

Department of English and Writing Studies

WRITING 4998G/650 – Distance Studies
RE-VISIONING SELF: CREATING YOUR PROFESSIONAL PORTFOLIO
Winter 2026

Required Text: **There are no required textbooks for this course.**

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.

Access to Brightspace

This course is fully online, therefore access to and familiarity with Owl (Brightspace) is essential. Further: students are responsible for checking the course OWL site (<https://westernu.brightspace.com/>) regularly for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class. If you need assistance with the course OWL site, you can seek support on the OWL Brightspace Help page. Alternatively, you can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk. They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

Evaluation

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

New Material: **30%** of your final grade will be based on an evaluation of a single new essay (or equivalent project, e.g. a creative writing piece), approximately 2000 words or equivalent that you will write during the term and submit (final draft) as part of your Portfolio.

This portion of your grade is allocated across three different pieces of work as follows:

Assignment 1

Proposal for your New Work project: 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%)**

Assignment 2

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

Assignment 3

Final Draft of New Work project: 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 and as part of the final version of your Portfolio. **(15%)**

The remaining **70%** of your grade is allocated as follows:

Assignment 4

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: **15%** (grade will be based on the piece as included in your final Portfolio).

Assignment 5

The Writing Portfolio itself: **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 [procedure t.b.a.] of Assignments 2 and 5 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.

*'Complete' 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.)

Assignment Format

Assignments 1, 2, 3, and 4 must be typed, double-spaced, and submitted online (see 'Submitting Assignments' below) as Word files. All assignments must have your name, course name, section number and instructor's name on the first page. When using sources in a paper, you will be expected to follow MLA, CMS, or APA standards for documentation

Submitting Assignments

Assignments 1, 2, 3 and 4 are due on the dates specified on the syllabus Schedule. In the absence of formal academic consideration, **late papers for these Assignments** will be penalized at 2.5% per day unless I have permitted an informal short extension of the due date. You must contact me ahead of the due date for an extension and provide a reason for the request acceptable to me. If you do so, please keep in mind that absent formal academic consideration any extension for **Assignment 2** will necessarily be brief, given that it has an associated peer review component. The same holds for the Provisional version of your complete Final Portfolio (**Assignment 5**). The Final version of your complete portfolio is due on the last day of classes. That date is a university deadline and will be extended only with formal academic consideration. Important: you are responsible for keeping an electronic copy of all assignments you submit. See also 'Academic Consideration and Accommodation' below, following the 'Schedule'.

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 on the 'Assignments' tab.

Your Final complete Portfolio (Assignment 5) may be in any accessible electronic format (Word, pdf, web-based) you choose.

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 Owl Brightspace 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) **at least two times in subsequent weeks**. This means at least two separate posts per week (a week is defined as running from Monday to Sunday) during weeks that have required Discussion; **one of which must be a reply/response to another student and one must be a 'new' post starting a new conversation.**

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%.

Prerequisites

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.

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/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.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 (see Scholastic Offence Policy as above).

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>.

AI Policy

In this course, the use of AI (such as automatic translation tools, grammar checkers, ChatGPT...) is prohibited, unless there has been discussion with and agreement by the instructor before beginning an assignment. If AI use is suspected, the instructor will ask for research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and/or other materials used in preparing assignments. Students are expected to retain these materials until after final grades have been entered. In the unlikely event of concerns being raised about the authenticity of any assignment, students may be asked to produce these materials; an inability to do so may weigh heavily against them.

Intellectual Property and Copyright

All instructor-written materials (e.g. PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students' personal use within the course, and remain the instructor's intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses, without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

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. 5 – 11)

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

*Read the Units 1 and 2 lecture notes 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. You can use the 'Portfolios Review' document (found on the 'Provisional Complete Portfolios' Owl tab) as a guide. These notes will be the basis for your **Week Two Discussion Topic contributions**.*

Unit/Week 2
(Jan. 12 -- 18) **(Introduction to the 'Professional Writing Portfolio'; Creating a Portfolio Identity**

For the Week 3 Discussion Topic assignment: after reading through section II of this Week 2's notes, create one or two paragraphs about your skills and how you might use those skills to establish an 'identity' in your portfolio – a 'face' that you can present to an audience (a public); these notes will be the basis for your Week 3 Discussion contributions.

