

Advanced Writing in the Health Professions

Syllabus

Section Details: Ryder 128, MWTH 1:35 p.m. - 2:40 a.m., Jan 11, 2016 - Apr 20, 2016

Instructor: Steven S. Kapica

Office: 475 Lake Hall

Email: s.kapica@neu.edu

Office Hours: M W TH 10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m., or by appointment

Comment [K1]: This was one of the final courses I designed and taught for Northeastern University's Writing Program (and the first time I taught for health profession majors). I returned to much of the work I developed for previous AWD offerings, though this version shows the evolution of my interests in e-portfolios and multimodal projects, as well as my work with multilingual writers.

Course Description

Advanced Writing for the Health Professions (ENGW 3306) is designed for advanced students immersed in a variety of nursing, pharmaceutical, rehabilitation, psychological, and clinical disciplines. In this course students develop a strategic understanding of the structure and function of influential writing and research in their discipline(s).

Coursework entails careful study of actual published documents that are meaningful to specific audiences in the health professions. With the principles of the technical genres and disciplinary discourses that give rhetorical force to these documents in mind, we will turn to our own writing and compose texts meaningful to specific audiences. We will consider matters of language, layout, the presentation of quantitative knowledge, and document design. How do texts make claims? Invoke prior claims? Engage multiple modalities? Your writing will be the focus of class attention and you will share it with our classroom community. Your deep engagement with and respect for writing and its power and complexities are essential, expected.

Students are encouraged to link, as directly as they wish, work in this course to their own professional work, including co-op experience, laboratory research, or study in other courses.

This course fosters skills in preliminary writing, drafting, revision, peer review, and research into the literature of the health professions. It offers sustained practice in the construction of precise sentences, coherent paragraphs, and well-ordered documents. It considers the strategic use of visual elements in the presentation of quantitative information. Students will engage complexity in terms, concepts, and judgments; exercise self-critique; and write with concision and purpose. Students will cultivate an authoritative voice in the health disciplines that offers coherent, meaningful knowledge to a specific, disciplinary audience.

Texts and Materials

There is no required textbook for this course. Materials will be provided through Google Drive, or students will be directed to online resources provided through the NU Library.

This course will require use of a variety of electronic and digital resources: Blackboard (grades and feedback); Google Drive (managed through NU G-Apps); laptop computer or tablet (bring to class every day; NEU e-mail account (check this at least once a day); Wordpress.com account and blog site.

Writing Program Learning Goals and Policies

Learning Goals: The Writing Program comprises First-Year Writing courses, Advanced Writing in the Disciplines courses, and the Writing Center. The goals below apply to all three sites, but expectations for how well and to what extent students will accomplish these goals vary in each.

1. Students write both to learn and to communicate what they learn.
2. Students negotiate their own writing goals and audience expectations regarding conventions of genre, medium, and situation.
3. Students formulate and articulate a stance through and in their writing.
4. Students revise their writing using responses from others, including peers, consultants, and teachers.
5. Students generate and pursue lines of inquiry and search, collect, and select sources appropriate to their writing projects.
6. Students effectively use and appropriately cite sources in their writing.
7. Students explore and represent their experiences, perspectives, and ideas in conversation with others.

8. Students use multiple forms of evidence to support their claims, ideas, and arguments.
9. Students practice critical reading strategies.
10. Students provide revision-based response to their peers.
11. Students reflect on their writing processes and self-assess as writers.

Writing Program Minimum Grade Requirement: A student must receive a grade of C or better in order to pass all required writing courses in the Department of English (C is required for Graduation). Any student earning a C- or lower will need to repeat the course in order to fulfill the writing requirement. The instructor makes the final decision with respect to any grade between A-C. Any portfolio receiving lower than a C must be reviewed and signed off on by a committee of 3-6 Writing Program instructors.

Attendance & Lateness: Writing Program policy requires regular attendance at class meetings. You are allowed **three (3) unexcused absences**; after that, your grade will suffer. You also have the right to a limited number of excused absences due to religious observance, illness, death in the family, required participation in athletic events, or other serious and unavoidable life circumstances. **You are responsible for notifying instructor when you must miss class for any reason.** I will decide whether or not your absence counts as an excused absence or unexcused absence.

Chronic lateness will also adversely affect your grade. It is necessary, both as a courtesy to others and in order to maintain a smooth workshop environment, that you be present at the beginning of each class. **Three (3) late arrivals = one (1) unexcused absence.** Excessively late arrivals (after 15 minutes) or unnecessarily long or frequent "breaks" during or toward the end of class will be counted as unexcused absences as well.

You are always responsible for missed assignments and activities. Even if you miss a class, you must not come to the next class unprepared; if you are unprepared (no homework, no draft, etc.) that also constitutes an unexcused absence. **Bottom line:** you need to be physically and mentally present—and prepared—to pass this class.

