

# Department of English and Writing Studies

WRITING 4998G/650 – Distance Studies  
**RE-VISIONING SELF: CREATING YOUR PROFESSIONAL PORTFOLIO**  
Winter 2021

**Instructor:** Brock Eayrs

**Consultation:** No in-person office hours this term. Contact me by Western mail (beayrs@uwo.ca) or on Owl/Sakai mail (preferred). I will typically respond within 24 to 36 hours.

**Required Text:** Smith, Herb and Kim Haines-Korn. *Portfolios for Technical and Professional Communicators*. New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007.

## Course Objectives and Description

In this course you will create a ‘**Professional Writing Portfolio**,’ which will include both revised and polished versions of work you have previously done in Writing and other courses, and at least one piece of new work written specifically during and for this course. We will spend considerable time on the principles of good writing generally, and of revision in particular, and you will apply these principles to your work.

Your aim is to create a Portfolio which, suitably modified to target specific audiences, will effectively represent, and potentially ‘market’, your abilities as a writer.

## Attendance/Participation

Obviously, we do not meet formally as a ‘class’ in a Distance Studies course. Therefore, ‘attendance’ and participation on the Discussion Forum are intertwined. While Distance Studies classes are generally asynchronous, they are not correspondence or self-paced. You must attend class (defined as logging into our Sakai course section) and participate by introducing yourself, and posting questions and thoughts during the first week, and by posting (by participating in a given week’s set discussion topic) **on at least three separate days** in subsequent weeks. This means at least three separate posts per week (a week is defined as running from Monday to Sunday) during weeks that have ‘graded discussion’, **at least one of which must be a reply/response to another student and at least one of which must be a ‘new’ post.**

Postings on the Discussion Forum must have the following characteristics:

- Must contribute something meaningful to the Board;

- Must support your opinion with sufficient reasons or evidence;
- Must display good grammar and organization.

Postings should not:

- Contain disrespectful, insulting, or offensive language;
- Be excessively long or excessively short;
- Be unrelated to the week's topic;
- Say things that do not contribute anything, e.g. "I agree with you" or "nice comment".

**Note** that 'attendance' as defined in this section is mandatory in this course. Failure to meet the minimum posting requirements for **any week in which there is graded Discussion** may result in your final grade in this course being reduced by 2.5%, cumulative to a maximum reduction of 10%.

## Evaluation

**NOTE: In this course all assignments will be in, and submitted in, electronic format. 'Working' documents (i.e. everything below other than your final, complete Portfolio) must be in Word (either .doc or .docx extension), to allow comments/editing etc. Pdfs, zipped/compressed files, other formats are not acceptable. Submission links will be provided. Your final complete Portfolio may be in any accessible electronic format (Word, pdf, web-based) you choose.**

Your final grade in Writing 4998F/G will be arrived at as follows.

**Assignment 1 – New Material: 30%** of your final grade will be based on an evaluation of a new essay (or equivalent project), approximately 2000 words, that you will write during the term and submit (final version) as part of your Portfolio.

This portion of your grade will be allocated as follows:

**New Work -- Proposal:** write a brief (around 500 words) proposal in which you propose the general subject, specific topic, and thesis/plan of research (if applicable) for your new project. **(5%)**

**New Work -- Interim Draft:** write a provisional but complete draft of your new project. You'll discuss (see Forums) each others' drafts during Week 7 **\*Peer reviewed. (10%)**

**New Work --Final:** submit the final version of your project in your Portfolio, at the end of term. The project will be graded both on its own merits **(15%)**, and as part of the PWP evaluation (see above).

**Assignment 2** – Revised piece of Discursive/Expository Prose (e.g. academic essay): select one of your academic essays, or some other piece of discursive (i.e. expository, not ‘creative writing’) writing, and revise/improve it for inclusion in your final Portfolio (this exercise will incorporate *\*peer review – a comparative analysis of the original and revised versions*): **15%** (grade will be based on the piece as included in your final Portfolio).

**Assignment 3** – The Writing Portfolio: **55%** of your final grade will be based on an evaluation of this set of materials. That evaluation will take into account the overall effectiveness of the portfolio (given its intended purpose), the design and presentation of the portfolio, and improvements made to specific items of content throughout the term as a result of revision. Your provisional complete portfolio will be *\*peer reviewed*.

(\**Peer Review*: Participation in peer review [as instructed] in each assignment for which a ‘peer review’ component is specified is mandatory. Students who do not submit a complete draft for peer review as scheduled and participate in peer review may lose 10% from the earned grade for that assignment or assignment component. ‘**Completeness**’ here means that the draft you submit is ‘complete’ enough to allow meaningful comment by other students. By participating in peer review you gain other readers’ comments and have an opportunity to offer comments [‘criticism’, in the best sense of that term] to others.)

