

# SENIOR WRITING PORTFOLIO & PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

## WRI 419, SPRING 2010

**GARY HAWKINS**

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Office Hours:

M, T, W, & Th 2:30-4:00p

& by appointment

As you come to the culmination of your creative writing major or minor at Wilson, this class will help you achieve two main outcomes:

- I. You'll gain strategies for creation of a larger writing project, including means of invention, revision, selection, and organization.
- II. You'll consider some of the choices and practices that inform the creation of a writer's life beyond college—and you'll begin to engage that practice.

### **I. PORTFOLIO:**

#### **THE TALENT OF THE ROOM, A PROJECT PLAN, & THE USE OF GENRE**

Every one of you has already been through the course of numerous workshops in multiple genres, and you may well be taking a workshop alongside this class. However, while this class will support your writing of your senior portfolio in many ways, it is not a workshop itself. You're ready for this; you're ready to begin finding your own best practice that includes both a way to get feedback and a way to trust your own (now well-informed) instincts. You're ready to cultivate what the writer Michael Ventura calls "the talent of the room."

The talent of the room, as Ventura has it, begins with the realization that "Writing is something you do alone in a room." In accomplishing your senior portfolio, you're going to spend a lot of time in that room. We'll also work through ways to support that solitary endeavor, including strategies (such as manuscript swaps) and resources (such as writing groups, editor friends, generous professors), and you will be asked to identify the process that works best for you.

No matter what your plan for your senior portfolio, I expect questions of genre both to contribute in your generation of new work and to inform your choices in revision. In fact, you might consider that the writer is usually engaged in either fulfilling genre, mixing genres, or pushing at the limits of genre. Accordingly, we'll begin the semester with a short course in the use of genre. You'll be asked to contribute in the form of your expertise and your own examples as we construct an understanding of the characteristics of three genres: poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction.

We will also take time to consider the special sub-genre of the senior portfolio introduction.

## II. PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES: THE WRITER'S LIFE

*The writer's life*—there is no simple formula by which to live it. To degrees, each of you is already in it; and to degrees each of you will configure your life after graduation to continue as a writer. And each of you will ultimately go a different way. We'll consider some of the post-graduate options (including graduate programs, careers, conferences, and colonies). And we'll talk about submitting your work—and have you submit your work.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

#### PROJECT PLANS

Whether you arrive with very little idea of what your senior portfolio will be or with a bounty of ideas from a summer of thinking about them, you need a plan to guide you in this work. A project plan is an active genre: writing yours will help you figure out what you might be doing, and revising yours will help refine your portfolio.

A project plan includes:

- What Are Your Goals?: What do you want to accomplish? Why are you writing this?
- What's in It (Genre)?: What are you including? What's to be revised? What's to be generated? What shape is each piece taking? What's the shape of the whole?
- What's your Process?: What strategies do you have for consistently working on this?

A preliminary project plan is due at our Week 2 meeting.

A revised project plan is due after Fall Break at our Week 10 meeting.

#### PROJECT PROGRESS REPORTS

Every time we meet during the first term (and informally in the second term), you'll write and bring a progress report that uses your project plan to assess how you are moving along. Of course, the work of checking-in can be active as well: it'll help you understand how you might best revise your project. It will certainly provide a way to figure out what work needs to be done and assign that to your process.

**A project progress report includes:**

- A memo to the class that talks about what you accomplished in the previous weeks and resets your goals for the next weeks.
- A sample of your recent work (notes, new drafts, revisions).

#### A SENIOR PORTFOLIO

See the attached page for full guidelines for your completed senior portfolio.

#### MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSION

While you are in school, you have many audiences within easy reach: in class, at slams, down the hall—and at your Senior Reading. And while you still have these venues, I want you to reach more broadly for other audiences, and in the process be introduced to the common writer's practice of submitting a manuscript. You will create a plan for submitting your work to print and/or online journals. By the end of the semester, you will have identified three likely venues and created a submission package, which will include a cover letter, a polished manuscript, and an SASE (for a print journals).

#### ATTENDANCE & ENGAGEMENT

With relatively few meetings and unique agenda at each session, you are expected to be present at all meetings. Often you'll be asked to prepare in some way (in addition to writing your regular Progress Report) by reading before class or locating a genre example to share with the class.

**CALENDAR (1.17.2010)**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Jan 21</b>	The Portfolio; your project; a writer's practice: a writing schedule
<b>2</b>	<b>Jan 28</b>	The Talent of the Room; Submission, part I: Journals <b>Preliminary Project Plan DUE</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Feb 11</b>	<b>Progress Reports</b> Genre: Poetry Poetry genre sample <b>DUE to me</b> by Mon 2/8. Pick up packet & read before class.
<b>6</b>	<b>Feb 25</b>	<b>Progress Reports</b> Genre: Fiction Fiction genre sample <b>DUE to me</b> by Mon 2/22. Pick up packet & read before class.
<b>8</b> <b>WED!</b>	<b>Mar 10</b> <b>WED!</b>	<b>Progress Reports</b> Genre: Nonfiction CNF genre sample <b>DUE to me</b> by Mon 3/8. Pick up packet & read before class.
<b>SB</b>	—	<b>Spring Break</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Mar 25</b>	<b>Revised Project Plan DUE</b> Submission, part II: The Cover Letter Next week's excerpts DUE.
<b>10</b>	<b>Apr 1</b>	<b>Submission Packet DUE</b> (complete except for stamps) Excerpts from (3) Next week's excerpts DUE.
<b>11</b>	<b>Apr 8</b> <b>TUE!</b>	The Portfolio Introduction Excerpts from (3) Next week's excerpts DUE.
<b>12</b>	<b>Apr</b>	Writing Time: Instructor teaching out of town
<b>13</b>	<b>Apr 22</b>	<b>5-8 page ms. for Deb Allbery</b> Excerpts from (4)
<b>14</b>	<b>Apr 29</b>	<b>Draft of Project (w/ Introduction) DUE</b> (electronic preferred) Writer-in-Residence: Deb Allbery Individual conferences during this week On Public Reading (incl. introductions for readers & publicity)
<b>15</b>	<b>May 6</b>	Your Senior Reading: 8pm Fellowship Hall
<b>16</b>	<b>May 14</b> <b>– MON!</b>	Senior Portfolio Due (with cover page and publicity waiver) in <b>both</b> hard copy & email attachment