CSMF Rubric - FILM & VIDEO

Examples

	Technical Expertise: Effective and Integrated use of camera work, lighting, audio clarity, and editing to support storytelling.	**Content (Story/Concept):** Clarity and impact of the story, including plot development, pacing, and emotional engagement. Strong projects tell a cohesive story that resonates with viewers.	**Creative/Innovative:** Originality in visual style, technique, and storytelling. Innovative projects show creative risk-taking in narrative, tone, and technical methods.	**Media Literacy (Copyright & Fair Use):** Ethical use of film tools, proper attribution, and awareness of the film's impact on audiences. Note: AI use is OK if cited. LINK TO CITATION TIPS
9-10	Masterful use of camera angles, lighting, audio, and editing. All technical elements contribute seamlessly to storytelling and emotional engagement.	A well-structured, emotionally impactful story. Character development and pacing are expertly handled, resulting in a compelling narrative. **Non-fiction** entries are thoroughly accurate and well researched.	Project shows highly creative and innovative, exploring unique genres or techniques. The project shows bold experimentation with film/video elements. The elements are all or mostly original student work.	Project shows excellent understanding of media ethics for video. Original student work is cited. Proper citation of all assets (e.g., people, sound, stock, models, technology tools such as AI) and process documentation are included.
7-8	Strong technical execution with minor issues. Lighting, audio, and camera work are used effectively but could be refined in certain areas.	A clear, engaging story with strong pacing. The narrative is well-developed but lacks the deep emotional or intellectual impact of the top-tier projects. **Non-fiction** entries are accurate and researched.	Project shows creative but within familiar genres or storytelling techniques. Media libraries or another non-original work is used effectively.	Project shows good media literacy. Basic analysis. Most assets (including technology tools such as AI) and processes are cited and documented.
5-6	Adequate technical skills, though there are noticeable flaws in audio, lighting, or camera work.	The story is present but may lack depth or emotional engagement. Characters and pacing feel conventional or underdeveloped. **Non-fiction** entries are generally accurate and somewhat researched.	Project shows some creativity, but overall follows conventional techniques without much originality or experimentation.	Project shows basic understanding of media literacy. Some missing or incomplete citations and processing documentation.
3-4	Significant technical issues (e.g., poor lighting, inconsistent audio) make the film difficult to follow or diminish its impact.	The story is unclear or underdeveloped. The pacing may be uneven, and character development is minimal, leading to a lack of engagement. **Non-fiction** entries contain some inaccuracies.	Project shows little to no creativity or experimentation. The project feels unoriginal or rushed, with few risks taken.	Project shows limited understanding of media literacy or ethical use. Few citations or other documentation present.
1-2	Major technical problems make the project difficult to watch (e.g., poor sound, bad framing, or lighting).	No clear story or emotional engagement. The project feels incomplete or without purpose. **Non-fiction** entries are inaccurate.	Project shows creativity or originality. The project feels like a direct imitation with no personal input or experimentation.	Project shows no understanding of media literacy or ethical practices. No citations or other documentation present.