Because writing classes are conducted workshop-style and focus on revision, a student who misses too many class meetings or falls too far behind in making up work, even with a legitimate excuse, is not earning credit for the same course as the rest of the class. In that case, I may suggest, but not require, that the student withdraw from rather than fail the course.

Academic Honesty: Northeastern University is committed to the principles of intellectual honesty and integrity and to respecting intellectual property. All members of the Northeastern community are expected to maintain complete honesty in all academic work, presenting only that which is their own work on tests and assignments. In required writing classes, this definition of plagiarism applies not only to borrowing whole documents (other students' projects, internet articles, published articles) but also to borrowing parts of another's work without proper acknowledgment and proper paraphrasing or quotation. In these courses, students will receive instruction on using sources properly as well as feedback from instructors and peers. They will also be directed to important resources on avoiding plagiarism.

However, students bear the responsibility for writing, revising, editing, and proofreading their own work. Writing instructors who determine that plagiarism has been committed are obligated to respond. In cases of student error, instructors may provide additional instruction, require the student to repeat the assignment, and warn the student about the consequences of further infractions. If instructors determine that an incidence of plagiarism is intentional, they consult a Writing Program administrator. Based upon the severity of the infraction, the student may a) fail the assignment, b) fail the course, c) be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution, or d) any combination of these. Students may be failed regardless of whether the matter has been sent to OSCCR and regardless of that office's finding.

Classroom Etiquette: Students are expected to behave with respect in the classroom, both to each other and to the instructor. Inappropriate language or tone of voice, interruptions, dominating class discussion, and other behaviors that might impede the creation of a safe and comfortable learning environment will not be tolerated.

Instructors will use their discretion on permitting the use of laptops and other electronics, but these devices should always be used in support of classroom activities and never for personal reasons during class. Students' failure to follow this rule may result in their being marked absent for the class.

The Northeastern University Writing Center offers free and friendly tutoring for any level writer, including help with conceptualizing writing projects, the writing process (i.e., planning, researching, organizing, drafting and revising), and using sources effectively. The Writing Center has two locations: 412 Holmes Hall (x4595) for advanced appointments and 136 Snell Library (x2086) for more last minute appointments. Online appointments are also available. To make an appointment or learn more about the Writing Center visit www.northeastern.edu/writingcenter. For writing tips and updates about the Writing Center, follow us via social media: www.facebook.com/NEUWritingCenter and @NEUWrites. Questions about the Writing Center can be directed to Kristi Girdharry, Assistant Director (neuwritingcenter@gmail.com), or Belinda Walzer, Writing Center Director (b.walzer@neu.edu)

Course Delivery, Evaluation, and Instructor Expectations

This course will rely heavily on computer-based learning technologies and we will work partly in the classroom and partly online. The “e” component of this class is designed to enhance your experience and facilitate more effective writing and discussion. To this end, these protocols will be followed:

- This will be a primarily “paperless” course.
- All assignment details and guidelines, grades and feedback, will be handled electronically through **Google Drive** and **Blackboard**.
- We will use additional web resources (**Google Docs**, **Wordpress**); work conducted outside of **Blackboard** will require transparency for evaluation and monitoring purposes.
- *Email should be used for genuine communication and problems.* During weekdays, I will get back to you within 24 hours; on the weekends, I will respond at my discretion. I want to make myself as accessible as possible; however, please use your best judgment.
- All drafts and final versions of essays must be submitted via Google Drive. I reserve the right to ask you for hard copies, but electronic versions will always be used for grading purposes. Feedback and grades will not be emailed; grades will be posted through Blackboard.
- **Technical difficulties are never an excuse for missed, late, or lost work.** Make multiple copies of all materials throughout the course. Backup your work frequently. File losses/problems are your responsibility and all technological problems should be handled *far in advance* of all deadlines.

Drafts: Document your writing process by saving all drafts related to every assignment, including pre-writing, notes, outlines, etc. Save everything. Upload drafts for review and evaluation to **Google Drive** in a timely manner.

Peer Work: I take peer work very seriously and I expect you to do so, as well. Responding to classmates’ work serves several functions: it helps your classmates get a sense of how an audience interprets their writing, it helps you become a more careful reader, it helps you to think about how others have read and thought about the same issues, and it gives you an opportunity to think about how others might read *your* writing.

Sometimes we will read and discuss a classmate’s work as a whole class; sometimes you will work in pairs or small groups. In both instances, you need to focus on the work of reading and responding to the writing. You might not be familiar with some of the techniques for peer response that we do, so I’ll explain them before we try them. If you have any questions about how to navigate peer response, be sure to ask. Peer response done incorrectly (or poorly) will be of little or no help to your partner; as a result grades for both your partner’s writing and your own peer work will suffer.

As a writer, you need to bring your work in on time. We can’t help you with your writing if you don’t bring it to class. For that reason, late work will hurt your grade. Be sure to save your work frequently and keep backup copies of it.

