

ENGL 5000 MATC Portfolio Capstone Fall 2020

Instructor Information:

Course day, time, and location:

Course Description & Introduction

Although this workshop-based, capstone course will support you to create a portable digital portfolio, the overarching goal is to produce and articulate a *professional identity* based in reflective, collaborative practices bolstered by rigorous theoretical framing. Consequently, you are invited to develop a portfolio that contains a set of artifacts (things you have produced) for specific audiences and purposes in alignment with your professional identity and the MATC program outcomes as described in the Graduate Student Handbook. Your sense of professional identity as a competent technical communicator will vary depending on your goals and career trajectory. The capstone experience can help you to synthesize content from your work throughout the program as you recognize habits of mind, skills, and key theoretical or methodological approaches that emerged across your programmatic experiences.

Rather than simply making an attractive document, your goal is to produce a portfolio of revised artifacts grounded in core curricular concepts and skills. Ultimately, a well-composed portfolio demonstrates a clear sense of professional identity, ability to reflect upon and illustrate skills, and preparedness to transition to another setting (e.g., the workplace, the academy, a doctoral program).

Questions you're invited to explore include:

- How do I develop a portfolio that showcases my rhetorical finesse, design savvy, and academic acumen?
- What is a 'bridge' portfolio, and how do I adapt it for different audiences and purposes?
- Why is theoretical framing important for portfolio development and artifact revision?
- How do I showcase ethical communication competencies and why does it matter in a portfolio?
- What are distinctions between an industry-, teaching-, or research-focused portfolio, and what role does academic framing play across these genre variations?

Course Learning Objectives/Consequences

The capstone course supports you to meet department, university, and professional outcomes expected of MATC degree holders, which suggests that after this course you can:

- synthesize individual and collaborative revision and development processes to better organize, format, frame, and clearly showcase professional and technical communication prowess;
- engage with and integrate theories, concepts, and frameworks from technical communication and/or rhetorical scholarship;
- employ a variety of appropriate communication technologies and medias in the service of supporting a professional identity;
- demonstrate rhetorical awareness of effective portfolio design by creating appropriate and user-centered technical documentation justified with relevant theory;

- devise a more informed theoretical and rhetorical framework for portfolio artifacts, particularly one that demonstrates sensitivity to the ethical, professional, and cultural issues that face technical communicators;
- revise existing artifacts and provide effective critical feedback in alignment with professional expectations, and
- apply professional development skills and genre research to create an effective portfolio, dossier, and employment materials that demonstrate the capacity to enter the workforce in technical communication as advanced hires, OR to enter doctoral programs in rhetoric, technical communication, and related fields.

Recommended Materials

Johnson-Eilola, J. & Selber, S. (Eds.) (2013). *Solving problems in technical communication*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. (This text may assist students who find that they have gaps in their knowledge and need a useful reference.)

Other requirements include the following:

- portfolio-worthy artifacts that you generated in other courses, internships, or appropriate contexts;
- internet access and access to Zoom, or other communication software, per the instructor’s request for synchronous class discussion;
- access to Slack (or other collaboration tool of instructor’s choice like Teams) for written correspondence;
- website platform of your choice and ISP to host your work;
- OneDrive access for some assignment submissions;
- other technologies for document design, data visualization, and task management.

Assignments & Grading

Assignments	
<i>Note that this table provides a brief overview. More detailed assignment descriptions are below.</i>	
Short assignments (100 each)	900
Preparedness and participation	400
Digital Portfolio with Revised Artifacts	1500
Portfolio Proposal and Needs Memo	200
Portfolio Progress and Needs Memo	200
Synthesis Statement	1000
Portfolio Presentation	600
Next Steps Memo	200
Total Points Possible	5000

Percentage
100 = A+
99-96 = A
95-91 = A-
90-86 = B+
85-81 = B
80-76 = B-
75-71 = C+
70-66 = C
65-61 = C-
60-55 = D
<55 = F