### **Class Schedule**

(Note: a ‘week’ in this course runs Monday to Sunday, unless otherwise noted on the Schedule)

**Unit/Week 1:** General Introduction; Creating a ‘Working Portfolio’  
(Jan. 11-17)

*Begin to collect a broad selection of your writing and other artefacts.*

#### **For Week 2:**

*Read Chapters 1 and 2 of the Portfolio text, and take a look at some of the sample student portfolios on the ‘Student Portfolio’ page. Review a few of them, making brief notes on type, design, and content. These notes will be the basis for your **Week Two Discussion Topic contributions.***

**Unit/Week 2:** Introduction to the ‘Professional Writing Portfolio’; Creating Portfolio Identity  
(Jan. 18-24)  
(Portfolio text Chapters 1 and 2)

#### **For Week 3:**

***Week 3 Discussion Topic assignment:*** Do Assignment 1 on page 29 of the Portfolio text (Skills Inventory), creating one or two paragraphs about your skills; these notes will be the basis for your Week 3 Discussion contributions. Note that the Assignments themselves are not formal, nor are they graded (other than in relation to your participation in this Discussion).

*Read Chapter 3 in the Portfolio text*

Unit/Week 3:  
(Jan. 25-31) Portfolio Contents, Design, and Structure  
(Portfolio text Chapter 3)

**Proposal for 'New Work' (5% of final grade) due midnight Friday**

*Read Chapters 4 and 5 in the Portfolio text*

Unit/Week 4:  
(Feb. 1-7) The Electronic Portfolio  
(Portfolio text Chapter 5)

**For Week 5:**

*Using Assignments 1 and 2 (Portfolios, pages 48-49) as a guide, post up your (still preliminary!) thoughts on the design, and (especially) the theme/metaphor for your portfolio, and a (provisional) table of contents (***Week 5 Discussion Topic assignment***).*

Unit/Week 5:  
(Feb. 8-12) Revising for Portfolio Quality  
(Portfolio text Chapter 4)

*Read Chapter 6 in the Portfolio text*

**Saturday February 13<sup>th</sup> to Sunday February 21<sup>st</sup>: Reading Week**

Unit/Week 6:  
(Feb. 22-28) Legal and Ethical Issues Affecting Portfolios  
(Portfolio text Chapter 6)

**INTERIM DRAFT (10% of final grade) OF 'NEW WORK' DUE midnight Friday**

**For Week 7:**

*Read Chapter 7 in the Portfolio text*

Unit/Week 7:  
(Mar. 1-7)

Getting Feedback: Responding to and Revising Portfolios  
(Portfolio text Chapter 7)

\*Peer-review of [Interim Draft New Work](#) (see Messages and Forums for information)

**For Week 8:**

***Week 8 Discussion Topic assignment: Do Assignment 1 on page 79 of the Portfolio Text: Design Considerations and Contextualization for Discussion in Week 8.***

Unit/Week 8:  
(Mar. 8-14)

**DISCURSIVE/EXPOSITORY PROSE REVISION (15% of final grade) DUE midnight Friday**

**For Units/Weeks 9/10:**

***(Weeks 9 and 10 Discussion) Post up your thoughts (and respond to those of others) on the question of the "main audience" (or audiences) for your Portfolio: i) who are you imagining will be reading/viewing your Portfolio, and ii) how is that definition of 'audience' influencing the appearance, structure, and contents?***

Unit/Week 9:  
(Mar. 15-21)

\*Peer Review of [revised Discursive/Expository Prose piece](#)  
(see Messages and Forums for information)

Work on portfolios

**For Week 10:**

***Work on Portfolio***

Unit/Week 10:  
(Mar. 22-28)

Work on portfolios

**For Week 11:**

***Prepare to submit Provisional Complete Portfolio***

Unit/Week 11:  
(Mar. 29-April 4)

Work on portfolios

**PROVISIONAL COMPLETE PORTFOLIO DUE midnight Friday**

Unit/Week 12:  
(April 5 to 12)

\*Peer Review of [Provisional Complete Portfolio](#) Monday April 5 to Monday April 12 (last day of classes).

Work on Final Portfolio revisions

**Final Portfolio: [deadline](#) for submission is [11:55 p.m. on Monday April 19<sup>th</sup>](#). 'Final submission' procedure will be communicated through Owl mail.**

### *Course Policies*

#### **Academic Consideration and Accommodation Policies**

**Note:** the official Western [Accommodation Policy](#) appears below. This is in effect, but may be modified temporarily by the university during the academic year as conditions change.

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

(Note: if you are registered with Accessible Education, please note [see above under [Assignments and Grades](#)] that you will not need extra time for the three tests to be written throughout the term in this course, nor for the final exam. You will have a three-day window in which to write each test, each of which is designed to take 50 minutes to complete, and you will receive the final exam 48 hours before the beginning of the Registrar's official time slot/date for it.

#### **Academic Consideration for Student Absence**

Students will have up to two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the term, provided the following conditions are met: the absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student's final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors by email within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence. Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- for exams scheduled by the Office of the Registrar (e.g., December and April exams)
- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours,
- assessments worth more than 30% of the student's final grade,

- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are *not* met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate if the absence is medical, or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. Students are encouraged to contact their Faculty academic counselling office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's Home Faculty.

For Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see [Policy on Academic Consideration for Student Absences - Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#) and for the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see: [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf)

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: (<https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

### **Religious Accommodation**

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing (email), prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#).

### **Scholastic Offences**

"Scholastic Offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf>."

"Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage of text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence."

"All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the

detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).”

**Prerequisites**

The University Senate requires the following statement to appear on course outlines:

“Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.”

The prerequisite for registration in this course is successful completion of at least two (2) half-courses in Writing at the 2200-level or above, or Special Permission of the department.