

# WRIT 326 Advanced Writing

## Course Syllabus – Fall 2020

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Wilson 1-123, noon-12:50pm, Weds

via WebEx: <https://montana.webex.com/meet/x58t486>

Course Website: D2L

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Office Hours via Webex: Weds 11:00-11:45 and by appointment

### **Course Description and Learning Objectives**

What makes writing “advanced” is a bit fuzzy. We could say that less experienced writers think writing longer / “bigger” pieces is harder than writing shorter pieces, while “advanced” writers know the opposite is true. Or we could say, “advanced” writing means writing that gets beyond the writing taught and practiced in school classrooms—and thus our ironic mission is to use school to practice “unschooled” writing. We do have to reject the mathematical thinking of “levels” of writing ability that too often accompany the notion of *advanced*—writing doesn’t work in levels and quanta, but in *time* and *extent*. “Advanced” writing really just means *more*—more writing, more time, more experience.

Thus, WRIT 326 puts you in writing situations that advance nonfiction writing beyond classrooms: collaborative, applied, client-driven, multimodal, designed, iteratively developed with reader input, stylistically aware and refined, and economical. Our focus this semester will not be academic or scholarly; it will move among story-based and community-based projects, telling stories of and addressing problems of real people with real needs. We’ll discuss problems of becoming informed on a subject, using readers’ time well, working with other owners of a writing project, and being mindful of style. The course is, foremost, a space for writing, rewriting, reading, and offering feedback on writing—“advanced” because it is, by definition, more than you’ve previously done, and, I hope, a greater degree of *freedom* than you’re used to in schooled writing. (Which will lead, paradoxically, to the limits of a writer’s freedom once writing has consequences beyond a grade and an ecology beyond a single student and teacher.)

Concretely, then, our foci in WRIT 236 will include

- Style – manipulating sentences for sound and conciseness
- Research – developing the information and background material a document needs given its exigence and genre
- Storytelling – using narrative, character, conflict, plot points, and research to tell nonfiction stories
- Genres – writing reviews, magazine features, and other nonfiction texts
- Applied Rhetoric – principles for analyzing a writing ecology and exigence to shape a text

By the end of the course, you should

- Understand how elements of storytelling function in various nonfiction genres
- Build experience managing complex collaborative writing projects on spec for clients
- Apply rhetorical strategies for considering the writing ecologies and exigences of texts you compose
- Gain confidence and experience in several nonfiction genres
- Gain practice with style and editing to write more concisely and with greater control

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**Course Texts**

- *Telling True Stories*, ed. Mark Kramer and Wendy Call – Plume/Penguin, 2007. ISBN 9780452287556
- A range of short texts posted as PDFs in D2L’s “Readings” page.

*As the course unfolds, our conversations may lead me to ask you to purchase one or two other books that lend themselves to our direction. You’ll be able to find these used and get them quickly; please budget about \$25 for this eventuality.*

**Coursework**

• Engagement in class meetings, workshopping, reading	10%
• Weekly Writing	15%
• Reviews (2)	10%
• Style Revision	10%
• Collaborative Client Project	20%
• Magazine Feature Story	20%
• Final Portfolio and Learning Reflection (letter-graded)	<u>15%</u>
	100%

**Evaluation and Grading**

**All work except the final portfolio will receive credit grades** rather than letter grades: full credit, no credit, partial credit, and extra credit. *Full credit* is given for work which is, simply, done well to a reasonable standard per assignment guidelines; *partial credit* is earned by work that is submitted but is notably poor. Work not submitted or not at all responding to the assignment guidelines receives *no credit*. *Extra credit* acknowledges work which rises well above the typical standard the majority of the class achieves.

**Letter Grades** are reserved for pieces in the Final Portfolio. I’ll judge writing quality by these traits:

- Design that matches intended genre and/or assignment guidelines
- Reader awareness and appropriateness of document for user needs, values, and expectations
- Clarity of arguments or storylines and strength of support for them
- Attribution and other source use appropriate to genre/assignment and reader’s needs
- Careful stylistic crafting of writing and document design
- Editing and proofreading

**A** writing shows little or no weakness in any of these traits.

**B** writing shows some weakness in some traits.

**C** writing shows some weakness in most traits, or great weakness in some.

**D** writing shows some weakness in all traits, or great weakness in most.

**F** writing shows great weakness in all traits.

**Writing letter grade → equivalent percentage of project credit earned**

A+	100%	B+	88%	C+	78%	D+	68%	F	50-0%
A	95	B	85	C	75	D	65		
A-	92	B-	82	C-	72	D-	62		

**Collaborative Projects**

On collaborative projects (i.e. Discussion Docs and Story of Place), your credit depends in part on your contribution *as rated by the professor and your teammates*. You will be required to account for your specific contributions to collaborative projects. Students who fail to contribute will have their credit for the project distributed among the other teammates as extra credit.