CSMF Rubric - ANIMATION

	Technical Expertise: Visuals, motion, timing, sound synchronization, digital/traditional animation techniques	**Content (Story/Concept):** How effectively the animation conveys a narrative or theme through motion and visual elements)	**Creative/Innovative:** Originality in animation style, use of techniques, and storytelling through motion)	**Media Literacy:** Understanding and ethical use of animation tools, proper citation, and critical reflection on the social and ethical impact of the project; use of AI is OK if cited. **LINK TO CITATION TIPS**
9-10	**Digital**: Masterful digital animation techniques (e.g., imagery, effective transitions, well done effects), precise timing and motion, Synchronized Sound. **Traditional**: Hand-drawn, stop-motion, or frame-by-frame animation; effective motion throughout.	The story or concept is clear, engaging, and emotionally or intellectually impactful. The animation supports and enhances the narrative, making it compelling.	Project shows highly creative use of animation techniques. The project explores new forms, blends styles, or uses animation in a way that feels fresh and unique. Bold experimentation with motion, style, and visual storytelling.	Project shows strong understanding of media literacy and ethics in animation. Original student work is cited. Proper citation of all assets (e.g., people, sound, stock, models, technology tools such as AI) and process documentation are included.
7-8	**Digital:** Strong technical execution with minor issues in imagery, timing or transitions; good sound synchronization. **Traditional:** Strong traditional techniques, but with small inconsistencies in imagery, sound, motion or timing.	The story is clear and engaging. The animation effectively supports the narrative.	Project shows creative use of animation techniques, though still within more familiar styles. Some experimentation with animation forms and motion.	Project shows good understanding of media literacy and ethical practices in animation. Most assets (including technology tools such as AI) and processes are cited and documented.
5-6	**Digital**: Adequate technical skills, but noticeable flaws in imagery, motion, timing, or sound synchronization detract from the animation. **Traditional**: Consistent but basic execution of traditional techniques, with some choppiness in frame rates or minor timing issues.	The concept or story is present, but the animation does not significantly enhance the narrative. The project lacks emotional depth or intellectual engagement.	Project shows creative effort, but the animation techniques are conventional. Limited experimentation or innovation in motion, timing, or style.	Project shows basic understanding of media literacy and ethical use. Some missing or incomplete citations and processing documentation.
3-4	**Digital:** Significant technical issues in imagery, motion or timing (e.g., choppy animation, poorly timed transitions); weak sound synchronization. **Traditional**: Noticeable issues with imagery, frame rate or motion that disrupt the flow of the animation.	The story or concept is unclear or underdeveloped. The animation feels disconnected from the narrative, lacking cohesion or engagement.	Project shows little creativity or innovation. The project feels conventional and rushed, with limited thought given to style or motion in conveying the story.	Project shows limited understanding of media literacy and ethical use. Few citations or other documentation present.
1-2	**Digital:** Major technical issues make the animation difficult to watch (e.g., poor imagery, poor transitions, erratic motion, or lack of synchronization). **Traditional:**Inconsistent motion and significant timing issues.	No clear story or concept. The animation feels unfinished, and the narrative is not enhanced by the motion.	Project shows no creativity or originality. The animation feels like a direct imitation or lacks any personal input or experimentation with style or technique.	Project shows no understanding of media literacy or ethical use. No citations or other documentation present.

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CSMF Rubric - PHOTOGRAPHY

	Technical Expertise: Photographer's skill in visual elements, composition, lighting, focus, and editing. Strong technical choices enhance the image's clarity, depth, and overall impact.	**Content (Story/Concept):** Evaluates the story or message conveyed through the photograph. Successful projects use visual elements to communicate a clear, engaging narrative or theme.	**Creative/Innovative:** Considers ~~in~~ perspective, technique, and style. Creative projects take unique approaches to subject matter or explore new visual methods.	**Media Literacy:** Considers ethical choices, such as proper attribution and responsible use of tools and edits, along with reflection on how the photograph affects viewers. Use of AI is OK if cited. **LINK TO CITATION TIPS**
9-10	Masterful use of visual elements, composition, lighting, focus, and editing. All technical elements contribute to a highly impactful and visually engaging photograph.	The photograph tells a powerful story or communicates a clear, well-developed concept. The subject evokes a strong emotional or intellectual response.	Project shows highly creative and experimental use of photography techniques (e.g., perspective, lighting). The photograph feels bold and original.	Project shows excellent understanding of visual storytelling and media ethics in photography. Original student work is cited. Proper citation of all assets (e.g., people, sound, models, technology tools such as AI) and process documentation are included.
7-8	Strong technical skills with minor flaws in visual elements, composition, lighting, or editing.	A clear story or concept, though it may lack the depth of top-tier projects. The photograph communicates effectively but does not fully engage emotionally.	Project shows creative use of photography techniques, but within more conventional approaches. Some experimentation, though not fully original.	Project shows good understanding of media literacy and ethical use of photography. Most assets (including technology tools such as AI) and processes are cited and documented.
5-6	Adequate technical skills, though there are noticeable issues in visual elements, focus, lighting, or composition that detract from the photograph.	The subject is clear, but the story or concept is underdeveloped. The photograph feels conventional, with minimal emotional impact.	Project shows creative effort, but the overall approach is conventional. Little risk-taking in terms of composition or technique.	Project shows basic understanding of media literacy and ethical use. Some missing or incomplete citations and processing documentation.
3-4	Significant technical issues (e.g., visual elements, poor lighting, focus problems) make the photograph difficult to interpret or appreciate.	The concept or story is unclear. The photograph lacks purpose and feels disconnected.	Project shows minimal creativity or innovation. The photograph feels rushed, and the composition lacks originality or depth.	Project shows limited understanding of media literacy or ethics. Few or no sources cited.
1-2	Major technical problems (e.g., visual elements, poor lighting, framing issues) make the photograph ineffective.	No clear concept or subject. The photograph feels unfinished or without direction.	Project shows no creativity or originality. The photograph feels like a direct imitation or lacks personal input or experimentation.	Project shows no understanding of media ethics or media literacy. No citations.

