

Department of English
Christopher Newport University
**Student / Faculty Guide to Assembling
the
English Major Portfolio**

Introduction

As an English Major, you are required to collect and save graded essays from your English literature and writing classes to put into your English Major Portfolio. You will save your *graded* essays from English 308, English 490 and one of your courses in your Concentration (e.g., literature, writing or film studies). In your senior year, you put into a portfolio folder one paper from each course, along with an essay that *describes and evaluates* what your work shows about your learning experience. The English Major Portfolio will be completed and submitted to the Senior Seminar instructor.

The portfolio is a vital part of the English Department's ongoing effort to assess instruction in English classes. Faculty members will review and assess the portfolios, and what they learn will help the department improve the curriculum.

As you save papers—and you study in the English curriculum—bear this in mind:

You will be asked in your senior year to reflect in writing on how your work in the English Major has 1) made you more aware of or a keener observer of the world, 2) helped you discover or develop your own critical voice, and 3) helped you develop specific skills.

Step 1—Saving graded work for your portfolio

• Collect from your instructors the following papers:

1. A graded English 308 paper, with the instructor's comments.
2. A graded English 490 paper, with the instructor's comments.
3. A graded English paper from your concentration, with the instructor's comments.

(Concentrations after Fall 2009 are Literature, Writing and Film Studies).

**** The portfolios will not be returned, so please save copies of papers that you wish to keep. ****

Step 2 — Write One 750-word essay formally reflecting on and analyzing your experience as an English Major

Reflect in writing on your work as a literature and/or writing student in the English major, following the prompt below. In all cases, the essays must be descriptive and *evaluative* to be acceptable and to fulfill graduation requirements. Essays that are not acceptable will be returned for revision.

Discuss ways in which the selections that you have included in your portfolio illustrate an engagement with the literature and/or writing courses that you have taken.

Essay Topic
English Major Essay 750 words

Head the essay with:

- date
- title: “English Major Essay ”
- your name
- student identification number
- the semester and year of your graduation
- your concentration
- your Senior Seminar instructor’s name.

Address the following inquiries in an articulate and persuasive essay of about 750 words.

Use specific examples from your study in the English major core courses *and* the concentration in which you studied.

- In what ways does your portfolio indicate that your work has developed “an ever opening awareness of the world and a keener capacity to observe that world ”?
- How does your portfolio show that you have developed your “own critical voice ” as a result of your encounter with “literatures of the world, writings of various field and disciplines, and language varieties of the local community” ?

and for students in the Writing Concentration:

- How does the paper in your portfolio from one of your writing courses, as well as practical experience you have gained (e.g., in journalism, public relations, technical writing internships, and so on), illustrate “mastery of applied skills and theoretical approaches [in] the study of writing [and/or] literature ”?

Step 3 — Turn in the Completed Portfolio

Turn in the completed portfolio in the semester that you take the Senior Seminar. Your portfolio will be evaluated by English department faculty members appointed by the department chair. The outcome of the faculty’s evaluation of student portfolios helps the department guide, develop and refine its curriculum and instruction. We appreciate your participation in helping us understand ways in which the department excels, as well as ways in which it can improve.

Appendix:

English Department Mission Statement

The CNU English Department instills in students the habits of mind required to pursue informed and purposeful lives in a diverse and interconnected world. Through intensive programs of reading, writing, and research, the department’s faculty fosters in its students the capacity for independent thought and reflection, as well as an ever-opening awareness of the world and a keener capacity to observe that world. To that end, the department engenders respect for the English language throughout its history and in its various forms, expressions and functions, while situating English within a larger, global context. Throughout the English Department’s curriculum— from the first-year composition sequence to the literature, professional writing, and language arts classes and concentrations— students work toward finding their own critical voices, as they encounter literatures of the world, writings of various fields and disciplines, and language varieties of the local community. Students receive individual attention from their professors, who are published experts in their fields, as well as from leaders in the local community who mentor students in professional settings.

The department’s three concentrations and four minors work to develop mastery of applied skills and theoretical approaches to the study of writing and literature. The department welcomes and values both the literary and writing enthusiast, those who will major in our department and those who will choose courses to satisfy their own desires and general education requirements.