## Course Policies

- **Appreciation of and Respect for Diversity:** It is my intent that students of all backgrounds be well-served by this course. I view the diversity brought by members of this class as a resource, strength, and delight. It is therefore my intent to incorporate materials and activities that are aware and respectful of gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, religion, culture, and other background characteristics. I encourage and appreciate your respect for these values, as well as your suggestions about how to improve the value of diversity in this course. I expect class members to respect differences and diligently work to understand how other peoples' perspectives, behaviors, and worldviews may differ from their own.
- **Attendance of required weekly meetings is expected.** Excessive tardiness or partial attendance count against your Participation grade, and missing an excessive amount of required class meetings will put you at risk of failing the course. *See also "Health-Related Class Absences" on the following page.*
- **Your work in this class is always public.** Don't submit writing you can't let us all read.
- **Ethical interaction with people you write about and for** is a central concern in this class, since we will be telling real stories with real people. You don't have journalist or employee credentials, but *you can and should identify yourself to people you're interviewing and to clients as "a student researcher at MSU,"* and if more detail is needed, as a member of this Advanced Writing class. Further, you are at all times responsible to *use information that people give you ethically*, and to honor any promises you make to them about keeping particular information private.
- **Collaboration is highly encouraged**—real writers write with readers.
- I decide whether to accept **late work** case-by-case. Do not assume yes or no; check with me. (When other students will be significantly disadvantaged by your extra time, as on Discussion Docs or the Final Portfolio, there will be a credit penalty.)
- If your **work becomes lost or missing**, you must provide another copy upon request.
- Writing that was or will be submitted for other assignments in other courses will not usually be accepted here too. You may work on the same problems, but **not double-dip** the writing itself.
- **Plagiarism:** You are responsible for acknowledging source material in your writing. Cheating—whether by claiming others' work as your own (fraud) or by fabricating material—will result in a course grade of F and a report to the Dean of Students.
- **Students with Disabilities:** If you are a student with a disability and wish to use your approved accommodations for this course, please contact me to discuss. Please have your Accommodation Notification or Blue Card available for verification of accommodations. Accommodations are approved through the Office of Disability Services located in SUB 174. See the [Disability Services website](#) for additional information.
- **I reserve final discretion in adjusting grades to account for unanticipated circumstances.**
- **I may use copies of your work**, anonymously, as samples in future classes or for research.
- **Your continued enrollment in this course constitutes your acceptance of this syllabus and its policies.**

### **Covid-Related Course and University Policies**

- **Wearing masks in classrooms is required.** Face coverings are required in all indoor spaces and all enclosed or partially enclosed outdoor spaces. MSU requires all students to wear face masks or cloth face coverings in classrooms, laboratories and other similar spaces where in-person instruction occurs. MSU requires the wearing of masks in physical classrooms to help mitigate the transmission of SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19. The MSU community views the adoption of these practices as a mark of good citizenship and respectful care of fellow classmates, faculty, and staff. You can read [complete details about MSU's mask requirement here](#) and see [additional information on MSU's covid response here](#). **Compliance with the face-covering protocol is expected.** If you do not comply with a classroom rule, you may be requested to leave class; continued failure to comply can result in your dismissal from the course via [a university-approved procedure](#) (see also Section 460.00 of the [MSU Code of Student Conduct](#) on “disruptive student behavior”). **Individuals whose unique personal circumstances require an exception** to the face covering requirement, as indicated by a medical professional, may request one in accordance with the campus ADA policies. Students should contact MSU's Office of Disability Services at 994-2824 or [drv@montana.edu](mailto:drv@montana.edu) to receive written permission for this exception.
  