As part of the whole class, or as part of a small group, you need to focus on the tasks at hand. If you are not prepared for class, or if you are not paying attention, I reserve the right to mark you absent and/or dismiss you from class.

Peer work needs to be done in a timely fashion. You need to respond to your partners’ work early enough so that they have time to revise based on your feedback. For that reason, late peer responses will receive a zero (0)

grade. Also note that if you are absent from class on a day when we are doing peer work, you are still required to complete your peer response in a timely fashion.

Grading: Grades will be based on successful completion of ALL assignments. Evaluation will occur through rubrics and assessment of process. You will be able to keep track of your grades through Blackboard.

Your grades will be a combination of all project elements (prewriting/drafting, workshops and peer review). Your E-Folio will include reflection and self-evaluation of your performance; it will require you to consider the total of your work for the term as evidence of your growth as a writer and communicator. This final assignment will carry its own weight; however, it will have a holistic effect on all of your grades for the course.

Because this course focuses on writing processes, failure to turn in drafts on time will result in serious and non-negotiable grade-based consequences.

Course Breakdown

1. Professionalization (20%): Becoming a professional requires more than simply completing a degree, or even amassing a certain amount of entry-level experience. It requires the creation of a professional persona, one that can be marketed, assessed, revised, and continually updated based on career objectives. We will begin this semester by taking stock of our academic and professional selves and discovering ways to shape and situate ourselves in our various professions.

2. Discourse (20%): After we've determined how to situate ourselves in our careers, we will turn to the writing and discourse of our fields and dig in, analyzing compositional methodologies and the languages of our fields—all with an eye toward how we can enter into discourse communities not as students but as professionals and colleagues.

3. Translation (20%): Health professionals, like many other professionals, are often confronted with the task of translating their specific knowledge for general audiences. For this portion of our course, we will collect samples of these documents and analyze their rhetorical strategies and their effectiveness.

4. Research (20%): For our last major project we will turn our attention to research in our fields. In some ways this unit will be a continuation of our second—however, instead of looking at the language, analyzing the discourse, we will do the research, do the writing, engage the discourse.

E-Folio (20%): Your **E-Folio** will represent the work you've produced this term. You will compile all of your work for this course, write reflections about the work you've done, and discuss how it illustrates what you have learned. Your **E-Folio** will be explicitly intended for an outside audience and it will include evidence of your learning and growth.

1. PROFESSIONALIZATION: Taking Stock

Length: Undetermined

Audience: Individual / Instructor

Due: 21 January > Google Drive > Submission folder

We've all heard—or had—the complaint that it's hard to get a job without experience and that it's hard to get experience without a job. One of the reasons many students come to Northeastern is the promise of getting job-related experience through good co-ops, experience that will then help you be more marketable when you graduate. Of course, to land a good co-op you need... well, you get the idea...

The other problem is that while many of us have had a few jobs—Starbucks anyone?—it's not always clear how those jobs relate to our academic and career goals. I mean, working the drive-thru at Taco Bell isn't exactly relatable to a med school rotation, right?

Or is it?

For the first assignment of **UNIT 1**, then, I want you to “take stock” of your personal, professional, and academic selves. Later in the unit you will produce more targeted writing about your recent academic/work experiences (specifically co-op), but for now, I want you to collect information about yourself and your experiences and assemble a professional persona (or personas) out of your wide-ranging experiences.

REQUIREMENTS / GUIDANCE

- Compile lists of your personal, professional, and academic achievements.
- Review your transcript and your program of study and evaluate, course by course, the skills and/or lessons you have learned that might apply to your intended career.¹
- Collect resume/c.v. data. While you will not be required to complete a finished resume or c.v., you will need to create a “working” document that replicates/anticipates the information/layout of a resume or c.v. in your field. I would also encourage you to consider the creation of multiple documents—ones tailored to the different kinds of jobs/positions you intend to seek upon graduation.
- Create an online resume/profile (Linkedin, etc.).
- Participate in a group workshop to determine common interview questions for jobs in your field, and then compose answers to at least ten of those questions.
- Collect all of your materials and submit them through Google Drive (in one document).

Comment [k1]: Much like my “Discourse Foundations” sequence for ENGL 3304, this unit focused on helping students manage their role transition from student to professional. Key differences: better, more focused integration of social media presences and taking stock of career goals and objectives.

¹ If you are planning to go to graduate school after finishing your undergraduate degree, then treat applying to graduate school(s) as applying for jobs. Substitute “graduate school” for “job” and/or “career.” Many graduate schools ask for a c.v., or have lengthy applications that duplicate much of what you would find on a good resume.

1. PROFESSIONALIZATION: Professional Persona

Length: Undetermined

Audience: Internet communities / Field Professionals

Due dates: 27 January 2016 > Google Drive > Submission folder

As Dan Schwabel notes, by taking control of your online presence “You... gain control over how you’re perceived online, and thus what employers find out about you when they conduct their search.” He adds, “A recent study by OfficeTeam shows that more than one-third of companies feel that resumes will be replaced by profiles on social networks. My prediction is that in the next ten years, resumes will be less common, and your online presence will become what your resume is today, at all types and sizes of companies.”

