

Sample Portfolio Assignment
ENWR 106: College Writing II
Instructor: Emily Isaacs

Due Date: On the day of your final exam. [If your exam day falls on one of the last few days during exam week, and you need more time to complete grading, you can move the due date up a few days. However, the final due date must not occur before the beginning of exam week.]

What Is the Portfolio?

A portfolio is a collection of a writer's work from a given period of time. This collection will consist of three of the essays you have written this semester and a short final essay, "Me as a Writer." [For CWII, substitute, "Me as a Reader."] This portfolio will reflect your very best work, and to achieve that aim, you will need to revise your essays from the comments I have made, reviewer comments, and from your own careful re-reading of your essays. Finally, you need to grammatically correct and proofread your essays. This is your final chance to let me see how hard you have worked, and also how strong your writing is. This is 20% of your grade.

1. The Essays

Review and revise all of your essays, using the comments that your peers and I have written, and also your own insights as you re-read your essays. These revised essays are the most important part of your portfolio. With perhaps one or two exceptions, you ought to add substantially to each of your four essays. Successful essays will include several new paragraphs as well as some significant cutting of old materials. When I evaluate your work I am looking to see that you have conquered the big challenges of college writing: focus, development, analysis, organization, clarity of prose and editing.

Here is an occasion when I will not overlook errors; you have time to fix errors and make your prose both clear and grammatically correct. Therefore, failure to cleanup grammatical and proofreading errors will deeply lower your grade. It is my responsibility to make sure that students who have taken College Writing I [or II] are prepared for the expectations of the academic community. Those expectations include grammatical and proofreading competence.

With each essay you must include a paragraph explaining the changes you've made to your essay. Describe what you've done to improve your essay, using the established criteria (focus, development, etc.). Make sure you include two versions of your essay: the old one and the new one. It might also be useful to put new sections in bold. That way we can really see where you have revised.

Here is an example:

In essay four I wrote an entirely new introduction, removed the second example, and greatly expanded the second example. I also worked on the introduction to the quotes. Finally, I worked really hard to remove ALL my previous typos and to get rid of the fragments and run-ons.

2. Final Essay, "Me as a Writer."

This essay is a short essay of one to two page length. Consider the following:

Who are you as a writer?

What are your strengths and weaknesses?

What characterizes your writing?

What do you like best about your writing?

What is the point of writing?

How has your writing changed over the semester? How has it not changed? Or, take a longer view: how has your writing changed, or not changed, over your many years of schooling? In this essay you don't have to like your writing or think your writing has improved. You do have to write an analysis of yourself as a writer, for that is what you are, for who else but a writer would write six essays in just four months?

For this essay, show me the skills you have used. Do not attempt to answer all those questions I've asked as then you will have an unfocused essay. Rather, choose your own way to focus your essay, and develop it with examples and evidence, as you have learned to do this semester.

And, if there was ever an assignment designed to help you to think, to analyze, this is it.

3. Presentation

Put your portfolio together neatly. Don't spend a lot of money on presentation folders, but do put it together in an organized and clear manner. In the past, many students have put together their portfolios carefully, with title pages, page numbers, etc. You decide how you want to package the result of a semester full of work.

Reminder: Your portfolio represents your very best work. This work will therefore need to be carefully re-read and re-read again. I expect no proofreading or other careless errors. When you work hard on something it will show, and I want to see that in this last piece of work you do for this class.

Assessment

Your final portfolio grade will be weighted as follows:

3/4 on the writing quality of the portfolio-revised essays. In this analysis I will use the same criteria I have used all semesters, but the stakes will be higher: I now view you as graduates of Introduction to Writing [or College Writing I/II], and so the standards for an A, B, C, etcetera, are higher. You are not in the first-week of the semester, but at the end of a full semester of instruction, and your writing should reflect that improvement. Your portfolio writing and the grade that it receives should accurately reflect your academic writing abilities.

1/4 on improvement. I will essay the improvement I see from the previous "final" drafts, to the revised drafts presented before. Even students who are earning very high grades at this point in the semester need to show me they can continue to improve their writing.