

English 5430: Professional Writing Capstone Spring 2006 | M 1:30–4pm | RWST 101 (lab)

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Course Goals

This capstone course focuses on developing your identity as a professional writer in the workplace. Since you will have almost completed your coursework before taking the capstone, the course is designed to prepare you to enter the workplace. We will discuss the job search process, and you will create cover letters, résumés, and a portfolio. You'll also learn interview strategies and participate in an interview. In addition, we will consider how the organization you join will influence the way you work and write as well as how you may, in return, come to influence the organization. Major assignments will include a series of reading responses, electronic and paper résumés, a résumé cover letter, a mock interview exercise, and two portfolios (print and web).

During this course, you will have an opportunity to meet these objectives:

- Review current publications about working as a professional communicator
- Learn strategies for analyzing and critiquing professional and technical writing
- Develop skills for representing yourself in varied job searching and review situations

In addition to these course objectives, your work in the capstone will meet the following programmatic objectives:

- Design documents for legibility/professional appeal
- Reflect on past writing/communication experiences
- Create digital and print portfolios

Required Texts

Online readings available through Syllabase course.

Required Materials

- One binder (high-quality binder that you will use to present your portfolio at the end of the semester) and display materials for documents in the binder
- Two CD-R for the electronic portfolio
- Portfolio samples from previous courses

Optional Membership

Student membership in the Society for Technical Communication (\$56 for one year). Student membership in the national organization includes membership in our local USU student chapter; access to the national website (www.stc.org), which includes job and career information; and receipt of two journals—Technical Communication and Intercom.

Other Skills and Computer Access Requirements

- Word-processing, publication production, and web development capabilities
- Ability to teach others to enhance their capabilities with above processes
- Email account, Internet access, and server space (school or personal) for electronic portfolio

Assignment Schedule

Assignment Description	Value	Due
Reading responses and class participation	100 points or 10%	Varies
Lab consultant participation	100 points or 10%	3 hours per week; varies
Job ad analysis	100 points or 10%	1/23
Résumé set and cover letter	150 points or 15%	Week of 2/13
Mock interview participation and self analysis memo	150 points or 15%	3/20 (interviews) 3/27 (memo)
Electronic portfolio and reflective memo	200 points or 20%	4/17
Portfolio package	200 points or 20%	5/1
	1000 points or 100%	Total

Assignment Descriptions

Final grades for these assignments will be determined using this scale: An A=900-1000 points; a B = 800-899 points; a C = 700-799; a D = 600-699; and an F = 599 or fewer points. Please note: you must turn in all major assignments to pass the course.

Final drafts (both written and electronic) must be ready for evaluation at the time designated on the course schedule. Final drafts submitted after the designated time will be considered late. Late paper grades will be lowered by one letter grade for every class day the paper is late; if you have not submitted an assignment seven days after the original due date, I will record your grade as a zero (0). You must turn in all assignments to pass the course. Any exceptions to this policy must be arranged with me at least 8 days before the due date and time.

Reading responses and participation (100 points or 10% of your grade).

In addition to reading assigned chapters and articles, you will occasionally be asked to write brief reading responses (approximately 100 words) about reading assignments. Please note: Your reading responses should not only provide you with opportunities to share your ideas about the readings with your peers but also demonstrate to me that you have read the course materials and are working to master the information within them.

In your responses, avoid summarizing the contents of the reading. Instead, I suggest you choose a specific passage or section of the reading on which to focus your response, or you may respond to another student's comments. Keep in mind other course readings and our discussions, and try mapping this reading/these ideas with others. Use this assignment as an opportunity to work out your own critical re-reading of the work—contextualizing it with your own perspectives and experiences as well as those of others that interest you.

Lab consultant participation (100 points or 10% of your grade).

To enhance your résumés, provide a service to the department, and increase your understanding of working in a community of writers, you will be required to work in the English department computer for three hours every week. (These hours cannot coincide with your time in this class.) You will also be required to spend up to an hour in a consultant meeting, Mondays at 4pm (or tba). As seniors – or at least advanced professional writing majors – you should already be comfortable with nearly all of the technology the lab offers, so this position will help you take that knowledge to the next level – graciously

helping others learn the technology. (Part of this assignment might require/request of you to work with current 3410 students once a week on their web portfolios. Let me know if you are specifically interested in this option.)

Job ad analysis (100 points or 10% of your grade).

To complete this assignment, you'll need to identify three potential job openings for which you'd like to apply at the end of the semester. Using the guidelines for analysis that we'll develop in class, write a three- to five-page memo to me in which you summarize the keywords in the ads and explain how you would shape your resume and cover letter in order to market yourself effectively to these employers. Please include copies of the job ads with your memo.

Résumé set and cover letter (150 points or 15% of your grade).