CSMF Rubric - AUDIO - Music

	Technical Expertise: Quality of sound, instrumental balance, and mixing. Strong projects demonstrate clear audio, cohesive arrangement, and professional mixing.	**Content (Theme, Emotion):** How effectively the music conveys a theme or emotion. Successful compositions evoke a meaningful listener experience aligned with the intended mood or message.	**Creative/Innovative:** Originality in composition, style, and genre exploration. Innovative projects incorporate unique soundscapes, musical structures, or experimental elements.	**Media Literacy:** Ethical use of samples, loops, and attributions, along with awareness of how the composition impacts listeners. Use of AI is OK if cited. **LINK TO CITATION TIPS**
9-10	Excellent sound quality, arrangement, and mixing. All instruments and sound elements are balanced, contributing to a polished composition.	A powerful theme or concept, evoking strong emotional or intellectual responses. The composition engages the listener deeply.	Project shows highly original and experimental, exploring new soundscapes, genres, or musical structures. The composition feels bold and innovative.	Project shows exemplary understanding of music and ethical use (e.g., proper citation of samples or loops). Original student work is cited. Proper citation of assets (e.g., people, sound, tech tools such as AI) and process documentation are included.
7-8	Strong sound quality and arrangement, though minor balance or mixing issues may be present. Overall, a polished composition.	A clear, engaging theme, though the emotional or intellectual impact is not as strong as exceptional works.	Project shows creative use of instruments or digital tools, though still within more familiar structures or genres.	Project shows good understanding of music theory and its ethical use. Most assets (including technology tools such as AI) and processes are cited and documented.
5-6	Adequate sound quality with noticeable balance or mixing issues. The arrangement is solid but lacks the refinement of higher-quality compositions.	The theme is present, but the composition feels conventional and lacks emotional depth or engagement.	Project shows creative effort, but the composition largely follows conventional structures.	Project shows basic understanding of music theory and ethical use, but citations are incomplete or missing for samples or loops. Some missing processing documentation.
3-4	Poor sound quality or mixing detracts from the composition. The arrangement feels disjointed or unbalanced.	The theme is unclear or disconnected, and the composition feels incomplete or rushed.	Project shows little creativity or innovation. The composition feels conventional or rushed, with no exploration of new musical ideas.	Project shows limited understanding of music theory or ethical use. Few citations or other documentation present.
1-2	Significant technical issues in sound quality, mixing, or arrangement make the composition difficult to listen to.	No clear theme or emotional engagement. The composition feels unfinished or without direction.	Project shows no creativity or originality. The composition feels like a direct imitation or lacks personal input.	Project shows no understanding of music theory or ethical use. No citations or other documentation present.

CSMF CALIFORNIA STUDENT MEDIA FESTIVAL

CSMF Rubric - AUDIO (Podcast, Spoken Word Poetry, Audio-only Interviews)

