Your work demonstrates that you watched Jena Osman's presentation and you understand the assignment. Your reflection, descriptions, photos exceed expectations for thoughtfulness, thoroughness, humor, creativity. **Grade of A**

You mostly complete #1-3 in the Assignment Rubric above, and you post the project to your blog on time, posting the link in Moodle. Your work demonstrates that you only watched some of Jena Osman's presentation and you only have a basic understanding the assignment. **Grade of C**

You complete some of #1-3 in the Assignment Rubric above, and you post the project to your blog on time or late, posting the link in Moodle. Your work demonstrates that you didn't watch Jena Osman's presentation and you don't fully understand the assignment. **Grade of D**

You don't complete enough of #1-3 in the Assignment Rubric above, and you post the project to your blog on time, posting the link in Moodle. Your work demonstrates that you didn't watch Jena Osman's presentation and you don't fully understand the assignment. **Grade of F (Remember an F is a 50% which is better by far than a 0!)**