- **Health-Related Class Absences:**
  - Please evaluate your own health status regularly and **refrain from attending class and other on-campus events if you are ill.** *You will be able to access course materials online.*
  - You are encouraged to seek appropriate medical attention for treatment of illness.
  - **In the event of contagious illness, please do not come to class or to campus.** Notify me by email about your absence as soon as practical, so that I can accommodate your circumstances.
  - **Documentation (a Doctor's note) for medical excuses is NOT required.** MSU University Health Partners - as part their commitment to maintain patient confidentiality, to encourage more appropriate use of healthcare resources, and to support meaningful dialogue between instructors and students - does not provide such documentation.
  - Because this is a blended class with built-in accommodations for online-only attendance and workflow, **students who become ill or are required to quarantine should still be able to complete the course as long as they can stay in communication with me** and continue to submit a majority of coursework. So: please don't worry; we'll probably find a way to make it work even if you don't have a healthy semester—just stay in touch.
  
- **In Case of Instructor Absences:** In the event that I become ill during the semester, I will be following the same procedures as you: getting medical confirmation on the nature of the illness and staying at home in the event of a contagious illness.
  - If I become unable to attend onsite class meetings, I will notify you immediately and we will withdraw to all-online meetings (that is, onsite meetings in the class schedule will be held via WebEx) until I'm able to return to campus.
  - If I become unable to teach the course, you'll receive instructions from Dr. Kirk Branch, Chair of the English Department. It is my intention, though, to ensure that all the resources you need for the course, minus my smiling face and completely literal sense of humor, will be available on our D2L site, so that brief times of away-ness on my part need not interrupt your workflow.
  
- **If the University Reverts to Online-Only Instruction:** In the event that MSU is forced to close campus and put all instruction online during the Fall semester, we will withdraw to all-online meetings as described above, and I will be in close communication with you immediately on any alterations to our class plans as a result. However, I've designed the class in anticipation of such eventualities, and any necessary moves online and back to onsite should be manageable with a minimum of fuss (if not minimal disappointment).

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## Assignment Guides

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### Weekly Writings (Discussion and Writing Group)

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*Throughout the course I'll assign a weekly short writing to be shared with your Discussion/Writing group. Subjects of these writings will vary; they will draw from work the class is currently doing, and emphasize practice of particular abilities, discussion of readings, or reflection on learning.*

Our Advanced Writing course wants you to be, first and foremost, *writing a lot* and *reading each other's writing*. While our major projects throughout the semester will be one opportunity for that, you also need more regular and shorter writings to develop and exchange. For that, I'll give you Weekly Writing prompts that will emerge from the class's progress and projects throughout the semester. Typical assignments might be to imitate a particular style of writing in one of our readings or to rewrite a piece in order to condense and sharpen it; or to discuss one of our readings; or to reflect on your writing process.

We'll handle the mechanics of composing and exchanging these writings via a Google Doc which will be maintained by a 4-member Discussion/Writing group. In a given week, each member will add their writing to the document, and then other members will respond to it using the Comments function.

#### Guidelines

- I will maintain a [Prompts document](#) in the [Weekly Writings google Drive folder](#), adding to it week by week. For a given week's writing, you'll look at the current prompt there.
- Prompts will suggest a length for the week's writing—usually this will be in the range of a single-spaced page, but this may vary by the specific activity being assigned.
- Be sure to *sign your work* at the top so that other readers and I know who has contributed what to your group's document.
- Each group member will be responsible to read and offer feedback or commentary on every other member's writing—this will comprise a significant portion of our overall reading load in the course this semester.
- Pay attention to due-dates, which will be stable week to week: Writing should be posted by the end of Tuesday (to be available for Wednesday class meetings) and commented on by Friday at noon each week.

**To earn full credit** for weekly writings, complete them on time, take commenting on others seriously, and take the writings themselves seriously—by which I mean, enter them in the spirit of intellectual play in which they'll be intended.

## Intro Video

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*Make a 2-ish minute video introducing yourself to the class, and post a link to it in the Intro Videos forum in D2L Discussions.*

It's great seeing people without their masks. (Well, their physical ones at least.) And since meeting time will be at a premium this semester, it will be helpful for us to have an asynchronous means of making introductions and getting to know one another. So, use whatever camera you have access to for making a short video (around 2 minutes) of you, somehow, telling us who you are. This can be as simple as—like in [my intro video](#)—talking into the camera. Or if you like and know how, you can make a more complicated presentation with breakbeat music, a parachute-mounted Go-Pro, and a dancing ladybug. Whatever floats your boat. Just let us know **who / how / what you'd like us to think you are**. I do request, please, that you *script it* before you shoot it in order to minimize those otherwise-inevitable “deciding what to say next” and “hmm, let me think if I've covered everything” and “I have no idea how to end this!” moments.

If you've already created such a video for another class and it continues to describe you sufficiently for our purposes, feel free to simply link us to that one.