Unit/Week 3:
(Jan. 19 -- 25)

Portfolio Contents, Design, and Structure

Style: 'Correctness' and Rules/Conventions

Assignment 1 (5% of final grade) due 11:59 p.m. Sunday Jan. 25

Unit/Week 4:
(Jan. 26 – Feb. 1)

Web-based or 'Document' Portfolio?

Style: Cohesion and Coherence

For the Week 5 Discussion Topic assignment: thinking back to the end of Part I of Unit 3's lecture notes, post up your (still preliminary!) thoughts on the design, and (especially) the theme/metaphor for your portfolio, and a (very provisional!) table of contents.

Unit/Week 5:
(Feb. 2 – 8)

Revising for Portfolio Quality

Style: Writing Clearly – Sentence-level Problems

Unit/Week 6:
(*Feb. 9 – 13)

Legal and Ethical Issues Affecting Portfolios

Style: Common Causes of Unclear And/Or 'Awkward' Sentences

Assignment 2 (10%) due 5:00 p.m. Friday Feb. 13th

Reading Week: Feb. 14 – Feb. 22

Unit/Week 7:
(Feb. 23 – March 1)

Getting Feedback: Reviewing documents; Responding to and Revising Portfolios

Style: Common Sentence Structure Issues

***Peer-review of Assignment 2**

For the Week 8 Discussion Topic assignment: think back to your thoughts and discussion in the Week 5 Discussion Topic and relate them to the overall design of your draft Portfolio, which should now be starting to take shape. Post up your thoughts on

your portfolio's intended theme/metaphor in answer to this question: how are you planning to ensure that your theme is clearly in evidence throughout and acts as both a unifying device in your portfolio and an explanatory device for your intended reader(s)?

Unit/Week 8:
(March 2 – 8)

Style: Sentence Boundary Issues
Work on draft Portfolio

For the Weeks 9 and 10 Discussion Topic: 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?

Submit initial version of Assignment 4 (15%) due 11:59 p.m. Sunday Week 8 for the record. Remember: this Assignment **must** be included in your Final Portfolio.

Unit/Week 9:
(March 9 – 15)

Work on draft Portfolio

Unit/Week 10:
(March 16 – 22)

Work on draft Portfolio

Submit Provisional (draft) of Complete Portfolio by midnight Sunday March 22

Unit/Week 11:
(March 23 – 29)

***Peer Review of Provisional Complete Portfolio**

Unit/Week 12: **Work on Final Portfolio revisions and submit.**
(*Monday March 30 – Thursday April 2; Monday April 6 – Thursday April 9)

Final Portfolio: submission is due by 11:59 p.m. on the last day of classes – Thursday April 9. Note: this is a university deadline. Extensions are possible only with formal academic consideration. 'Final submission' procedure will be communicated during term.

Academic Consideration and Accommodation

University policy on academic considerations is described [here](#). This policy requires that all requests for academic considerations must be accompanied by a self-attestation.

Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline.

For procedures on how to submit Academic Consideration requests through the Student Absence Portal, please see the information posted on the Office of the Registrar's webpage: https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academic_considerations/index.html

All requests for Academic Consideration must be made within 48 hours after the assessment date or submission deadline.

All academic consideration requests must include supporting documentation, which may include a Student Medical Certificate. Recognizing that formal documentation may not be available in some extenuating circumstances, the policy allows students to make one Academic Consideration request **without supporting documentation** in this course.

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: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation_disabilities.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. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519-661-3030 (during class hours) or 519-433-2023 after class hours and on weekends.

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](#).

Statement on Gender-based Sexual Violence

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/studentsupport/survivorsupport/get-help.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Other Student Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>
Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>
Academic Support and Engagement <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>