

Department of English and Writing Studies

WRITING 4998G/650 – Distance Studies
RE-VISIONING SELF: CREATING YOUR PROFESSIONAL PORTFOLIO
Winter 2024

Required Text: **There are no textbooks required 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.

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 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 three times 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 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, e.g. a creative writing piece), approximately 2000 words, that you will write during the term and submit (final version) as part of your Portfolio.

This portion of your grade is allocated across three different pieces of work which together constitute Assignment 1:

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 is 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 [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.)

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.

Further Course and University Policies

Academic Accommodation Policy

Senate language requires all requests for accommodation for a grade component of **10% or more** to go to academic counselling. That same section, however, allows for (and encourages) instructors to deal directly with accommodation requests for grade components less than 10%. Here’s the relevant Senate language:

“Accommodation by Instructor for work worth less than 10% of the overall grade in a course: Instructors are encouraged, in the first instance, to arrange participation requirements and multiple small assignments in such a way as to allow students some flexibility. A student seeking academic accommodation for any work worth less than 10% must contact the instructor or follow the appropriate Department or course specific instructions provided on the course outline.

In arranging accommodation, instructors will use good judgment and ensure fair treatment for all students. Instructors must indicate on the course outline how they will be dealing with work worth less than 10% of the total course grade. In particular, instructors

must indicate whether medical documentation will be required for absences, late assignments or essays, missed tests, laboratory experiments or tutorials, etc. Where medical documentation is required, such documentation must be submitted by the student directly to the appropriate Faculty Academic Counselling/Dean's office, who will make the determination whether accommodation is warranted. Given the University's Official Student Record Information Privacy Policy, https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/general/privacy.pdf, **instructors may not collect medical documentation."**

Instructor's note: The only grade component worth less than 10% in this course is the New Work Proposal (see 'Assignment 1' above): 5%.

Medical Accommodation Policy

"The University recognizes that a student's ability to meet their academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Illness may be acute (short term), or it may be chronic (long term), or chronic with acute episodes. The University further recognizes that medical situations are deeply personal and respects the need for privacy and confidentiality in these matters. However, in order to ensure fairness and consistency for all students, academic accommodation for work representing 10% or more of the student's overall grade in the course shall be granted only in those cases where there is documentation indicating that the student was seriously affected by illness and could not reasonably be expected to meet their academic responsibilities.

Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the appropriate Dean's office (the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration/home Faculty) together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. These documents will be retained in the student's file and will be held in confidence in accordance with the University's Official Student Record Information Privacy Policy. Once the petition and supporting documents have been received and assessed, appropriate academic accommodation shall be determined by the Dean's Office in consultation with the student's instructor(s). Academic accommodation may include extension of deadlines, waiver of attendance requirements for classes/labs/tutorials, arranging Special Exams or Incompletes, re-weighting course requirements, or granting late withdrawals without academic penalty. Academic accommodation shall be granted only where the documentation indicates that the onset, duration, and severity of the illness are such that the student could not reasonably be expected to complete their academic responsibilities. (Note – it will not be sufficient to provide documentation indicating simply that the student "was seen for a medical reason" or "was ill.")

Whenever possible, students who require academic accommodation should provide notification and documentation in advance of due dates, examinations, etc. Students must follow up with their professors and their Academic Counselling office in a timely manner."

Documentation from Family Physicians/Nurse Practitioners and Walk-In Clinics

A Western Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is required where a student is seeking academic accommodation. This documentation should be obtained at the time of the initial consultation with the physician/nurse practitioner or walk-in clinic. An SMC can be downloaded at

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

Documentation from Student Health Services

At the time of illness, students should make an appointment with a physician/nurse practitioner at Student Health Services. During this appointment, request a Student Medical Certificate from the Physician/Nurse Practitioner.

Documentation from Hospital Urgent Care Centres or Emergency Departments

Students should request that an SMC be filled out. Students may bring this form with them, or request alternative Emergency Department documentation. Documentation should be secured at the time of the initial visit to the Emergency Department. Where it is not possible for a student to have an SMC completed by the attending physician, the student must request documentation sufficient to demonstrate that their ability to meet their academic responsibilities was seriously affected.”

Please note that individual instructors **will not under any circumstances** accept or read medical documentation directly offered by a student, whether in support of an application for accommodation on medical grounds or for related reasons (e.g. to explain an absence from class which may result in a grade penalty under an ‘Attendance’ policy in the course). **All medical documentation must** be submitted to the Academic Counselling or Undergraduate office of a student’s home Faculty.

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 (<https://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo>).

Statement on Gender-based Sexual Violence

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced gender-based or sexual violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts, here. 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&languageCd=ENG&> provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Academic Support and Engagement <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Writing Studies' Policy on the Use of AI Tools

“In this course, students are permitted to use AI tools for information gathering and preliminary research purposes only (unless otherwise indicated in the assignment instructions). These tools are intended to enhance the learning experience by providing access to diverse information sources. It is essential, however, that students critically evaluate the obtained information, exercise independent thinking, and engage in original research to synthesize, develop, and articulate their own ideas, arguments, and perspectives. The use of AI tools can serve as a starting point for exploration, but students are expected to uphold academic integrity by appropriately attributing all sources and avoiding plagiarism in any form. Note that for all assignments completed outside of class, the instructor can require you to attend an in-person interview to discuss your work before a mark is finalized. Assignments should always reflect students' own thoughts and constitute independent written work. By adhering to these guidelines, students contribute to a responsible and ethical learning environment that promotes critical thinking, supports independent inquiry, and encourages original written contributions.”

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>).

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.