Evaluation Criteria for Your Work

- Work attends to appropriate audience expectations

- Demonstrated evidence of research requested in/for the assignment
- Clear evidence of significant engagement with the assignments
- Work is well-written and is polished, proofread, and edited
- Clear communication of thought-processes and theoretical framing
- Work presents a clear, coherent, and consistent professional identity
- Work illustrates understanding of communication as rhetorical, cultural, and ethical acts
- Work demonstrates attention to design principles appropriate for the audience, genre, and purpose
- Work is technically correct and accurate (e.g., links work, accounts for or conforms to genre conventions)

Primary assignments include a professional digital portfolio, revision of existing artifacts, portfolio proposal and needs memo, progress and needs memo, synthesis statement, portfolio presentation, and next-steps memo. Secondary assignments (listed in the first table below), contribute to your professional development and are designed to assist you with the primary assignments.

Portfolio Proposal and Needs Memo

Due week 2 – 200 points (Maximum 3pgs.)

Though your digital portfolio has a relatively broad audience, the memo's audience is your capstone instructor and your peers. The proposal should address what artifacts you intend to revise for use in the digital portfolio and why you are selecting the artifacts that you do and for what purpose and how far along you are on your revisions. For example, if you want an industry-focused portfolio because you want to be a technical writer at a software development firm, then you might include usability testing documents, a before-and-after website revision, or an instruction set that you created in a UX course or internship setting. The needs portion of the memo ought to include what you need from your peers and instructor to help you improve and better articulate your professional identity and competence to an outside audience. For example, if you're a high school teacher and you want to incorporate technical communication skills into your curriculum, your needs may include working with other students who have an interest in educational settings. Conversely, maybe you know that you're not strong on web design or need assistance with articulating theoretical framing of artifacts. You can indicate this in your memo. You can also propose the digital platform/software you are leaning toward as the digital portfolio delivery method.

Portfolio Progress and Needs Memo

Due week 8 – 200 points (Maximum 2pgs.)

The audience and purpose of this document is the same as the initial proposal and needs memo. However, now that you've determined what artifacts to select, have begun to revise them, and have selected a web platform for the digital portfolio, you ought to be able to articulate your progress and may find that your needs have changed. The assignment is designed to support you to communicate both your progress and your current needs to yourself, your peer cohort, and your instructor

Synthesis Statement

Rough draft due week 12; Final draft due week 14 – 1000 points (3-5 pgs.)

Check-in/Peer Review due week 12

The audience for this statement is your instructor, peers, and, potentially, TCR faculty on the MATC portfolio review committee, assuming you use a version of the document as part of your MATC portfolio to earn your MATC degree designation.

Ultimately, this statement supports the TCR faculty, the department chair, graduate studies director, and invested parties to work together to determine how well the MATC program serves students, meets the university's rigor, and advances the profession. Put otherwise, faculty and department leadership pay close attention to the courses, the requirements, student experiences, professional development, and student opportunities beyond the degree. The TCR faculty, graduate director, and department chair want to understand the identities, experiences, and opportunities you've gleaned in and outside of the MATC programmatic objectives.

The purpose of this 3-5 page essay is to:

- **Reflect** on your student experiences to synthesize and frame your experiences and artifacts in a rhetorically robust manner. A chronological narrative or course-by-course narrative will not do. To form a professional sense of identity requires more of you than a timeline. It requires an overarching theme or theoretical framework or ideas to which you return and can articulate. It can involve metaphor, a position title, an orientation to research or to experience. For example, someone attuned to accessibility concerns in technical communication might see that thread play out in the topics or approaches they choose to focus on in different projects across several courses. A person interested in teaching may find that a metaphorical connection to "liveliness" or "gaming" stretches across course contexts, which can act as a unifying theme for how s/he wishes to approach her portfolio and artifacts holistically.
- As you reflect on your work, revised artifacts, and digital portfolio, evaluate your processes, skills, and competencies. Then, put these in **context** with your professional career goals, identity, and socio-historical, cultural context of the profession you seek to enter or in which you wish to advance or excel.
- Include self-assessment of your skill set in tandem with the professional context you want to enter/excel and the academic framework(s) relevant to that professional domain. How and why have you developed your expertise in X or Y through your coursework, projects, internships, teaching, etc.? You ought to point to artifacts that demonstrate your skill and academic development.

