

SENIOR WRITING PORTFOLIO & PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

WRI 419, SPRING 2011

GARY HAWKINS

ghawkins@
Jensen 204
828.771.3718

Office Hours:
M, W, & Th: 230-400p
mornings & other times 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:

DON'T JUST SIT THERE: 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. And you're ready to step into a project that's more ambitious than any you've likely undertaken so far.

In accomplishing your senior portfolio, you're going to spend a lot of time alone in your room. But as Rosellen Brown admonishes us, *don't just sit there*. You'll need all your previous experience as well as some new tricks to keep moving and work through the inevitable fallow periods. We'll work through ways to support that solitary endeavor, including strategies (such as the tips Brown offers) 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.

This work with genre will also serve as notes toward the sub-genre of the senior portfolio introduction, which asks you to consider your influences and place your work in the context of them.

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 year 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:

- **Goals:** What Are Your goals? What do you want to accomplish? Why are you writing this?
- **Preparation:** What is your preparation for this work? What courses have you taken? What have you read that models what you want to do? What have you written that serves as a starting point or model?
- **Content & Form:** What's in it? What topics? What genre? What's to be revised? What's to be generated? What shape is each piece taking? What's the shape of the whole?
- **Process:** What's your process? What strategies do you have for consistently working on this?

Your **preliminary project plan** is due at our Week 2 meeting.

Your **revised project plan** is due *right after* Spring Break at our Week 9 meeting.

—BIBLIOGRAPHIES

Your reading over the past three (and more) years has surely informed your aesthetic. This semester you'll continue your reading in a way that focuses it to support your portfolio.

Your **preliminary bibliography** is due at our Week 2 meeting.

It should include:

- Full citation (MLA style) of three to six texts (depending on length) you intend to read (or re-read) as you work on your portfolio
- An Introduction of approximately one typed page that speaks to how you think these works will serve you

Your **annotated bibliography** is due after Spring Break at our Week 10 meeting.

It should include:

- An overview/summary of the content of each text
- An indication of its genre and some of the conventions of the genre used in that text
- Some brief but specific stylistic analysis of the text.
- Some specific things you learned from the text that you can use in your work

—WEEKLY WRITING GROUPS

While the majority of a writer's work occurs alone, there is nothing like some external accountability—and camaraderie—to help you along. To this end, I'll collect you into small writing groups. **You'll meet with these groups outside of class at least once per week.** Set a schedule; exchange some work; meet to talk about it. Then, report back:

—WRITING GROUP REPORTS (& ARTIFACT)

Every time you meet as a writing group, elect someone to write the group report, which is due most every week (see calendar for specifics).

A writing group report includes:

- An account of your meeting (anything from full minutes to an anecdote)
- An artifact from the event

—INDIVIDUAL PROJECT PROGRESS REPORTS & WORK SAMPLE

On alternate weeks (see calendar based on your writing group **A-F**), 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.

An individual project progress report includes:

- A letter 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).

—INFLUENCE: NOTES TOWARD THE PORTFOLIO INTRODUCTION

Every writer is first a reader. In reading you gain instruction and inspiration for your own work. We'll spend the first few weeks of class reflecting on your individual influences and collectively considering the use of various genres—what do we expect from each? what do we learn from each?

For the week you will contribute something that has influenced you, you need to:

- Provide a copy (hard copy or electronic) of a sample of the work which you admire. If the complete thing (poem, story, novel, essay) is longer than 3 pages, please excerpt to keep it at 3 pages (this is regrettable, but I want to keep the total reading to a manageable size).
- Write ~200 words of rationale for your choice, covering:
 1. **IMPACT:** Why do you consistently return to this piece?
 2. **CRAFT:** What are some of the specific aspects of the craft in this work that make it successful?

—A SENIOR PORTFOLIO WITH INTRODUCTION

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 first term, you will have identified several 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.