Creating and maintaining a professional presence—especially online—is a must for a successful career, regardless of your profession. And it’s never too soon to begin shaping your social media presence—not just to successfully market yourself, but to ensure that employers are (only) able to “see” who you are in the outside and/or cyberworld.

In addition to working on your “professional self,” you will need to begin researching the “places” where those in your chosen field congregate, communicate, publish, and present. Every field has premier organizations (for me: MLA, CCCC, RSA); these organizations usually have thousands of members who communicate and share resources; they also often hold yearly conferences where they present research and discuss current issues.

For this portion of **UNIT 1**, then, I want you to work on creating/maintaining your professional persona. This will involve shaping a working C.V. or resume—a physical document you can hand to a potential employer—as well as investigating and molding your online persona. You will also need to research the organizations in your field and determine which ones you might someday (today?!) join. Ideally, both aspects of this assignment will intersect (I have built professional profiles through my organizations).

REQUIREMENTS / GUIDANCE

- Create a working resume / C.V., one you could use—today—to apply to a job or co-op in your field.
- Research your online presence and create at least one online professional profile.
- Research organizations in your field.
- Write a brief report where you identify and summarize the missions of the premier (or relevant) organizations in your field. Note which one(s) you will consider joining (explain why).

1. PROFESSIONALIZATION: Co-Op Narrative

Length: 1500-2000+ words

Audience: Peer Community

Draft & Review: 28 January

Draft > Google Drive (Personal Folder)

Review > Google Drive (Draft + / Group Folder)

Final Version Due: 5 February

SUBMIT > Google Drive (Personal Folder) by 11:59PM

Since your co-ops constitute a significant portion of your academic and professional education and training, your first “evaluated” writing for this course will be an explanatory and reflexive assessment of your co-op experiences. This will be an opportunity for you to not only revisit and reflect on your experiences, but it will also allow you to produce and collect writing that you can later use for résumés and job interview preparation.

Draft Guidelines

At the draft stage of the project, you should have a **semi-cohesive narrative about one or more of your co-op experiences** that **explains the nature of your co-op and reflects on your experiences and how they relate to your future academic and career goals**. Your draft should be relatively complete (1500 words), written in a professional yet conversational tone, and presented according to APA formatting guidelines.

Things to keep in mind:

- This paper serves two main goals: **explanation** and **reflection**.

The **explanation** part should seek to put your co-op in proper context. That is, write your essay to an audience unfamiliar with Northeastern’s co-op program. You don’t need to spend too much time going over program details, but be sure not to assume that your audience will know what you’re talking about. The same goes for the company or companies you have worked for: Be sure to give some background and “set up” your role(s). You may find that this explanation will not only help you frame your essay, but will spark additional thoughts and reflections.

The **reflection** part may be the harder of the two because while you likely have vivid memories and plenty to write about, you may find it hard to actually write about what you think about what you did. This is why I would suggest you start with fleshing out the concrete details (the explanation part) first and then use the concrete to guide you through reflecting on your experiences.

But what about those experiences? You can approach this from several angles, but here are two to consider:

Go personal. Write what you feel. Did you have good or bad experiences? What was your boss like? What happened that you didn't expect? And so on.

Think about your career, your burgeoning professional self. What did you learn that will help you be a better employee or worker? How can you apply what you've done to future goals? How might you talk about your experiences in a future job interview? This second point is really the one that will be most helpful to future writing/thinking about your co-ops: The more you reflect on these experiences, the more you will be inclined to recall on résumés and in job interviews.

- **APA for Beginners:** We will be using APA style this semester. Since this is your first paper, and your first draft, you don't need to worry about getting your formatting perfect; however, I do want you to begin using APA as best you can. Go to Purdue University's OWL [APA Formatting and Style Guide](#) to find the most recent and accessible information about APA.
- **Tone:** As college writers with some workplace experience, you are likely not (sorry to say) masters of writing tone and delivery. That's why you're in this class. Much of your writing at this point is based in emulation and avoidance of instructor ire. This has likely served you well up to this point, but as you become professionals, your ability to control tone in your writing will be key to not only how you are perceived but how effective your writing will be. This is all to say that with this assignment, try to pay attention to not only what you say and how you organize it (into a coherent narrative) but to **how** you say it. Does your writing sound like it's coming from a college student or from a health professional? What kinds of writing choices can you make to change your tone? Here again, we will talk about this in class, work on it in workshop, but I want you to start this draft thinking about how your writing tone presents itself right now.