The essay ought to support you to draw from and reflexively engage your experiences in the MATC program. Creating this essay can also support you to articulate your portfolio choices in your capstone presentation for the course and elsewhere as you see fit (e.g., in an interview, in an exit survey for the department, to your friends and family, to industry or academic professionals).

Professional Digital Portfolio

Due finals week – 1500 points (Include a hyperlink to your digital portfolio in your Next Steps Memo assignment to formally turn in the portfolio.)

Check-in/Peer Review due dates weeks 8 and 12

You'll research, select, and use a web content management system (e.g., [Drupal](#), [Wordpress](#), [Adobe Experience](#), [Joomla](#), [ExpressionEngine](#), [SquareSpace](#), [Weebly](#), and [Wix](#)) to create a professional web-based portfolio that adheres to usability and accessibility standards important for professional, ethical communication. The portfolio should include the following content: a rhetorically-nuanced synthesis statement (as described below) that incorporates scholarly

resources to contextualize and explain portfolio choices and artifacts, a short biography of relevant experience related to the portfolio context and artifacts included, and 4 or 5 thoroughly-revised artifacts from course or internship experiences. Your digital portfolio may have print-worthy components within it that are scalable and useful in non-digital contexts like an in-person interview.

The audience and purpose for this digital portfolio is three-fold. First, a digital portfolio *represents* your work to the working world. As such, you tailor your portfolio for the professional conversation you wish to enter or in which you want to advance. Thus, you'll need to research that audience and understand the genre conventions of digital portfolios in those places/spaces, which requires talking to professionals in the domains you wish to enter. Second, the most immediate audience for this portfolio is your capstone course instructor and your cohort of peers. Together, they act as a bridge between you and outside audiences. Third, *after* you have completed your capstone course and *before* you can be conferred a degree, an *ad hoc* committee of TCR faculty must pass or fail your final MATC portfolio. Their assessment is based upon programmatic learning objectives specified in the graduate handbook. Hence, the portfolio's audience and purpose in the third instance means that you need to demonstrate your competence in keeping with programmatic objectives and academic rigor, which the capstone, as a penultimate step, should help you to accomplish.

Portfolio Presentation

Due finals week – 600 points (10 mins.)

As you prepare your digital portfolio presentation, have a public audience of professionals in mind. The ideal audience is industry professionals and TCR faculty.

You'll have ten minutes to present your professional identity to an audience of your peers, instructor, and potentially outside faculty and/or industry professionals subject to the instructor's preferences. The portfolio is your tool to illustrate your key skills, showcase work, and demonstrate your academic acumen.

Your presentation is your moment to shine. You can showcase your work, your philosophical approach to the work you do, and your developmental potential.

The presentation structure may be narrative (a story); it may be skill-focused (e.g., focused on UX, or accessibility, or inclusion, or open access), or it could be a combination. You ought to bring to bear coursework, internship, teaching, or other experience that inform your professional identity, focusing on transformative moments during your time in the MATC program. Avoid tedious step-by-step "how-tos" or a rote artifact-by-artifact laundry-list of features. Instead, synthesize for your audience your identity as a professional. Your goal is to address a compound question: Who are you; what can you do, and *why* do you do things as you do?

Your audience wants to know the answers for multiple reasons. First, it's important to illustrate your individual know-how. Second, it's important to the program leadership because your response also helps others to understand how/what the *program* does to adequately prepare you for next steps beyond the academy. Finally, the *why* aspect points to your deeper ethical, cultural, and rhetorical commitments. It's the "so-what" that can make a significant impression. If it's missing or composed solely of whistles-and-bells, that leaves a blemish.

Next Steps Memo

Due Week 15 finals week – 200 points (1-2 pgs.)

