

English 491

ENGL 491, Scott Wible, Fall 2007

English 491A: Professional Field Experience: Capstone Fall 2007

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ENGL 491A: Professional Field Experience: Capstone is the capstone experience option for the Professional Writing and Editing (PWE) concentration and minor. The intent of the English capstone experience is to provide you with a venue in which you can apply the skills and the knowledge that you have acquired during your training as PWE majors and minors. The experience is intended as both a culmination of your undergraduate work and as preparation for further work in academic and non-academic environments.

Required Text:

Reynolds, Nedra, and Rich Rice. *Portfolio Keeping: A Guide for Students*. 2nd ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007. ISBN: 0-312-41909-0.

Requirements:

1. Complete 140 hours of internship work.
2. Compose Weekly Reflective Writing for fifteen minutes each week.
3. Attend four scheduled meetings with ENGL 491A advisor and fellow interns.
4. Present a poster at end-of-semester PWE Exhibition.
5. Produce final portfolio of internship materials.

Requirement #1: Complete 140 hours of internship work

You need to work a minimum of 140 hours over the course of the semester. The schedule is flexible; for example, you could work 10 hours per week for the span of 14 weeks or 20 hours per week for 7 weeks. What must be consistent, however, is your carrying out your internship work in a professional manner. As a PWE intern, you are responsible for:

- Informing the internship sponsor of the criteria for ENGL 491A;
- Arriving at the internship at the designated time and location, prepared for work;

- Contacting your supervisor in advance regarding any absence and completing the duties of the absent period at a time convenient to both your sponsor and you;
- Executing assigned tasks to the best of your ability; and
- Seeking help from your supervisor should you have any questions regarding an assigned task.

Of course, the PWE internship has been designed for the benefit not only of the internship sponsor but also for you. Toward these ends, your internship sponsor is responsible for the following activities:

- Assigning work that is relevant and useful to both the sponsoring organization and to your professional development;
- Assigning work requiring skills developed in your PWE major or minor (e.g. writing, editing, research, etc.);
- Training and guiding you through your designated tasks (and/or assigning a mentor to you); and
- Serving as a resource regarding career information and other aspects of professional development.

Your internship sponsor also will file formal evaluations of your professionalism and work ethic during the mid-semester and finals period. I will use these evaluations as I assess your work for the entire ENGL 491A capstone course.

Requirement #2: Compose Weekly Reflective Writing

As Nedra Reynolds and Rich Rice explain, reflective portfolio assignments ask you "to keep watch over your own work and your own learning, and to pay close attention to your strengths and weaknesses, including your preferences as well as your best and most limited practices for effective writing." The Weekly Reflective Writing component of English 491A gives you space for keeping watch over your development as a professional writer throughout the course of your internship.

At some point during each week, spend 15 minutes writing about what you are learning about professional writing as well as how you are learning it. You might use this weekly writing activity to think through problems that you are trying to resolve in a particular project; to explore your

deepening understanding of how writing functions both internally and externally for professional organizations; or to describe and analyze more generally what you are learning, how you're learning, or what is and what isn't making sense to you.

By 9 p.m. Sunday of each week, post your Weekly Reflective Writing (*approximately 300 words*, or about the length of these three paragraphs) to the class message board on our eCampus course page <https://ecampus.wvu.edu/>.

Then, by 9 p.m. Monday, respond to at least one message posted by a fellow intern. Your response could offer advice about how to work through a situation, describe similar problems you're experiencing, connect a particular internship problem or learning opportunity to your other PWE coursework, or provide some other sort of insight on your colleague's reflective piece.

I will read through and comment on your reflections in order to keep track of your progress throughout the internship, to give you feedback on problems you're trying to work through, and to give you advice as you begin to put together your final portfolio.

Requirement #3: Attend four meetings with ENGL 491A advisor and fellow interns

We will meet in small groups (3 or 4 interns per group) throughout the semester. The purpose of these meetings will be to help me keep track of your progress; to give you an opportunity to share your successes and to ask questions about problems or concerns you may be facing; to learn from your peers about how they are handling their professional writing internships; and to ensure that you make steady progress on your final portfolio and poster presentation.