A GRADING CONTRACT: OUTCOMES, EXPECTATIONS, & ASSESSMENT

The requirements fall into five areas that define the outcomes and expectations of the course:

- **Participation in a Community of Writers**
 - attendance
 - preparation and contribution to weekly class
 - weekly writing groups

- **Participation in a Wider World of Writing**
 - submission to a journal
 - individual meeting with writer-in-residence

- **Intellectual Work of Writing**
 - bibliography: preliminary and annotated
 - influence: contributions (example & rationale)

- **Writing Process**
 - preliminary and updated project plan
 - progress reports and work samples

- **Product**
 - portfolio (approx 40pp at high standard)
 - public reading

While the final product of the portfolio itself holds the greatest weight in the course, the other 4 areas are also important. My grading expects that you complete those final products, which are required to pass the course. Then, your collective performance in the other four areas is determined based on these criteria:

Solid: you have done everything expected and done it well;

Acceptable: there may be some small parts not completed or work that has been completed with subpar performance;

Insufficient: work not completed or completed poorly

Then, this contract determines your final grade:

- A** Solid in all areas (with an allowance for Acceptable performance in no more than 1 area)
- A-** Insufficient in 1 area; Solid in the rest
- B** Insufficient in 2 areas; Solid in the rest
- C** Insufficient in 3 areas; Solid in the rest

COURSE POLICIES:

ACADEMIC HONESTY & PLAGIARISM

As writers at the capstone of their college careers, I expect you all to understand and respect the significance of intellectual property. At the same time, I understand that when doing research and drawing on influences, you are intermingling the work of others with your own work. Thus, you have the obligation to clarify what's your and what is another's. And, as you know, presenting someone else's work as your own is plagiarism. Here are some additional guidelines to operate with integrity:

- **Be wary of cutting and pasting** other's text into your document; if you do, make clear—even in a draft—what the source is. Sloppiness in your process is no excuse for misrepresentation.
- **Use citations.** In a draft, this may be parenthetical notes, but include some acknowledgement of your sources. In your final portfolio, most creative writing manuscripts use Notes at the end to document sources (cited by page).
- Please **do not submit the same work for your portfolio also in other courses** without approval from both instructors.

Any plagiarism will result in an F for the course and potentially have further repercussions with the Office of Academic Affairs.

ATTENDANCE

With weekly meetings, every class day counts. Missing more than one (1) class will result in insufficient performance in **Participation in a Community of Writers**.

LATE WORK

Again, weekly meetings make your timeliness crucial. In addition, you will sometimes have deadlines that require you to turn in materials **prior to class**. Missing these deadlines interferes with the ability of the group to function. Moreover, late work will impact your performance assessment in each of the five areas.

ACCOMMODATION

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact Deborah Braden, Educational Access Coordinator (Dodge House, x3791, dbraden@warren-wilson.edu), as soon as possible to ensure that appropriate accommodations can be implemented in a timely fashion.

SENIOR WRITING PORTFOLIO MANUSCRIPT GUIDELINES

CONTENT:

The Senior Writing Portfolio is a collection of creative work that the student submits to satisfy a requirement for the creative writing Major, the writing concentration in the English major, or the creative writing minor.

The portfolio should be approximately 40 pages in length and be original creative work of exceptional quality written by the student during his or her tenure at the College.

This work should be revised and professionally-presented pieces of fiction, poetry, drama, or creative nonfiction. Typically, a student chooses a single genre around which to structure the project. A project may, however, include a variety of genres if they can be presented as a coherent whole. A project may also include critical writing, but a substantial portion of the project should be original creative work, and, again, critical work should be integrated with the creative. The Senior Portfolio is an intentional, whole manuscript rather than a collection of the student's best work presented piecemeal.

The portfolio must include a Table of Contents and an Introduction. The introduction is a separately composed essay that names the student's rationale for including the pieces that appear in the manuscript, includes a discussion of the aesthetic claimed by the manuscript, and reflects the learning the entire Senior Portfolio represents. Students who include work in more than one genre should address the rationale that dictates the decision to include these pieces.

Any exceptions to the above guidelines should be approved by the Director of the Undergraduate Writing Program, who welcomes arguments for hybrid manuscripts.

