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English 491

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English 491, Spring 2007, Scott Wible

English 491A: Professional Field Experience: Capstone Spring 2007

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NOTE: In email correspondence with me, begin subject line with "ENGL 491A"

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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 5 p.m. Sunday of each week, post your Weekly Reflective Writing (approximately 250-300 words, or about the length of these three paragraphs) to the class message board on our MIX course page. 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 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 January 15
2. Week of February 12
3. Week of March 12
4. Week of April 9

Allow 30 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>

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.

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