In response to one of the job openings examined in your job ad analysis, you'll produce three versions of your résumé (paper-based, electronic suitable for emailing or scanning, and electronic in pdf format). You'll also write a single cover letter for your résumés.

Mock interview participation and self-analysis (150 points or 15% of your grade).

As a class activity, you will participate in a mock interview with a local member of the technical writing community. To prepare for this activity, you will provide the interviewer with a résumé and cover letter. Following the interview, you will debrief with the interviewer and then write a short two-page memo, briefly describing your interviewing experiences and discussing your interviewing strengths and weaknesses. After identifying any weaknesses, describe a strategy for improving these weaknesses.

Portfolios (400 points total or 40% of your grade: 200 points or 20% for the professional portfolio; 200 points or 20% for the academic portfolio).

To meet the final requirements of this course, you'll produce two portfolios: a professional (print-based) interviewing portfolio as well as an electronic academic portfolio. We will discuss portfolio sample selection, organization, and presentation over the course of several class meetings. In addition to grades for these assignments, your participation grade will reflect your process of creating them. I will be checking your revision progress throughout the semester and awarding participation grades based on your work-in-progress. You'll also meet with me at least once in conference to discuss your portfolio plans.

Policies

Attendance

In the business world, you are expected to notify your employer before you are absent from work and to makeup, on your own time, any work that you miss. I expect the same courtesy from you in this course. *Notify me by email or in person prior to any absence.*

Regular, punctual attendance is required and will be considered as a factor in your final grade. You will be allowed one absence before your grade begins to drop. At the end of the semester, I will deduct 5% of your final grade for every absence above and beyond the one personal day allowed.

Regular attendance also requires that you be prepared and actively participate in each class, both in class and online. For this reason, you should strive to complete all reading and homework assignments (including PRINTING) before coming to class. Should you miss class, you are responsible for collecting any handouts and for completing all assignments or other activities you may have missed. Please ask classmates what you missed. I am only contracted to teach each set of class materials once.

Work Submission Guidelines

For all assignments, I will provide you with an overview of the assignment and an explanation of minimum requirements or expectations for your work. To earn an A or a B, your assignment must exhibit qualities above and beyond the minimum requirements. Generally:

- professional-level work will receive an A
- work that doesn't achieve a professional level of communication will receive a B
- work that is done without regard to professional requirements will receive a C
- incomplete work will receive a D
- incomprehensible work will receive an F

My evaluative comments on the assignment will discuss if and how your work exceeds the minimum requirements.

In addition, specific documents require different designs and layouts. Use what you know about good design and readability in producing all our your documents. If you have questions about the appropriateness of a specific design or layout, please consult an authoritative resource or ask me. I expect all of your assignments to demonstrate your ability to produce professional, ethical technical documents. In addition, I expect your documents to exemplify your awareness of appropriate writing conventions for each document's specific audience and purpose.

Classroom Conduct

Since this classroom will be conducted as a community of writers, I expect you to treat each member of our community with the dignity and respect she or he deserves. No discriminatory behavior directed toward a person's race, creed, religion, national origin, age, sex, or disability will be allowed in this classroom.

Computer Use: Laws and Ethics

As a student enrolled in English 5430, you are eligible to use the computer labs in the Ray B. West building during class and other open lab times. The lab fee for this course supports the purchase of all the hardware/software that is needed for this course, as well as the computer lab consultants and technicians who support your academic work in the English department.

At USU, university students, faculty, and staff are expected to make legal and ethical choices regarding computer usage. Please familiarize yourself with University policies regarding the legal and ethical use of computer hardware and software and observe them thoughtfully and carefully. (See The Open Access Computing Facilities Policy Statement at http://www.usu.edu/~compserv/lab_policy.html for more specific details on university policies. On this page you will find information or links to information about university computing policies regarding theft or failure to observe copyright of computer programs, chain letters, and sexual harassment.)

Academic and Professional Honesty

As a technical communicator and university student, you are expected to be academically and professional honest when producing your work. For a more detailed discussion of professional and academic honesty policies, please see STC's Ethical Principles for Technical Communicators at <http://216.35.212.183/code.html> and the USU policy on plagiarism and its consequences in your undergraduate catalog or at <http://online.usu.edu/services/regulations.html>.

Special Needs and Accommodations

Please inform me within the first two class meetings if you are a student with a special need or disability that requires making accommodations to this course outline. I will be happy to discuss options with you that will allow for your effective learning of the course materials.

Schedule

Week 1: Reading job ads (1/9)

- Discuss course requirements and syllabi
- Identify, locate, and discuss job posting websites and other resources
- Discuss job ad analysis assignment.