We will meet during the following weeks during the course of the semester:

1. Week of September 10
2. Week of October 8
3. Week of November 5
4. Week of November 26

Allow 45 minutes in your schedule for each meeting. In order to accommodate everyone's schedule, I will arrange the specific days and times for these meetings as your schedules become clear over the course of the first few weeks. To help focus our discussions about portfolio keeping and presentation, come to each meeting with the following writing prepared from the "Taking Stock" exercises in *Portfolio Keeping*:

Meeting #1: Establishing Expectations (p. 7)

Meeting #2: What is Reflective Learning? (p. 19) and Composing Your Own Postwrite (p. 22)

Meeting #3: Determining Your Program's Values (p. 34)

Meeting #4: Reviewing Your Working Folder (p. 39) and Revisiting Your Expectations (p. 48)

You will want to keep these writings on a computer file with all of your portfolio materials, but bring a hard-copy printout to submit to me for the respective meetings.

Requirement #4: Present a poster at end-of-semester PWE Exhibition

West Virginia University requires that the capstone courses include a public presentation component (See <http://www.wvu.edu/~facultys/1200SA4.htm>). Toward these ends, you will produce a poster as part of a collective exhibit entitled "Professional Writing and Editing on Campus and in the Community." (The date of this exhibit is still to be determined, but it will be held during the final week of classes.) Your presentations, taken together, will help to educate WVU students and teachers as well as the public about the field of professional writing. Collectively, your poster presentations will help WVU and Morgantown community members to better understand answers to these types of questions:

- What kinds of organizations do professional writers work for?
- What types of positions do professional writers occupy?
- What sorts of roles do professional writers fill in these organizations?
- What genres of writing do professional writers do?
- What kinds of skills do professional writers use?

More generally, this poster presentation exhibit will heighten audience members' awareness and deepen their understanding of the cultures of professional writing at West Virginia University and in Morgantown.

Specifically, your poster should present two or three materials that best represent your internship experience. You should accompany each of these documents with a context analysis that indicates the audience, purpose, genre conventions, and other circumstances or constraints for each of these materials, and discusses how you negotiated this context. Since the poster is a highly visual medium, and since the physical spaces in which people write often shapes their work in significant ways, I also encourage you to incorporate photographs of your workspaces

into your presentations and your reflections. Finally, to fulfill the objectives of the capstone course, you should incorporate a reflective component through which you reflect on how all of these materials speak to your academic and professional development.

We will use our regular meetings to discuss the poster presentation in more detail, but here are some websites that you can explore to learn more about effective strategies for designing and constructing your poster:

- Writing Department at Colorado State University, "Writing Guides: Poster Sessions," <http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/speaking/poster/>
- Jeff Radel, "Designing Effective Posters," http://www.kumc.edu/SAH/OTEd/jradel/Poster_Presentations/PstrStart.html
- George Hess, Kathryn Tosney, and Leon Liegel, "Creating Effective Poster Presentations," <http://www.ncsu.edu/project/posters/NewSite/index.html>

Basic Components of a PWE Poster Exhibit

1. *Title:* The title of your poster should draw your audience's attention to the aspect(s) of your internship experience that you want to highlight in your exhibit. Do you want to focus on the genres that you wrote? The type of organization in which you worked? The rhetorical purposes of the documents that you wrote for the organization?
2. Brief *description of the organization* where you interned.
3. Brief *description of your internship experience*. You could address these types of issues:
 - * the variety of tasks that you did, both writing and non-writing;
 - * the amount of material that you produced;
 - * the kinds of materials that you produced; and
 - * the process through which you produced these materials (e.g., what kinds of research you did and where you did research, who you worked with, who gave you feedback, how many drafts you produced of most documents, how long you worked on most projects).
4. *2-3 professional writing documents* that illustrate your internship experience.
5. Your *analysis* of each document.

6. Visuals: You could incorporate your organization's logo into your poster presentation. Or, if you have some interesting analysis to provide of your workspace and what it signals about the role of the professional writer within that space or the role of writing within the organizations, you might consider adding a photograph of that space.

Presenting and Analyzing Your PWE Documents

You certainly can use the poster to describe and analyze your internship experience in any way that you find to be most effective and most appropriate. I'm envisioning your posters, though, to showcase two or three documents that best represent the work that you've done this semester, the kind of work done at the organization where you worked, and/or the kind of work done by people in the position you held. Accompanying each document, provide explanation and analysis that describes it in these kinds of ways:

- Genre of the document
- Audience for the document
- Purpose of the document
- Key rhetorical features of the genre, and
- Key rhetorical decisions (textual and/or design) you made in creating the document.