Final Version Requirements

- Your narrative should be an adequately developed, significant revision of your draft. It should be a complete, engaging academic essay.
- Essay must be 1500-2000+ words, double-spaced, and submitted in 12pt Times New Roman font.
- Be sure to include your name, the date, and your class section in the upper left-hand corner. Title your narrative and number the pages.
- This is a "final version" of your essay. It should be carefully proofread for editing mistakes (spelling, grammar, and mechanics).
- Submit essay to your personal folder on Google Drive (be sure to appropriately label it; i.e., "Kapica Unit 1 Co-op Narrative Final Version").

2. DISCOURSE: Engaging Discourse Communities & Sector Snapshot

Engaging Discourse Communities

A *discourse community* primarily communicates with words, continually engaging in the production, distribution, and consumption of written (as well as oral and visual) *texts*. This kind of textual exchange defines a discourse community, sustains it over time, and allows it to adapt to changing social conditions. Discourse communities share not only interests and knowledge but *language*, and the particular uses of language within a community keep that community going.

You are already a member of numerous discourse communities — social, academic, professional, and so forth. Your use of discourse changes as you move from a smaller community to a larger one, and it changes again as you move back again. These changes are significant because language use in discourse communities functions (in part) to exclude outsiders. Most discourse communities are more or less exclusionist: they accept new members based in part on their mastery of “insider” discourse. Are academic and professional discourse communities more exclusionist than others? Maybe; maybe not. They differ from more informal communities, however, in that the exclusionary function of discourse is explicitly announced in such practices as grading and professional certification.

Discourse communities are a central concept in AWD. As the *Toolkit* notes, “AWD takes seriously the proposition that differences among fields have consequences for the kinds of writing pursued by members of those fields” (1). For the first portion of Navigating Communities, you will explore a variety of texts and “haunts” in your chosen field and report back about your field’s discourse community.

For this assignment, begin by searching through scholarly publications and professional websites, and answer these questions: *Where do professionals in your field hang out (intellectually)? What publications do they read? What websites do they frequent? What professional organizations do they belong to? What “big” conferences does your field hold? What are the hot button topics being discussed?*

Examine the contours of your field’s insider discourse and report back to our classroom community about how your community talks. (Group reporting)

Consider what you discover as artifacts of your discourse community. What can you tell about how your community communicates based on these artifacts? What can you conclude about the values of the community based on that language?

Think and report about these:

- *Audience:* Based on these communications, what can you tell about the community to which they speak? Think about it this way: After you’ve explored the primary outlets for your field, construct an “ideal” member of the community. What would this person know? What education would she/he have? Where might she/he work? How much money might he/she make? Thinking about the audience is thinking about the demographics of the community.
- *Style:* What words does this community use without explanation? Do members of this community use a lot of jargon? Is the tone formal, semi-formal, or informal? What level of math or science does it assume for its members? Are there more fancy words or plain words? Do sentences tend to be long and complicated or concise?
- *Design/Function:* How does this community typically present itself visually? This one may be a bit tricky, but think about it this way: Go to, say, Nascar.com. Look at how the site is

Comment [k1]: Comparing this assignment with the one provided for ENGL 3304 will again show much is the same. What is different, however, is worth noting:

- A stronger focus on communities. For this portion of the class, I grouped students by major (within health professions: physician assistants, pre-med, physical therapists, etc.) and these groups discussed their findings, working to both learn more about their respective fields and interrogate the conventions of those fields.
- A stronger focus on rhetoric. This is a product of my own shift scholarly interests. I entreated students in this version of the assignment to conduct more rigorous rhetorical analysis.

constructed. What might we be able to speculate about Nascar fans based on how this site is designed, how it is meant to appeal to its users? Now, look at all the places you've visited for your professional discourse community. Are there design trends? How does the audience determine its style? That is, what is the point of the style in terms of targeting an audience? What might the design say about both those who visit these places? What does it say about how each of the places wishes to be seen?

For your group report, you will need to focus on the *dominant impression(s)* you get from your community, but make sure you provide specific examples from specific sites and scholarly journals; document and report representative language of the more general observations you make.

Additional Help

How many individual texts and sites should you search through (and report on) for this assignment? This is a tricky question.

The short answer: **Your report will be relatively informal, so search for and report on only the most important venues in your field.**

The long answer: Let me use myself as an example. As an English scholar, if I were to collect all the publications, sites, and organizations in my whole field ("English Studies"), I could easily write a book—even a collection of books. However, while I am in the field of "English Studies" (my degrees are in "English"), my fields are composition and rhetoric. If I were to complete this assignment—if I were taking this class—I would focus on the major, most well-known, most cited publications and organizations within my *specific* fields in English Studies. The most well known organization for English Studies is the Modern Language Association (MLA). MLA covers the entire discipline and has members from all fields. I am a member of MLA, which has subgroups devoted to my areas, and hosts the scholarly journal *PMLA*. I am also a member of NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English), which is home to the flagship of rhetoric and composition: the four C's (Conference on College Composition and Communication), and its journal, the three C's (*College Composition and Communication*). All English academics are familiar with these organizations and publications, and most belong to them and read their publications.