Once you have a video you like (be prepared to google any questions you have or help you need for the specific gear and software you might be using), please upload it to a video sharing site of your choice (YouTube, Vimeo, Instagram, etc), make sure you've made the video either publicly viewable or viewable with link, and create a thread in the [D2L Discussion Forum “Intro Videos”](#) posting your link. (I would prefer you not upload your video directly to D2L because of site memory constraints across the semester. You're also welcome to upload it to your Google Drive and make it shareable from there.)

**To receive full credit** as part of the Participation portion of your course grade, your video needs to play when we click the link, give us a sense of yourself, and be clearly *planned* rather than “I turned on my camera and rambled without any forethought until I could find the stop button.” (The difference is obvious!) Don't hesitate to email me if you have unresolvable difficulties. Please have a link to your Intro Video posted by the end of **Wednesday, Aug. 19**.

## Collaborative Client Project

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***With a team of 2-3 other class members, identify a nonprofit organization with a significant writing project (likely totaling 15-30 pages of writing, perhaps over several documents) that your writing team can complete for them.***

There is a world full of nonprofit organizations short of staff, time, and resources which need to get writing done that will in some way advance their organization or its mission. This semester, you'll take on such an organization as a client, offering your writing time and expertise to complete some writing-related project they are seeking volunteers for.

The Client Project will have five phases spread across the semester:

1. Identifying a potential client
2. Specifying the text(s) to be delivered and a production schedule for your team
3. Assembling necessary material, background, and information to develop the specified deliverables
4. Drafting the necessary text(s) / document(s)
5. User-testing and revising deliverables

### **Identifying a Client**

***Each student will pitch a particular client and project to the class***, having made enough contact with the potential client to confirm that a suitable writing project would be available. You may already know of or work with an organization you'd like to contact, which you're welcome to do. Any organization which contributes to community in some way and has nonprofit status would be eligible for this project (including less obvious ones like churches, political organizations and campaigns, or national or international advocacy organizations as long as they have local offices). If you don't have existing connections to or interests in a particular organization, ***check out the [Community Organization List](#) maintained by MSU's [Office of Student Engagement](#).*** (Even if you think you know who'd you'd like to work with already, take a spin through this list—it's mind-expanding.)

***What kind of writing*** does a client need to need to let you work with them? I'm encouraging you to cast as wide a net as possible and be as creative as you can in thinking about this. ***The minimum requirement is that your deliverables to this organization include 15-30 pages of writing whose final shape you are responsible for creating.*** (So, you could be revising or repurposing existing docs, or working from scratch.) Given the kinds of writing that organizations usually use and need, your project might involve creating or revising *advocacy campaigns, grants* or other fundraising documents, *websites*, organizational *stories*, or *handbooks, user guides, or organizational procedures*. But don't approach an organization with a closed mind. Make your initial pitch to them open:

“I represent a team of MSU students specializing in writing. For a course project, we'd like to help a nonprofit organization get something written that will advance their mission and that they're having trouble producing on their own. I'm really interested in your organization because [various coolnesses], so I wanted to ask whether you have any writing projects you might like us to work on?”

(Feel free to come up with a better approach of your own, by the way.) Do be aware that local organizations are more likely than national organizations to be able to use your writing time and expertise.

When you find an organization that's interested and has what sounds like a workable writing project, you'll ***post a 1-paragraph pitch describing the organization and kind of writing to our [D2L Pitch Board](#)***. Pitches are due by Fri., Sept. 4. We'll vote on pitches and form teams for the winning client projects by Fri., Sept. 11.

### **Specifying the Project, Timetable, and Deliverables**

Because you will be volunteering for professional organizations and have a limited timeframe in which to complete your work for them, each team will ***develop a contract with its client specifying exactly what deliverables (documents you're creating) the organization seeks***. The contract should include

- A list of documents the team is responsible to deliver.

- The nature and specific needs to be addressed by each document, including any design requirements (e.g. genre, length, function, and other specifications).
- Any assistance, materials, information, files, access, logins, or other stuff the client must provide the team in order for the team to get its work done, and when it will be provided.
- Any orientation, training, or professional development the organization might need to provide the team in order to complete its work.
- The timetable on which the team will complete its work, including any milestones either the client or team must meet, a projection of when drafts will be available for user testing, and a deadline for completion of deliverables.