FORM & STYLE:

Formatting requirements for the senior portfolio manuscript:

- a standard cover page with a title and the name of the student submitting the project and the date it is submitted (a template for this page will be provided)
- an introduction (see above)
- a table of contents giving the title and beginning page number of each piece in the manuscript
- pagination should begin with the title page and run consecutively through all sections.
- all pages numbered following MLA style
- 10 or 12 point type in a conventional type face
- all prose: double-spaced; poetry: single-spaced
- untitled work should include the first several words of the first line as the title
- critical work should use conventional MLA citation format
- researched nonfiction, fiction, or poetry should cite sources in endnotes
- all other notes should appear as endnotes

DEADLINES (SEE WRI 419 SYLLABUS FOR SPECIFIC DATES):

A preliminary draft of the manuscript should be submitted no later than 14 days before the student's anticipated graduation date.

The final manuscript must be submitted in 2 forms at least 5 days before the student's anticipated graduation date (or 5 days before the end of the semester in which WRI 419 is taken):

- A clean and proofread hard copy of the manuscript **with cover page and Publicity Waiver**
- An electronic copy (.doc or .pdf) emailed to the Director (ghawkins@warren-wilson.edu)

CALENDAR (rev. 1.12.2011)

Term III

Week	Date	Topic
1	Jan 20	The Portfolio: your project & your plan (a writer's practice; a writing schedule). A one-sentence abstract. Bibliographies Writing Groups Submissions: The Market
2	Jan 27	Don't Just Sit There: Writing as a Polymorphous Perverse Pleasure (Rosellen Brown) Preliminary Project Plan DUE Preliminary Bibliography DUE The Portfolio Introduction: Influence Group Assignments: begin meeting weekly with your writing group
3	Feb 1 MON!	By email or at my office by NOON. DUE (sample + rationale) from (5)
	Feb 3	No Class: Instructor out of town at conference
4	Feb 10 A, B, C	Group Reports from everyone (w/ artifact) Individual Progress Reports from groups A, B, C Influence, Pt. I Pick up packet & read before class. DUE (sample + rationale) from (5)
5	Feb 17 D, E, F	Group Reports from everyone (w/ artifact) Individual Progress Reports from groups D, E, F Submissions: Check-in. DUE: title & description of 1 journal you're looking at Influence, Pt. II Pick up packet & read before class. DUE (sample + rationale) from (5)
6	Feb 24 A, B, C	Group Reports from everyone (w/ artifact) Individual Progress Reports from groups A, B, C Submissions: The Cover Letter Influence, Pt. III Pick up packet & read before class.
7	Mar 3 D, E, F	Group Reports from everyone (w/ artifact) Individual Progress Reports from groups D, E, F DUE: Submission Packet (complete except for envelopes & stamps) Planning for workshop after break (excerpts from your portfolio drafts)
8	Mar 10	No Class: Writing time
SB	—	Spring Break

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Term IV

9	Mar 24	<p>Revised Project Plan DUE Re-assessing Weekly Writing Groups On Graduate School Next week's excerpts DUE. (5 pages for workshop; >5pp for me if you want + Individual Progress Report)</p>
10	Mar 31	<p>Annotated Bibliography DUE Optional Group Reports (w/ artifact) Workshop: Excerpts from (4) Week after next excerpts DUE. (5 pages for workshop; >5pp for me if you want + Individual Progress Report)</p>
11	Apr 7	<p>Optional Group Reports (w/ artifact) Writer-in-Residence: Dominic Smith (possible reading assignment) Possible small group workshops with Smith during this week</p>
12	Apr 14	<p>The Portfolio Introduction: Further Strategies Workshop: Excerpts from (4) Next week's excerpts DUE. (5 pages for workshop; >5pp for me if you want + Individual Progress Report)</p>
13	Apr 21 A, B, C, D, E, F	<p>Draft of Portfolio (w/ Introduction) DUE (electronic preferred) Workshop: Excerpts from (4) Next week's excerpts DUE. (5 pages for workshop; >5pp for me if you want + Individual Progress Report) Publicity for Senior Reading</p>
14	Apr 26 TUES!	<p>Workshop: Excerpts from (3) On Public Reading</p>
15	May 2 &/or 3	<p>Your Senior Reading: 7:30pm Fellowship Hall</p>
	May 5	<p>Optional Class: Time to pause, check-in, & get fuel for completion!</p>
	May 6 – FRI! 5:55pm	<p>Senior Portfolio Due (with cover page and publicity waiver) in both ceremonial hard copy & email attachment</p>