There would be enough in these places alone to complete this assignment. However, they do not represent the entire field(s) (of rhetoric and composition), nor the discipline (English Studies). Since I am both a rhetorician and a compositionist, I would also include a couple of the major rhetoric journals (*Rhetorica*, *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, and *Rhetoric Review* spring to mind).

Keep in mind (as I would) that there are lots of people working in your field. It is your responsibility for this assignment to hunt down those people you would most like to work with—and report back on what they are talking about.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This particular assignment does not ask you to talk extensively about the *content* of the discourse. This is deliberate. You'll have to deal with content to the degree that you talk about the purpose of your collection. But you don't have to read everything (every conversation, concept, etc.) in order to perform this analysis, and you certainly don't have to understand it in full. Instead, focus on what are sometimes wrongly described as "surface features" — look, feel, and use of language. Using these rather than content, create a picture of how language is used in this community.

Sector Snapshot

Length: 1500+ words

Audience: Instructor; Group

Draft & Review: 11 February

Draft > Google Drive (Personal Folder)

Review > Google Drive (Draft + / Group Folder)

Final Version: 25 February

SUBMIT > Google Drive (Personal Folder) by 11:59PM

Put simply, Unit 2 is about *entering* professional conversations. We've talked in class about the complicated position you hold as student-professionals; this unit's goal is to push you further into the role of professional by immersing you in appropriate, field-specific discourse. In addition to this, we will spend some time discussing the function of writing and communicating within these professional contexts. This unit, then, is about reading in your chosen field, writing to professionals in that field and, finally, reflecting on how your field and your communication fit into a larger, global context.

The *Sector Snapshot* asks you to start with **one scholarly text** from your field. You will choose the text by following the leads you uncovered in *Engaging Discourse Communities*; you will then ask questions generated by the dynamic interaction between your interests and the text. Your *Sector Snapshot* will also serve as a starting point for additional research into your field. This research will ultimately culminate in the centerpiece of writing for Unit 3.

Guidelines

First, **locate a single scholarly text in your field that raises issues you think are worth exploring.** Working from this text, you will inquire into the contours of a scholarly debate.

This paper serves two purposes: the first is to define a knowledge front; the second is to locate your own relation to that front. In any field, the knowledge front is the area where questions are asked. On one side of the front are the facts, the kinds of things on which the members of the field agree without dispute. On the other side of the knowledge front is the unknown, where we do not even yet have the tools to investigate. We can define the knowledge front as the area between facts and the unknown; there, things are open to question and questions are capable of being answered.

Here are a few guiding questions: *What does this text tell you about the kinds of things people in this field are concerned with? What does it assume? What kinds of arguments does it make? What kinds of evidence does it use? In other words, from this text, what does this field or argumentative terrain look like?* Second, *a few questions about your relation to the front. Why did you choose this text? What drew you to it? What areas of dispute were immediately recognizable as such? What areas of dispute or disagreement seemed more obscure at first? Finally, what kinds of specific research questions would you like to answer, if you had the time and resources?*

This assignment is designed specifically to advance your understanding of your discipline and the relation between your discipline and your career path. **A strong paper will be characterized by an impression of carefully conducted inquiry, a close reading of the text, an attention to the audience (me; your group), and careful reflection on your own knowledge and position with respect to the field.**

Things to keep in mind:

- **Find a good article.** First, you must—I repeat, must—choose an article from an appropriate scholarly journal. All articles must be approved by me. Second, pick a good one. This may sound obvious, but it really isn't. Think first about what intrigues you about your chosen field and think about questions you may already have that you'd like to explore. Use these two points to guide you to the right article. Use a variety of search terms and don't be hasty. Engaging titles are usually indicators of good articles; however, reading abstracts (when provided) is a great way to find what you're looking for. And finally: Don't shy away from long and difficult articles. In fact, the longer, the better—not because you need to spend an inordinate amount of time reading but because the goal of this assignment is to dig (and dig deep) in to your field's discourse. You can't do that if you pick the shortest, least complicated article you find!
- **No reviews or editorials.** All scholarly journals have a variety of articles—from critical pieces that ask intriguing questions, to book reviews, to researched editorials. Stay away from the last two. While scholarly book reviews and editorials are much more involved than those you would find in magazines and newspapers, they are not original research-based writing. They are reactions to others' works. For this assignment, we're looking for original conversations.
- **A two-pronged approach.** Above, I noted that this paper serves two purposes. Don't forget this! It's really easy to fall into old patterns of research/writing behavior, where the goal is to simply comprehend and summarize. In many ways, this assignment isn't about either of those. It's about defining a knowledge front and locating your own relation to that front. *What does that mean?* Use the questions above to guide you through your reading and writing, but also try hard to position yourself in the conversation. That is, you're not reading this article to tell me what it's about; rather, *you're reading it because you want to be part of the conversation*. Understanding what's been said is a given.
- **Read and read again.** One of the primary goals of NU's First Year Writing Course is to teach you how to read with and against the grain. This is code for **critical reading**—for understanding reading not as a passive intake of information but as a dialogue between text and reader. Reading critically is *crucial* to this assignment for two reasons: 1. If you're hoping to join the conversation, you need to really engage what's being talked about. 2. If you're hoping to join the conversation, you need to know how to talk to those already in the conversation. The first point is pretty simple. Read with all your might, engage, understand, talk back, think around and through, ask questions, poke, prod, and think some more. The second one is really, really important to the goal of this assignment: Read critically to pick up on the language of your discourse community. Here again, you're used to talking about your field from the position of student (as in teacher/student, employer/employee). For this assignment, analyze how the writer talks so that you can join the conversation (the move from teacher/student to professional/professional).