The point of the Specification Contract is to assist with planning, forestall oversights, and ensure that the team and client have thought carefully through what the project will require to prevent surprises and ensure the team is coordinated on what it has to do and has the necessary resources to do it efficiently. ***Your team's Specification Contract will be due to me by Sat., Sept. 19.***

### **User-Testing, Final Delivery, and Evaluation**

You should *expect an iterative development process* for the documents you create, in which you return repeatedly to the client throughout the project to get their feedback as you design and draft. When you have a full draft of a document prepared, schedule time with your client to formally user-test it: have them review it closely to see where it works well for their needs, and places that need additional development. Your document is not finished until the client signs off on it. ***Understand that it would not be unusual for this process to require several rounds of review and revision, and build time into your development process to account for that.*** You will need to forward me either notes your client provides on user-testing (written feedback they give you), or summaries of the verbal feedback they give you.

While groups will have wide flexibility in their timetables, workflow, and final deadlines, for the purposes of the class I must set two hard boundaries:

- All of your documents **must** be drafted and ***in user-testing by Friday, Oct. 30.***
- Your client **must** have signed off on ***final versions of your documents no later than Friday, Nov. 13.***

That said, because of other writing that will also be pressing you in the course, I ***strongly recommend*** that your group have its documents in user-testing by ***Oct. 23*** and have the project finalized by ***Oct. 30.***

The Client Project is a substantial portion of your course credit (20%), and this accumulates in several ways:

- Your client pitch to the class
- The team's specification contract
- Reporting on user testing (client's written feedback or summary of verbal feedback)
- Client's report or evaluation of documents sent to me
- My evaluation of the quality and suitability of the team's work
- Team members' reports on team members' contributions to the project (emailed to me).

You will also be able to revise the client project and submit it in your portfolio (in place of your Magazine Feature Article) should you choose to.



## Reviews

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**Write a 700-1200 word review of a cultural artifact or activity/experience for readers who are trying to decide whether to buy/do it or not.**

One of the more common kinds of nonfiction writing for readers with real needs is *reviewing*—of products, places, activities, experiences, and art. While Web 2.0 has given us the gift of ubiquitous product reviews—many of them fake, naturally—the world still needs, and uses, longer-form, professionally written reviews of all kinds of cultural artifacts (albums, movies, shows, books, exhibits, installations, etc.) and experiences, activities, and places. Most staff writers for magazines, for example, do at least some reviewing and may do nothing but reviewing. Reviewing is also an excellent way to get a start in freelance online writing. Even most academics spend a significant amount of time reviewing various texts. So a well-rounded writer can write a solid review almost in their sleep.

To practice review writing (preferably *not* in your sleep), you'll write two reviews of cultural artifacts or experiences/activities (or whatever else you feel like reviewing, as long as you clear it with me) for the class. (While you'll only give feedback on drafts of your group members' pieces, everyone will read all the final versions of reviews.)

Your reviews must do the following things (listed in no particular order):

- Clearly identify what you're reviewing.
- Establish the basis of your review—the criteria by which you will judge your subject.
- Give any background necessary for readers to understand the subject.
- Give the clearest possible description of the nature or essence or experience of your subject.
- Compare your subject to, or put it in the context of, other similar subjects.
- Make apparent the source of your authority as a reviewer.

*Above all:* render a clear judgment on whether your subject gets a thumbs up or thumbs down. Your decision need not be black & white—rather, you can specify who is most likely to be satisfied by your subject, and who is least likely to be.

Along with sample reviews we'll read in class, be sure to locate several examples of the specific kind of review you're writing. (If you're reviewing a restaurant, for example, read several professional restaurant reviews from different sites or publications.)

**To earn full credit**, your review should respond well to the guidelines on length and function here. The week a review is due, have a workshop draft available to your Discussion/Writing Group by noon Thursday, and be finished workshopping by 12:30 Friday in time for our class videoconference on revisions. The final draft will be due by the end of Saturday that week.

You'll also choose one of your reviews to revise and polish for the Final Portfolio.

## Magazine Feature Article

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*Write a 2,500-4,500 word feature article suitable for publication in a magazine of your choice on a subject of your choice.*

It's play time. One of the joys of writing is tracking down a less-than-obvious story and finding an amazing way to tell it. This is the world of magazine feature writing, and as part of our course's nonfiction storytelling focus, you'll spend a significant portion of the semester developing a feature article.