This reflective memo allows you to process your presentation performance and consider next steps in your portfolio and artifact revision process before you submit your digital portfolio as part of your MATC degree requirement. **Please include a hyperlink to your final digital portfolio in the memo, so the instructor can evaluate your portfolio.**

Policies/Procedures

Individual instructors should add their own policies beyond O.P.#s or descriptions.

Short Assignments

Short assignments descriptions are referenced within the weekly course schedule.

Number	Description
One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share your c.v. or resume, a brief professional bio (250-300 words), and a short list of potential career objectives you have in mind to Slack before class starts • Consider what artifacts/assignments you've completed for courses or internships that you feel best demonstrate your skills or interests • Create a list of 3 to 5 that you'd like to revise this semester • Note the following relevant to your artifacts: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) the context in which you created the work 2) what you did to produce the work 3) the skills you think the work illustrates
Two	<p>In peer mentor groups, identify and exchange at least two artifacts you each wish to revise and use in your portfolio. Seek and provide feedback on each artifact before Week 7.</p> <p>Find three digital portfolios for people who have the position to which you aspire or a job you want.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a one- to two-paragraph analysis of each person's professional identity as represented in the portfolios • Analyze things the portfolios have in common • Evaluate distinctions that make a difference • Consider what makes them effective or less effective • Be prepared to share your observations and the sample portfolios in break-out sessions or as a group
Three	<p>Find and research three different content management web technologies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a one- to two-paragraph analysis of each software platform's affordances and constraints • Analyze things the platforms have in common • Evaluate distinctions that make a difference (e.g., usability, accessibility, scalability, conversion to print...) • Consider what makes each platform effective or less effective for professional use/display • Be prepared to share your observations and the platforms in break-out sessions or as a group
Four	<p>You'll need to conduct at least two informational interviews over the next couple of weeks. You will need to identify individuals, contact each, arrange a meeting, prepare</p>

	<p>for it, and follow up with a thank you. The idea here is to find people who have a position you'd like to have in the future and learn how they arrived at their position. This is both a networking opportunity <i>and</i> an opportunity to evaluate the skills you have in tandem with the professional identity you wish to craft.</p> <p>For the second part of this activity, you'll need to address the questions below, create informal notes to share with peers, and discuss the results in break-out rooms or in a whole-class discussion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •What did you learn about each person's position? •What did you learn about each person's path to that position? •What did you learn that might support you to align your portfolio, revised artifacts, and theoretical framing to make yourself a strong candidate for such a position? •What insights did you gain about yourself and your MATC programmatic experiences in light of these conversations?
Five	<p>Assemble a collection of things that contribute to design choices you want to make informed by the professional identity you wish to project. Think broadly and visually (e.g., logos, websites, infographics, advertisements, images, colors...). These can serve as inspiration for typefaces, color scheme, graphics, and photos i.e., visual rhetoric). Ponder the following question: What visual narrative do I want to portray, and how do I want to represent my work and professional identity to others?</p>
Six	<p>Create a paper prototype of what you'd like your digital portfolio home page to look like and do. Include the navigation bar. Explain a key feature or two that you intend to have (e.g., roll over text, voice-over descriptions, meta tags, color scheme, fonts...). List a few questions you have regarding your design, navigation, or features. Be prepared to show the result and discuss your design and navigation choices with peers and your instructor in class.</p>
Seven	<p>Draft the text for the home page of your portfolio site. Consider the ideal audience, user, and purpose of this initial bit of text, as it is the introduction to your professional identity. Jot down concerns, questions, etc. you have about your draft for which you'd like feedback.</p>
Eight	<p>Create short descriptions of, or introductions to, the 4 or 5 artifacts you intend to include as part of your portfolio website. Keep in mind that you can include these descriptions either in your synthesis statement or within the portfolio web pages. The descriptions assist you to tell the story of your professional identity or identity formation, depending on where you are in your career trajectory.</p>
Nine	<p>Provide strengths/weaknesses feedback to your peer partner(s) via Slack on their presentations. Address the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •What sense of professional identity did you take from your peer's presentation? •What was particularly strong in your peer's work? •What could use improvement in your peer's work? •Based upon your peer's short presentation how do (or do) you have a sense of who the person is, know what s/he can do, and <i>why</i> he or she does things as s/he does within the work as presented?