3. TRANSLATION: Cross-talk Audience & Textual Analysis

Length: 1000 words

Audience: Classroom Community

Draft Due: 14 March

Draft > Google Drive (Personal Folder)
Review > Google Drive (Draft + / Group Folder)

Final Due: 18 March

SUBMIT > Google Drive (Personal Folder) by 11:59PM

We've talked a lot about the "knowledge front" and "discourse communities." By now you should be somewhat comfortable in your various academic and professional communities—you may still struggle with the more complex ideas or terms, but for the most part, you're now (have been) an insider. You don't need things explained to you the same way the general public does.

However...

As health professionals the general public is—and always will be—part of your communities. Your jobs will depend on the general public—on explaining your complex insider language in outsider terms.

The question is, are you well-versed enough to explain insider language to the general public?

For this assignment, we will look at the following types of artifacts:

- **The Translation.** A translation is simply a journalistic representation of some development within a field. Regular translation articles in scientific fields are published every Tuesday in the Science section of the *New York Times*. They invariably report on some recently published article announcing a discovery or finding. Translations are also published in social science fields and, on occasion, in the humanities. But the humanities develop less by means of "discovery" than the sciences, so developments in the humanities rarely lead to a translation article (exceptions include a newly discovered literary work — a new poem of the ancient Greek poet Sappho was recently found, for example, and it made the news.)
- **The Explainer.** An explainer article is a kind of academic piggy-back article accompanying a larger piece or series dealing with non-academic issues. Explainer articles are needed when a public debate or event seems to open the door to the misunderstanding of technical or academic issues, and so the public needs to have the technical or academic issue clarified. Recent examples of such issues and explainer questions include the rebuilding of the World Trade Center site (how do architects design safe buildings?), the 2000 election controversy (how do electronic voting machines work anyway? Why do we have an electoral college?), political nominations of ambassadors and judges (what are the normal contexts for recess appointments? What kinds of questions should a nominee have to answer?), the prison abuse scandal (how does the US interpret its obligations under international law on the issue of torture?), and so forth. The explainer article is generally informative, and resembles a reference document in some respects. However, it is always occasioned by some development in the news or in social life outside of the thing explained.
- **The Profile.** A profile is a journalistic biography of a "star" academic or other important person in a knowledge-related field. The person profiled will have made some significant contribution to an academic or other field, yet will not typically be well known to the

public. A profile may include selections from an interview either with the person profiled or with that person's colleagues, allies, and rivals.

- **The Review.** A book review summarizes the main argument of a book in an academic or scholarly field and evaluates its success and importance. Effective reviews interpret the book they are reviewing in terms of their potential contribution to the field, and also have the character of explaining that field to outsiders. Really interesting reviews use the occasion of the book review as a kind of springboard to a larger argument. The best sources for model book reviews include *The New York Review of Books*, the *New York Times Book Review*, and the more serious weekly magazines (such as *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, *Commentary*, *The National Review*, etc.).
- **The Op-Ed.** An op-ed is an argument developed for a general audience on an issue related to scholarship or the academy. Many op-eds have been published recently on the public statements of President Bush on evolution and "intelligent design." Some op-eds advocate understanding an issue in public life within the terms of a specific field. For example, a recent op-ed by David Brooks in the *New York Times* discussed the usefulness of what Brooks called "cultural geography" in understanding regional conflict.

Though not lengthy, these types of popularization present specific writing challenges. Popular genres are various yet tightly constrained. We will begin by gathering popular pieces related to your field and determining their criteria for success. You will then choose a specific piece of writing in a specific genre and analyze it in relationship to the ideas it popularizes. In a sense, you will work backwards in an effort to see what may or may not have been "lost in translation."

Although genres of popularization vary greatly, they have some things in common. In addition to the overall features we look for in AWD, we will look specifically for the following elements:

- A concise introduction (or lead) that sets the stage for the rest of the article, including both its subject and its context.
- Appeals to audience investment: these may include a human-interest dimension, careful use of tone (including humor), invitations to understand the academic field and its importance for them, and so forth.
- Effective highlighting of salient details.
- Syntax and vocabulary used at a level consistent with your proposed audience.
- A high level of clarity.
- A responsible and careful attention to possible counter-perspectives, qualifications, and limitations.