### Subjects

If you don't already know, you'll quickly discover that pure freedom in a writing assignment gets overwhelming quickly. How can you narrow your options for what to write about and how best to tell the story you find? We'll read plenty about this in *Telling True Stories*, but here are additional suggestions:

- Remember that no matter the story, it's ultimately about *people*. So what kinds of people might you want to write about, in what kinds of circumstances? Whose story would you like to tell? Responses can range from "my own" to "this group's" to "this kind of person's" to "this particular person."
- You might want to constrain yourself to particular *genres*. Travel writing, sports writing, food writing, history writing, profile writing, and investigative narratives are a few kinds of writing that work well as magazine features.
- Start with the *magazine* you want to write for. You'll ultimately be required to specify the magazine your story is aimed toward (in your story pitch to me), but serious freelancers actually usually *begin* with that decision, and then they look through the past 2-3 years' issues to see a) what's already been written about, b) what might fit well with what the mag has been publishing, and c) what kinds of stories the mag seems to most readily accept. Let the magazine guide you toward your subject and style.
- Look at what you're already working on. Perhaps you're already working on another story which has too many angles and needs to be two or more separate stories. Perhaps your work on your client project will make you aware of a story needing telling relating to the work your organization does.

Note that you *may* collaborate with one other student on the feature article should you wish.

### What You're Making

We'll look at a lot of samples of magazine feature articles to keep ballparking you on what this thing is. Here are a few necessary elements that I don't want you to lose sight of:

- This *is* nonfiction. You're writing about actual people, events, and experiences, not making them up.
- Thus, your article will require *research*—interviewing key figures / *characters* in the story, visiting *places* in which the story is set so you have firsthand experience being there, collecting *materials and background* to inform the story, and gathering or creating *visuals* to include with the story.
- This is *story*. There will be characters, narrative, plot points, and conflict.
- There is a *visual element*: your article need not be built *around* images, graphics, and art, but it will have to include some.
- Your article's *style* should be in keeping with the magazine you're targeting. (A *Wired* article does not sound like an *Atlantic Monthly* article, in ways we'll examine. How should yours sound?)
- Readers should be *entertained, informed*, and if you're in peak form, *moved* by your story.

### Process and Waypoints

While I'll leave you to yourself most of the semester to work on this project, there are some hardpoints along the way where everyone will have to have a particular aspect ready.

- You'll **pitch me your story idea** (via email) by **Mon., Sept. 28**.
- Once I approve your story, I recommend you *develop a schedule for how to work on it in the background* as Client Project and other course projects will often capture our immediate attention. Since you'll have an overall schedule for milestones on your Client Project (and hopefully your other classes), I'll recommend weaving your Feature writing schedule around those.
- I'll require a **project update** from everyone by **Mon. Oct. 19**.
- You're required to be **workshopping** a draft of the Feature in your Discussion/Writing Group **by the week of Nov. 2**, with **a version to me for feedback by Sat., Nov. 7**.

You'll revise your Feature for the Final Portfolio (unless you opt to revise your Client Project).

## Style Revision

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*Revise a nonfiction text you've previously written specifically with an eye toward concision, style, and editing.*

Writing is never finished, it's just at deadline. While we'll focus carefully on style in all the pieces you write for this class, I want us to have one project that focuses on it exclusively by removing initial concerns about getting a piece drafted to begin with. Therefore, for this project you should select a nonfiction piece of 5-8 pages that you've previously written—perhaps for another course (but not a current one), or perhaps in some other life venue. The piece may not be “creative” nonfiction (e.g. memoir, personal essay, or other literary genres), but need not necessarily be “analytical” or “academic.” (It's fine if it is.)

The purpose of the style revision of your selected piece will be to 1) compress it and 2) play with its style by reworking it sentence by sentence to be *more consistent, tighter, readable, and fully voiced*. As we work on the project, we'll define each of those categories and experiment with different approaches to the writing.

You'll **workshop this piece** according to our typical class conventions for workshopping, but it's likely as well that one or two of our Weekly Writings will focus on it and ask to you work on and share particular aspects of your revising with your Discussion Group.

I'll **evaluate** this piece *as a revision*. That means that while I'll pay some attention to the material the text discusses and to the reading experience the piece creates for me, I'm going to put more weight on *the distance you've taken the piece*—how much you've really worked on the piece stylistically, the extent to which you've been able to shorten and tighten it, and, overall, how far the writing has come.