Your analysis of the document also should try to address the question, "What purpose does this document serve the organization?" or, put another way, "What does this document enable the organization to do?"

The ways in which you address these latter questions in particular will help to contribute to our larger goal of educating the campus and local communities about the work of professional writers. Many people know that professional writers write documents, but they do not necessarily know all of the various ways in which these documents serve not only an organization's clients and partners but also the organization's internal workings, as well. So, when thinking about the documents you're exhibiting, consider the multiple purposes that any one document might serve. The purposes of a document could be external. For example, a technical description that accompanies a product could aim both to educate the consumer about the safe and effective use of that product and it could also aim to create a positive impression of the company itself as being thorough, attentive to details, and consumer-oriented. The purposes of the document also could be internal to the organization itself. For example, a policy manual could help an

organization to run more efficiently as it helps new members of the organization (particularly in an organization with high employee turnover rates) to learn their specific job responsibilities as well as to understand their work in relation to that of other employees or volunteers.

Format for the Posters

The size of your posters should be about 3.75 feet wide by 4 feet high. You don't necessarily need to use all the space provided. Just make sure you provide all the necessary materials and information, and ensure that your poster is legible from a distance of 4-6 feet. Also, your poster should be complete enough so that anyone can read the poster and understand your analysis of your documents and your internship experience.

Requirement #5: Produce final portfolio of internship materials

By the end of the semester, you will have continually recorded and reflected on the strategies that you have used to work through writing and research projects in your internship position. Your tasks as a portfolio keeper have included tending to your developing ideas about individual writing projects in particular and professional writing more generally; keeping watch over your learning patterns; and, quite possibly, collaborating with colleagues at your internship. Now, your responsibility shifts to putting together and polishing a final product. The final portfolio marks the culmination of your efforts in the capstone course, as you display to me your ability to be a reflective professional writer and to analyze and respond to rhetorical situations effectively.

At the beginning of finals week, then, you will submit a portfolio—revised, edited and polished to presentation quality—and I will evaluate the argument it makes about your ability to make rhetorically informed choices. In effect, the purpose of your final portfolio is to convince me, your evaluator, that your portfolio represents your best work as a professional writing intern, that you have become a reflective learner, and that you have developed writing abilities that match the high evaluative standards set for WVU's Professional Writing & Editing program.

The only firm guideline for the contents of your final portfolio is that it include twenty pages of finished, polished writing. You are free to include any additional pages of finished or unfinished writing—from brainstorming and rough design sketches to drafts and email correspondence—that help you to make a specific claim about your abilities, your development, or your identity as a professional writer.

In addition to examples of the professional writing that you did through your internship, you will also compose a reflective essay that pulls together the various documents in your portfolio and explicates what these documents illustrate about your academic and professional development.

This essay will explain the analysis that guided your decision-making about what to include in your portfolio. You will use these 20 pages of finished writing, as well as any additional pages of writing, as evidence to support the claim that you want to make about yourself as a writer. For example, you might discuss how the extensive revisions you made to a brochure illustrate your greater sensitivity to an audience's informational needs. Or, you might explain how the email correspondence with your colleagues shows you working through the difficulties of blending different writing styles. So, after you have selected your materials and built a cohesive argument, you will explain to me what cohesive argument they make and how they do so. Your goal with this essay is to show me what you have learned about the qualities of good professional writing, anticipating readers' needs, and the importance of careful presentation.

Here, then, is a list of the materials that should appear in your final portfolio as evidence of your internship work for the PWE capstone:

- A *table of contents* listing all the items in the portfolio.
- A *brief description* of the internship.
- The *reflective essay/statements* locating the work done for the internship within your academic and professional development.
- At least *20 pages of representative materials* that you have produced during the internship, such as memos and related business correspondence, brochures, press releases, reports, grant applications, analyses, videos, websites, and presentations.

The assessment rubric on the following page explains the criteria I will use to evaluate your portfolio. We will use our individual meetings to discuss strategies for creating and presenting your portfolio in ways that address these specific criteria.

Your final portfolio will be due to me in my office, 431 Stansbury, on Tuesday, December 11 at 12 p.m.