You may find that some of the values you uncover conflict with each other. For example, a writer wants to explain a point concisely to the general public. This calls for a kind of language use that tends toward generalization. Yet the writer also wants to attend to counter-perspectives and so forth. How can the writer do both? How can the writer be responsible toward the nuances of the field while maintaining a rhetorical stance consistent with appealing to a general audience? This dialogue among values will constitute the major rhetorical inquiry in this project.

Your unit paper (both draft and final) should be preceded by a one-paragraph reflective note to the reader explaining your choice of subject.

E-FOLIO

Unit	Assignment	Points
E-Folio (20%)	Goals	150
	Organization & Style	50
	Total	200

No matter what the tools used to create them... writing portfolios offer, most importantly, the chance to collect, select, and reflect.

-- Kathleen Blake Yancey

In *Portfolio Teaching*, Nedra Reynolds and Rich Rice break the types of writing portfolios down into two basic categories: portfolios for learning and best-works portfolios. “**Learning portfolios**,” they note, “are specifically designed to benefit learners, with or without evaluation. When students are assigned to keep a learning portfolio, they are invited to collect, select, and reflect on artifacts to include in a portfolio for their own benefit, not to prove to a teacher... they should pass a course.” Furthermore, “learning portfolios invite students to collect or create artifacts—essays, photographs, charts, letters, notes, and so on—that best represent their experience and engagement with the learning process” of a course.

While **best-works portfolios** also promote and sustain learning, their focus “shifts from the learning process to the final product. Students who create best-works portfolios produce a number of pieces or projects and then choose those they consider best to include.” Reynolds and Rice also break this category down into two types: evaluation and presentation. However, both types “showcase a final product... These types of portfolios vary widely, but they share a similar goal: to show someone else what the portfolio keeper has learned, or to convince an audience of the portfolio keeper’s achievements, abilities, or talents.”

The key difference between learning and best-works portfolios, then, is audience. Learning portfolios are reflexive and, to an extent, self-motivated. They are produced for the benefit of the writer, for an audience of one. Best-works portfolios, on the other hand, are explicitly intended for an outside audience. Whether that audience is a teacher, friend, or the general public, the portfolio moves beyond tracking personal goals and learning to a demonstration of those goals and learning for the benefit of others.

This leads to an important question for the creation of your E-Folio:

What kind of portfolio should it be?

The answer...

ASSIGNMENT

Create an E-Folio representative of the work you’ve produced in this course. Your E-Folio should be *explicitly* intended for an outside audience and it should include evidence of your learning and growth. In this respect, your Final E-Folio should take the elements of a learning portfolio and turn them into a best-works portfolio.

REQUIREMENTS

- Your folio should “showcase” your compositions from this course.
- Your folio should present reflection on your writing/composing/communication development.
- Your folio should describe your approach to achieving assignment goals for **EACH project included in your folio**.

Comment [k1]: This is indicative of what I have assigned students with regard to producing “efolios” for all my writing courses.

For this iteration, I opted for more of a “showcase” folio instead of a collected works learning folio. My folio guidelines for first-year writing courses have generally required students to include most, if not all, of their writings for the course. However, I have become increasingly interested in how the “electronic” element of an e-folio allows for a more curated selection and presentation, and the idea that students can learn to select the right kinds of materials to represent their investment(s) in their courses speaks to both my concerns with skill transfer and recursive writing processes.

I am happy to share examples upon request.

- Your folio should evaluate our **projects'** significance to the development of your composing and communication skills. (It would be good to think and write about your development not just for this course but since you began "seriously" communicating as an academic and/or professional.)
- Your folio should be presented using internet-based electronic platform Wordpress.com
- Your folio should be logically organized and easy to navigate. **Remember:** This folio should operate as a showcase portfolio intended for an **outside audience**.
- Be sure to proofread all writing and test all hyperlinks and media. Broken links and/or multimedia that doesn't properly load for external viewers will affect your grade.
- Be sure to cite sources where appropriate.

Final E-Folio Assessment Rubric:

	Outstanding	Exceeds	At standard	Low	Poor	Points Available
Assignment Goals						
The E-folio succinctly and effectively presents reflection on the composer's development.	100-99	98-90	89-80	79-70	69-0	50
The E-folio adequately describes the composer's approach to achieving assignment goals for included projects.	50-49	48-45	44-40	39-35	34-0	50
The E-folio shows adequate evaluation of included projects' significance to developing composition/communication skills.	50-49	48-45	44-40	39-35	34-0	50
Organization & Style						
E-folio is logically organized and easy to follow. Composer places a high priority on clarity and highlighting of important details. E-folio exhibits attention to style, design, and engaging delivery. Format is effective and consistent throughout, and visuals are used appropriately and effectively. Composer has clearly demonstrated college-level effort. Writing is error-free.	100-97	96-90	89-80	79-70	69-0	50
Total						300