## Final Portfolio

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***Revise and polish a portion of your writing in the class, reflect on your learning over the course of the course, and articulate your learning in terms of what appears (or doesn't appear) in your writing.***

To this point in the class your drafts have been *read* and *credited* but not *graded*. The final 15% of course credit lies in your final portfolio, where I'll grade final versions of your pieces according to the rubric on p. 2 of the syllabus. While this approach complies with the university's expectation that writing courses have graded writing projects, the better and more important reason for a portfolio is to push you to think carefully back over the semester, build awareness of what you've learned, put language to that learning, and write accounts of it that help you gain perspective on it and explain it to others ... such as me. So my (and hopefully your) two main goals for this portfolio are to 1) show your writing at its best and 2) explain what this writing demonstrates about your learning in the course, while talking about other kinds of learning you've done here as well. As such, **your portfolio counts as your final exam for the course and is to be submitted by the final day of class (Weds. Nov. 25<sup>th</sup>) by 6 p.m.**

### What's In It?

Your portfolio is required to include the following revised and polished pieces:

- **One** of your two *Reviews*
- Your **Magazine Feature Article** (you may substitute a revision of Client Project if you wish)
- **Two** *Weekly Writings* from across the semester.

In addition, for the **Reflection** element of the portfolio, you'll write these new pieces:

- A short *Reflective Preface* (1-2 paragraphs) for **each** of the above pieces (one preface for the two *Weekly Writings* together)
- A *Learning Reflection* (1-2 pages) that **introduces** the portfolio

Your basis for choosing pieces to include might include *necessary revision time* (at the end of the semester, sanity can mean going with your already best-developed pieces), *potential for excellence* (some pieces require more revision because they're made of better stuff to begin with and have brighter futures than others), or *love of the writing* (it's wise to choose pieces you're most highly invested in, since this project is likely to cause you some late nights and early mornings.)

### What Do You Do for It?

The portfolio accrues credit in three ways: the *quality of writing* included in it, the *revision and development* of that writing you've done since receiving my feedback on it earlier in the semester, and the *learning reflection* you do in the portfolio's introduction and with each piece. So once you've chosen your pieces for the portfolio, you should:

- Revise / Develop. You'll have plenty of feedback on ways your pieces' earlier drafts are working and ways they could work better. Make it so.
  - In the case of your *Weekly Writings*, I don't want you to revise the docs themselves. Rather, please add a **final comment** (about a paragraph in length) that returns to the issues in question in the piece and says your current thinking on them at the end of the course, as well as offering any perspective on how your views differ from when you wrote the page originally.
- Polish. Spend time on the final details of pieces.
- Reflect. You'll write the Reflective Preface for each piece (see below) as well as a Learning Reflection that introduces your portfolio by reflecting on your learning in the class as a whole.

## Reflection Guidelines

- **Reflective Prefaces** for the major pieces in the portfolio should take 1-2 paragraphs to A) *tell the “story” of the piece* (how did it come to be, what was it like to write it, was there anything noteworthy in your process on it) and B) talk about *what you learned* by working on the piece; what it taught you or what you had to come to know in order to accomplish it. Add the preface to your piece by adding a new first page to the document.
- The **Learning Reflection** that introduces the portfolio explains how, overall, your work in the portfolio relates to your learning in the course, and talks about your learning in the course more broadly. Its overall guiding question is, what do you know now that you didn’t before, and how does the portfolio demonstrate that?
  - Use the learning-goals list on page 1 of the syllabus as a guide here.
  - Use the Learning Reflection to tell the story of your portfolio and the course. You might talk about **origins**, how the portfolio came to be, about your favorite piece in it, about what you’d do with it if you had more time. You might talk about your overall **experience** in the course, how that’s reflected in the writing in the portfolio, and how it’s not—the learning that doesn’t show in the writing. You might talk about **change**, in your thinking and writing (possibly pointing to the differences between earlier drafts and final ones). You might talk about **expectations** and **surprises**. And you would probably want to talk about **yourself as a writer**.
  - Single-space your Reflection, and make it a minimum of 500 words.

## How Will I Grade It?

The portfolio’s three main elements—polished writing, revision process, and learning reflection—are what I’ll consider in developing a grade for the portfolio:

- I’ll assign portfolio pieces letter grades based on the rubric on syllabus p. 2, and average these to derive **the overall writing quality grade in the portfolio**. This **will set the portfolio’s “base” grade**.
  - Missing pieces, *including missing reflection*, in the portfolio mightily detract from its grade—**each missing element will lower its final grade by a letter**. So please don’t forget anything / leave anything out!
- Then I’ll consider your revision process as demonstrated by 1) development of the writing itself across drafts and 2) your explanations of your process and the pieces development in your learning reflections. I’ll assume that your process work is generally consonant with writing quality, but **particularly robust or particularly lacking revision will “swing” the portfolio’s grade up to 10% either way**. A portfolio with “B” writing could be an “A” portfolio if you’ve demonstrated outstanding process work; one with “B” writing could earn a “C” if drafts aren’t revised and reflective prefaces don’t speak at all to process.
- The same applies to the third element, reflective work. I’ll look for 1) *completeness* (all the assigned reflections are included), 2) *fullness* (you’re really engaging fully in reflecting), and 3) *consonance* with the writing in the portfolio. (You would not want to run on about how much you’ve learned about writing characters in your stories and then not have any characters in your stories!) **Doing these all reasonably well will be reflected in the “base” grade of the portfolio**. If, however, reflection quality is extremely poor (like a 200-word Learning Reflection or half-assed Reflective Prefaces that don’t speak to the assignment), the portfolio could lose a letter grade. And if reflection quality is outstanding, the portfolio could gain as much as a letter grade.

## Semester Timeline of Major Projects and Deadlines

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- *Deadlines refer to the end of the specified day (11:59 p.m.) unless otherwise indicated.*
- *Weeks are arranged Monday-Sunday.*
- *Reading assignments will be provided through weekly D2L Announcements*

### Weekly Routine

- *Class will not meet Mondays—work on your own*
- *Weekly writings will always be due Tuesdays*
- *Class will meet onsite (also streamed online) Wednesdays—have week's readings completed by class*
- *Class will have optional online videoconf Fridays (except as required for workshopping wrapup)*

### **Week 1 – Aug. 17-23 – Opening Assignments**

- Weekly Writing (Aug. 18 prompt)
- Your Intro Vid DUE (Weds Aug. 19)

### **Week 2 – Aug. 24-30 – Review 1**

- Weekly Writing (Aug. 25 prompt)
- Review 1 DUE (Workshop draft by Thurs noon, Teacher draft by Sat Aug. 29)

### **Week 3 – Aug. 31-Sept. 6 – Client Pitches to Class**

- Weekly Writing (Sept. 1 prompt)
- Client Pitches DUE (posted to D2L Pitch Board) Fri Sept. 4

### **Week 4 – Sept. 7-13 – Client Project (CP) Teams Selected**

- Weekly Writing (Sept. 8 prompt)
- Client Project Teams selected no later than Friday Sept. 11

### **Week 5 – Sept. 14-20 – CP Specification Contract**

- Weekly Writing (Sept. 15 prompt)
- Specification Contract for Client Project DUE (Fri. Sept. 18)

### **Week 6 – Sept. 21-27 – Feature Pitches, Review 2**

- Magazine Feature Article Pitch DUE (email to professo) Mon Sept. 21
- Weekly Writing (Sept. 22 prompt)
- Review 2 DUE (Workshop draft by Thurs noon, Teacher draft by Sat Sept. 26)

### **Week 7 – Sept. 28-Oct. 4**

- Weekly Writing (Sept. 29 prompt)

### **Week 8 – Oct. 5-11**

- Weekly Writing (Oct. 6 prompt)

### **Week 9 – Oct. 12-18 – Style Revision**

- Weekly Writing (Oct. 13 prompt)
- Style Revision DUE (Workshop draft by Thurs noon, Teacher draft by Sat Oct. 17)

### **Week 10 – Oct. 19-25 – User-Testing CP docs**

- Project Update – Feature Article (email to professor) Mon. Oct. 19
- Weekly Writing (Oct. 20 prompt)
- Recommend user-testing CP docs by Oct. 23

**Week 11 – Oct. 26-Nov. 1**

- Weekly Writing (Oct. 27 prompt)
- Recommend completing CP by Oct. 30
- **Required** to be user-testing CP docs by Oct. 30

**Week 12 – Nov. 2-8 – Feature Article DUE**

- Draft Feature Article available for workshopping with your Discussion/Writing Group
- Weekly Writing (Nov. 3 prompt)
- Teacher version of Feature Article DUE Sat. Nov. 7

**Week 13 – Nov. 9-15**

- Weekly Writing (Nov. 10 prompt)
- CP docs DUE by Nov. 13 with feedback from Client

**Week 14 – Nov. 16-22 – Work on Final Portfolio**

- Weekly Writing (Nov. 17 prompt)

**Finals Week – Nov. 23-25 (*no class meetings / TRAVEL SAFE!!*)**

- Final Portfolio DUE Weds Nov. 25 by 6 p.m.