Schedule

Week	Work Due	Activities
One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short assignment 1 • Slack or other get-to-know-you introductory post 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • course intro.; intro to portfolios • assignments overview • reading discussion • artifact revisions – selection discussion • IRB participation request
Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal and needs memo due to Slack or another platform of instructor’s choice • Read Mather’s “Your Online Portfolio: The Rights and Wrongs” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • break-out room and broader discussion of memo content • identify semester-long cohort teams based on memo
Three	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short assignment 2 • Before class upload your short analyses of 3 examples of individual’s professional identity as represented in each person’s portfolio. Include a link to each portfolio example 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • break-out room discussion with peer partner(s) regarding the type of feedback you need on your artifacts • discussion of portfolio examples and professional identity portrayed therein
Four	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short assignment 3 • Before class, upload your analyses to Slack 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discussion of the affordances and constraints of different platforms you have researched
Five	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short assignment 4 • Reading/viewing on networking and building a mentor “tree” • Read Harvard Business Review’s “How to get the most out of an informational interview” • Resource: Zhang’s “Three Steps” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discussion of potential informational interview questions and professional networking strategies • collaborative drafting of potential questions and email introduction verbiage
Six	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short assignment 5 <p>Below are linked resources on design thinking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White Space is Not Your Enemy • Five Design Principles for Building Your First Portfolio • Information Design Rules • 5 Principles for Choosing and Using Typefaces • Tools: • Adobe Color generator • Web Accessibility Checker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discussion of your initial design ideas and how you want to project your professional identity via your portfolio object and artifacts • Short writing assignment in Slack based on the reading and post-discussion reflection
Seven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short assignments 6 & 7 • Before class have your paper prototype prepared and scanned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discussion of your prototypes’ pros/cons • discussion of website navigation and categories

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Have your home page text available for screen-sharing •Your feedback to your peer(s) on his/her artifacts <i>must</i> be complete and returned no later than today •Read McGovern's "Seven Principles of Effective Digital Navigation" •Look at different types of website navigation ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •break-out room discussion of feedback exchange and home page text revision workshopping
Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Short assignment 4, second part •Before class begins please post the results of your informational interviews to Slack •Please upload your portfolio progress and needs memo to OneDrive (or other instructor-approved platform) by the end of class this evening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •discussion of what you gleaned from your informational interviews either in break-out rooms or in open discussion •in-class writing •midterm feedback survey subject to instructor's discretion
Nine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Short assignment 8 •Upload artifact descriptions to Slack or other platform before class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •discussion and feedback on description verbiage and professional identity
Ten	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Before class begins have some online web content created in platform of your choice. Incorporate your revised home page text and set up navigation etc. •Create an ISP and establish domain name in platform of your choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Web creation workshop
Eleven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Before class begins have at least two artifacts placed into your website and include the descriptions in some manner (e.g., as roll-over text, as captions, linked) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Graphic design and visual rhetoric workshop
Twelve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Upload a rough draft of your synthesis statement to OneDrive for peer workshopping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Synthesis statement workshop in break-out teams

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Working draft of digital portfolio due for in-class workshopping 	
Thirteen		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Artifact revisions and web workshopping •Presentation criteria discussion •Course design feedback to TCR faculty team
Fourteen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Synthesis statement due to OneDrive or another platform of instructor's choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Artifact revisions and web workshopping •Presentation workshopping •Course evaluations
Fifteen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Presentations due (if created in a slide format) should be uploaded to OneDrive or platform of instructor's choice before class begins •Short assignment 9 •Digital portfolios should be completed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Presentations •Slack commentary on presentations sent to individuals by teammates via instant message before the weekend
Finals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Next steps memo due to OneDrive or another platform of instructor's choice. <u><i>Include a link to your digital portfolio within the memo.</i></u> 	