Read the following articles:

- “Online Job Searching”
- “Do Core Competencies Correspond to Managerial Expectations?”
- “Fitting Academic Programs to Workplace Marketability...”
- “Cover Letters that Sell You”
- “Writing an Application Letter”
- “Using a Resume to Showcase Your Talents”

Week 2: no classes (MLK day)

Week 3: Creating resumes & cover letters (1/23)

- Visit Career Services.
- Job ad analysis due
- Discuss results of the job ad analysis.
- Review resume and cover letter examples from reading assignment.
- Discuss resume set and cover letter assignment.
- Critique your current resume and plan for revision.
- Begin resume revision and cover letter development.

Read the following articles:

- “Portfolios: Tools for Acing the Interview”
- “Developing a Web-Based Portfolio”
- “The Ten Commandments of Effective Portfolios”
- “E-Portfolios”
- “Portfolios for Technical Communicators: Worth the Work”

Review the following websites:

- Developing an Annotated Portfolio
- Creating a Portfolio

Week 4: Choosing documents and designing the portfolio (1/30)

- Workshop resumes and cover letters.
- Discuss portfolio articles & assignment.
- Discuss portfolio purposes and literacies.
- Discuss strategies for choosing portfolio pieces and for designing the portfolio.
- Begin document selection process by

gathering electronic and hard copies of all potential documents.

- Revise resume set for Career Services review next week
- Complete cover letter for class review next week

Week 5: Portfolio contents (2/6)

- Workshop editing session at Career Services.
- Answer questions related to Career Services session.
- Workshop cover letter and resume set.
- Examine and evaluate sample portfolios.
- Complete resume and cover letter assignment (due next week)
- Complete portfolio documents selection process
- Schedule individual portfolio conference
- After conference, begin revisions

Week 6: Portfolio Conferences (2/13)

- No class—Sign up for an individual conference time.
- Resume set and cover letter assignment due (Bring to individual conference)
- Finalize portfolio selections, and begin portfolio revisions.
- Bring in one portfolio sample (original and revised) to class, and be prepared to discuss changes you have made. You must demonstrate significant changes you have completed in the document.

Read about networking strategies

- Successful Networking
- Networking Your Way To A New Job
- Making Connections (Parts 1 and 2)
- How to Network Like a Pro
- Networking Do's and Don't's
- Networking Timetable for College Students
- Informational Interviewing
- Researching Employers through Informational Interviewing
- Seven Smart Networking Moves
- Networking Scenarios
- Working a Room and Other Networking Misconceptions
- Complete the following tutorial: Informational Interviewing Tutorial

continued...

Week 7: Networking/Preparing to interview (2/21): MEET ON TUESDAY

- Discuss networking strategies
- Discuss how to use Career Services and STC networks to gain access to employers and identify job opportunities
- Discuss portfolio revisions and demonstrate significant changes.
- Participate in portfolio workshop
- Continue portfolio revisions

Week 8: Networking and Interviewing, con't. (2/27)

- View interviewing videos
- Review Career Services' list of possible interview questions, and prepare to answer these questions.
- Brainstorm for potential interview questions and practice interviewing

Week 9: Interviewing (3/6)

- Discuss interviewing strategies
- Identify interview questions that are challenging you and bring them to class for discussion.
- Roll-play interviews.
- Review the mock interview assignment and job description to prepare for upcoming mock interview
- Sign up for mock interviews.
- Review the mock interview assignment and job description
- Prepare resumes for interviewers.
- Prepare for mock interviews.

SPRING BREAK: NO CLASSES (3/13-3/18)

Week 10: Mock Interviews (3/20)

- Participate in mock interviews.
- Participate in portfolio workshop during mock interviews.
- Debrief mock interviews
- Review requirements for mock interview self-analysis memo.
- Write mock interview self-analysis memo
- Continue to revise portfolio pieces
- Bring portfolio piece to class for review.

Week 11: Joining the workforce (3/27)

- Mock interview self-analysis memo due
- Review fourth portfolio revisions and demonstrate significant changes.
- Review portfolio & reflective memo assignments.
- Prepare questions for alumni panel.
- Continue to revise portfolio pieces
- Draft reflective memo, and bring draft to class.

Week 12: Alumni Panel (4/3)

- Participate in alumni panel discussion
- Critique reflective memos
- Portfolio workshop—revise and review
- Continue to revise portfolio pieces
- Revise reflective memo.
- Complete print and electronic portfolio drafts for review on 4/10.

Week 13: Portfolios and finishing (4/10)

- Participate in academic electronic portfolio review/critique
- Participate in portfolio workshop
- Schedule final individual conferences, as needed
- Complete academic electronic portfolio and reflective essay.
- Bring in professional portfolio for review.
- Portfolios and reflective memos

Week 14: Portfolios and finishing (4/17)

- Academic portfolios and reflective memo due
- Professional portfolio workshop and critique
- Schedule final individual conferences, as needed

Week 15: Portfolios and finishing (4/24)

- Evaluations & class wrap-up

Professional portfolios due (May 1 by 5pm)