

Writing Portfolio Assignment – Online Class

For both ENG 1113 and 1213, students will submit a final portfolio, worth 65% of their grade. Students have 2 options to choose from for this portfolio.

Option A: This portfolio includes a cover letter that argues for the grade students feel they deserve in the class, two newly revised essays picked from all essays handed in this semester, and the graded first drafts of those essays. The portfolio itself will have a cover page that uses the MLA header for essays. Students will center this header on a sheet of paper and attach it to the top of the portfolio. The contents should follow this order:

1. Cover page
2. Cover letter
3. Revision Essay 1
4. Revision Essay 2

Option B: This option is only for students who have submitted **ALL** essay assignments this semester. Anyone who did not complete an essay must choose Option A. This portfolio includes a cover letter. For the revision work, students can choose to take the first grades they received on two essays they have already submitted in class. Students might also choose to take one previous grade and revise a second essay for a higher grade. Basically, if you are happy with the grade you have in class based on all non-portfolio assignments, then you can simply submit a cover letter that states somewhere in it which essay grades you want to use as your portfolio grades.

I will grade the portfolio as one grade worth 100 points. All items should follow MLA formatting guidelines. Not following the order listed in Option A or leaving an item out will result in a letter grade deduction from the portfolio.

The Cover Letter: This *one to two page* letter functions as a microtheme argument essay. If it is shorter than one page, you will receive a **5 point deduction** for every 5 lines that it falls short. This letter has 2 major parts. First, you are to argue what grade you deserve in this class and provide specific evidence to back up the grade you choose. Please consider the following sections on your syllabus when arguing for your grade: **Civility; Academic Honesty; Attendance; Grading; Course Outcomes**. If you choose Option B, then you need to indicate which essays you want a portfolio grade for and why you chose those two. The second part of the cover letter requires you to assess what you have learned this semester and how you have improved as a writer and critical thinker. You may also offer suggestions for assignments or changes to the class (or thumbs up for aspects that you liked).

The letter should follow the essay format: **introduction** (context for the letter and purpose, identifies what your expectations were at the beginning of the semester for yourself and the class; ends in a thesis that states the grade you feel you deserve); **body paragraphs** (discussing

the argument for your grade and assessment of yourself and the class); **conclusion** (restates the argument, leaves me with a final strong impression of why you have earned the grade). See the sample at the end of this handout.

NOTE: if you argue for a grade lower than the one you have earned point-wise in class, I will not lower your grade. Please do not indulge in fantasy (arguing for a grade that you have not truly earned) or false modesty (arguing for a lower grade than you really have earned because you don't want to appear immodest). I am looking for an honest assessment of your performance because self-assessment is an important quality independent writers cultivate. This letter could be the difference for borderline students.

Letter Formatting:

1. Do not use my address or your address. Simply use the date at the very top left side of your letter, double space after the date, and then use the salutation: Dear Ms. McBride:
2. You will not have an enclosure line at the bottom.
3. Use block formation like it is in the example – each paragraph is not indented. Instead, you skip a line between each paragraph.
4. Be sure you follow the spacing as shown in the example below. Note the difference in spacing between paragraphs and within paragraphs.
5. Be sure you type your name.

The portfolio is due no later than noon on the last day of finals week (though students may turn in portfolios any time before then). There are no exceptions to this rule, so do not wait until the last minute and find you have computer or printer problems. I am warning you now that I will not accept it later than the above times.

Please submit your portfolio via email in one file attachment. I have rough drafts already, so do not include any drafts other than the newest ones). Presenting your portfolio as separate essays is not acceptable, and **doing so will result in a 10 point deduction from your grade.**

SAMPLE COVER PAGE

(do not type this or use the page number header above on your cover page)

Student Name
McBride, Class and Day/Time
Due Date of Assignment
Writing Portfolio

30 April 2006

Dear Ms. McBride:

When I first enrolled in ENG 1113, I was full of trepidation. I had last attended school in 1988, so I knew my study skills would be rusty. I had also not written anything other than emails and the occasional report since leaving high school. Since writing has always been a weakness of mine, I expected this class would be a struggle. In all honesty, I admit that this has not been my favorite class because of that self-doubt; however, now that I have come to the end of the semester, I am surprised at how well I have done. Based on my participation and attitude, my overall essay performance, and how much I've grown as a writer, I believe I deserve a B in this course.

Though participation and attitude only count for a small percentage of the grade, I believe I have performed at an A level in this area. I have always come prepared for class and volunteered comments during class discussion. When I did not understand something we were discussing in class, I would ask a question rather than just go along. For example, the first time we talked about thesis statements, I was completely lost. Since no one else seemed lost, I almost did not raise my hand; however, I knew that if I did not get this right, then I would be seriously in trouble when it came time to writing that essay. So, I asked a question and was surprised at how many of the other students nodded and seemed to need the same information. Finally, I have always presented work following the guides of the assignment. This reflects my serious attention to detail that characterizes a student on an A or B level. These reasons show that I deserve a high grade in this area.

On my essays, I consistently earned high Bs. The two essays I have included in this portfolio represent the level of work I have presented in the class. You have commented on my papers that my content is very good but that my grammar and mechanics tend to be too sloppy for higher grades. When I revised, I could see the typos, the missed words, and the occasional verb error or sentence error that brought the grade down. I have made every effort to fix these problems, but I know I still need improvement. For this reason, I believe that my work, though A quality in content and essay structure, is only a B because of the cosmetic flaws.

Finally, I believe my best case for a B lies in my improvement overall as a writer. I have grown so much since that first essay. In that paper, I made common mistakes like problems with coherence and paragraph unity. I didn't always stay focused on my topic sentences. In these revision papers, you will notice that those areas have improved dramatically. I understand now about staying focused on the message I want to communicate to my reader. This is perhaps the biggest lesson I learned about writing this semester.

A PARAGRAPH THAT ASSESSES THE CLASS AND YOUR SPECIFIC PERFORMANCE GOES HERE.

Based on my class performance, essay grades, and growth as a writer, I believe I deserve a B in this class. I know I have much more to learn about writing. I want to sharpen my style,

especially in the area of wordiness. However, I have consistently performed at a high level. The three Bs I've earned on essays are the most compelling evidence to award me a B in the class, and the other related areas only offer more support for that grade. Though I certainly doubted my abilities to perform well in this class at the beginning of the semester, I am proud of what I have accomplished. I will never love writing, but I do now know that I can put together a coherent paper that communicates my purpose. That is a huge step forward for me personally.

Sincerely,
John Q. Student

OPTION A: Follow this cover letter with your revised essays.