	Technical Expertise: Technical Expertise (Recording, Editing, Mixing, Sound Design)	**Content Story/Concept:** (Clear premise, structure, research, listener impact)	**Creative/Innovative** (Format, voice, originality, creative risk-taking)	**Media Literacy:** (Ethics, sourcing/credits, accessibility/transcripts, medium-message reflection) LINK TO CITATION TIPS
9-10	Professional-level clarity; consistent levels; clean edits; purposeful use of silence, music, SFX, ambience; performance enhances meaning.	Clear, compelling message; strong structure; polished writing or planning; depth of insight or emotion; listener deeply engaged.	Fresh, distinctive voice and form; risks succeed; memorable choices set project apart.	Full credits; clear permissions/consent; transcript or alternative text included; strong awareness of representation and ethics; reflective relationship to medium.
7-8	Minor issues but strong capture and edits; performance mostly confident; music/SFX supportive.	Strong message and structure; good preparation; impact present but not exceptional.	Clear creative elements; some originality; a few risks taken.	Most credits and ethics handled well; transcript included; minor gaps.
5-6	Noticeable issues (uneven levels, noise, rough cuts); performance adequate; music/SFX inconsistent.	Understandable but general; some structure present; insight or emotional depth limited.	Some creative attempts but mostly conventional; limited experimentation.	Basic credits and transcript; ethical awareness present but incomplete.
3-4	Significant audio problems interfere with impact; editing distracts; performance or mixing weak.	Weak or confusing purpose; underdeveloped structure; minimal preparation.	Few creative decisions; predictable or flat style.	Missing or inconsistent credits; limited ethical thinking.
1-2	Audio impedes understanding; unclear vocals; chaotic levels; music/SFX obstruct meaning.	No clear message; chaotic or absent structure; listener confused or disengaged.	Little to no originality; derivative or disengaged.	No credits/transcript; no evidence of ethical or accessibility considerations.

CSMF Rubric - INTERACTIVE MEDIA

	Technical Expertise: Interactivity, immersion, design, user experience, tool integration	**Content Story/Concept:** How effectively interactive tools enhance storytelling or problem-solving	**Creative/Innovative:** How original and experimental the use of interactive technology pushes boundaries in user interaction, immersion, or storytelling	**Media Literacy:** Understanding and ethical use of interactive tools. LINK TO CITATION TIPS
9-10	Smooth, responsive interactivity; immersive design using 3D models, soundscapes, environments; intuitive user interface. All tools are seamlessly integrated, enhancing interactivity or content generation.	The story or concept is deeply immersive, using interactivity to enhance the narrative or solve a problem. The project engages the user emotionally or intellectually.	Project shows highly original use of interactive, pushing boundaries of interaction, immersion, and user experience. The project is bold and experimental.	Project shows excellent understanding of media literacy and ethical implications of interactive tools. Original student work is cited. Proper citation of all assets (e.g., people, sound, stock, models, technology tools such as AI) and process documentation are included.
7-8	Well-designed interactivity with minor issues; immersive environments, but some refinement needed. All tools are well-integrated but not fully optimized for interaction or content generation.	The story or concept is clear, with interactive technology enhancing user engagement. Some elements feel more functional than deeply engaging.	Project shows creative and engaging use of interactive, though more conventional.	Project shows good understanding of media literacy and ethics in interactive tools. Most assets (including technology tools such as AI) and processes are cited and documented.
5-6	Adequate interactivity, but noticeable issues in responsiveness or immersion. Environments or models feel basic. All tools are present but underutilized, with integration issues or limited enhancement of the user experience.	The concept is clear, but the use of interactive technology feels conventional or adds little to the storytelling or problem-solving.	Project shows creative effort, but follows familiar patterns or conventional uses of interactive.	Project shows basic understanding of media literacy and ethical use in interactive tools. Some missing or incomplete citations and processing documentation.
3-4	Significant issues with interactivity, immersion, or design. Environments are poorly constructed. Tools are minimally used and do not significantly contribute to the project.	The story or concept is unclear, and the project fails to engage the user. The use of interactive technology feels disconnected from the content.	Project shows little creativity or innovation.	Project shows limited understanding of media literacy and ethical use of interactive tools. Few citations or other documentation present.
1-2	Poor or non-functional interactivity, clunky design, and environments with no sense of immersion. Tools are poorly integrated or misused.	No clear concept or story. The project feels unfinished, and the technology adds little to the user experience.	Project shows no creativity or originality. The project feels rushed, with little meaningful use of interactive technologies.	Project shows no understanding of media literacy or ethical considerations in using interactive tools. No citations or other documentation present.