Advanced Technical/Professional Writing Assignment Descriptions

E-Portfolio Research Memo (I)

This first memo should show me that you've familiarized yourself with the range of online portfolios and what often goes into them. To complete this assignment, do the following:

1. Do a very thorough online search of the topic, eliciting information not only on the kinds of online portfolios (depending on purpose) and kinds of programs people use to build online portfolios, but what can and should go into an online portfolio. Don't get fooled by the hype on a quick google search; dig deeper to discover what the topic is about. Online sources can include reputable websites but also academic articles, as you know.

2. Write a memo under 2 pages that informs me about what you have discovered in these first hours looking into the topic. In the "Recommendations" section of the memo, recommend some areas that we as a class should look into more fully, keeping in mind specifically that we are using WIX to build our portfolios. You'll also post these to our WIX Discussion board on d2l. Think of these as your initial questions for future research: what do you need to know more about to successfully complete this major portion of the course?

Include a Works Consulted that lists the sources you examined to create your memo.

For all memos, I will check that you follow the guidelines associated with writing memos as detailed in the book: appropriate identifying information (header); clear purpose statement up front; appropriate summary/background; effective organization and document design; complete but concise content; and clear, concise, grammatically correct writing. See the memo grading rubric as well.

Career Readiness Materials (I)

There are three elements of this assignment.

1) You will rewrite and update your old resume, which you completed in your Tech Writing I class (and which you need to submit as part of the qualifications section of your proposals later in the semester). For the assignment, please submit the original and your updated one so I can see adjustments that you have made. At the very least, I want you to think ahead as to what new information you can add to it based on this class.

2) As part of your WIX online portfolio, you will create a professional online resume to showcase your technical writing and web design skills. While the "graded" version of it is due early in the semester, you should feel free to continue to adapt and build upon the resume throughout the semester. You will be graded on both the look of the page itself and on the content/design of the resume. Eventually you will add a link to the paper version of your resume (#1).

3) You will create EITHER a LinkedIn profile site, linked from your WIX portfolio, OR you will register with SHIPConnects, a networking tool from the Career Center. We will hear from the Career Center more about both of these programs and you can determine based on your circumstances which will be more beneficial for you. Nothing is preventing you from doing both.

The grading guidelines for this assignment can be found at our website and on d2l.

Work Plan (G)

This assignment enables your team to practice project management techniques and gain experience working together prior to writing your major project. A work plan at early stages is vital to setting forth the division of responsibility among group members and the amount of hours you believe each step will take. It keeps you on track as well as letting your manager/boss know that you have thought through the scope of work. Write a memo from your team to me, with attachments if necessary.

Please note that your team eventually needs a business name, logo and letterhead; so if possible, use at least your team's new name/letterhead on the memo's first page and on any attachments.

In addition to the elements of a work plan discussed in our chapter, include the following elements:
- Under mission/objectives, a brief explanation of the project you've selected and why it merits attention. Why is your team committed to it?
- Estimated hours to complete key project activities (in discussing each team members' responsibilities)
- A Gantt chart
- A list of your group's policies, which all members agree to abide by. Include a discussion on meeting procedures and procedures for resolving conflict.

Much of the material for the work plan will extend out of the work you do from Chapter 3 on collaboration; at the same time, much of this work plan, properly done, should be able to be incorporated into your proposal. Thus, it is a key document in your semester-long collaborative project; treat it as such. The length of the memo will vary because you have choices in what elements are part of the memo and which are attachments.

Proposal (G)

So here's the situation: using WIX, you need to build an online portfolio web site to solidify your professional online identity. But what should you put on it? What projects will make you stand out? As part of your hunt to create some online cred, your group needs to create materials for an outside client, so that you can discuss and post examples of that work on your site. This semester, that client is the Shippensburg Revitalization Group.

The purpose of your proposal is to secure my and your client's approval to create materials that will help them improve their presence, some of which you will then create and feature on your individual online portfolios. The material may be a web site—this would be ideal—but it can also be other marketing materials: you and your client need to discuss this to decide.

In order to get my approval to proceed, you will need to convince me that you have a good sense of how to gather information for research, that you understand what is involved in designing and creating the materials and/or the web site, and that you have established an equitable division of labor among team members. Below I've outlined what I'm expecting (your RPF), so while you'll use the book to guide you in what should be included, follow this format for constructing the proposal. Note that this project kind of melds the two proposals in the book--while you are researching and providing a progress report (as if for a research proposal) you are also providing a service by the end, your clients' materials (a goods and services proposal).

Length: 5000-7000 words (body only, excluding appropriate front and back matter)
Format: MS Word. The proposal should have the following sections.

Front matter: Letter of Transmittal, Title page, Table of Contents and List of Illustrations, Executive Summary

1.0 Introduction. State the purpose of the proposal, providing clear goals. Make it clear that you have analyzed the primary and secondary audiences for the materials your client wishes you to create and that you understand their needs (both the client's and the client's audiences). Indicate the scope and organization of the proposal.

2.0 Background. Review the current situation and the causes and effects of the issues. Make it clear that you understand the goals of your client in general and why what you are creating is needed. Review and discuss relevant literature to give a context for your work. This major section of the proposal should give context for everything that follows; it will certainly have sub-sections.

3.0 Description of Products. Each group will create products in consultation with their clients, the plans for which you will include as part of the proposal. In this section, detail the proposed structure of and information of those materials. Be as specific as possible in describing them, including the program you'll use to build them, the amount of time (in hours) you expect to take building them, and the information they will include. Include a graphic representation of your proposed materials (for a web site, include a sitemap or flowchart that indicates how the pages will be connected to one another.). Include a description of any pictures or drawings that you plan to include. NOTE: although each of you will certainly change your plans as you actually create your materials, the specifications should include as much detail as possible and should serve as your guide as you complete the assignment.

4.0 Group Work and Schedule. Specify how the work of this and the remaining projects will be divided among group members. Include any research you've already completed as well as what you plan to do to continue your research. You can refer to "research" in learning WIX or other programs as well. Consider such tasks as research on the topic itself (interviews, internet, other); writing text; finding and downloading images, backgrounds, and other components of your materials, editing, revising, and proofreading.

You may also need to take into account the work already done on the proposal itself. In other words, refer to the completion of this project, detailing each member's workload and responsibilities, in discussing future work on the project. If one member did more than her share in creating the proposal, that should be reflected in the amount of work assigned for the rest of the materials and/or presentation. Include a Gantt chart, here or as an appendix, that demonstrates both the division of labor and the timetable for completion of specific tasks.

5.0 Qualifications. Briefly list your group members' qualifications here, and submit print versions of your resumes in an appendix.

Back matter: List of References, Glossary (if appropriate), Appendixes

AN IMPORTANT NOTE: at this stage neither your group nor I know what the actual final product(s) will be. This is flexible. At the same time, I envision that you will not be able to create all of the materials you propose to create. If your client wants a web site, you might only end up finishing the homepage; or you might create a mock-up of the front page of a more detailed business plan for the client. However, your proposal should discuss the project as a whole. You will not be graded down (on this proposal) for not being able to complete everything.
You'll discuss your scaled-down more realistic project outcomes in your progress reports.

Online E-Portfolio (I)

The major individual project of the class revolves around building an online web portfolio suitable for showcasing your work as a professional. You'll work on this in small stages throughout the semester.

My goals here are to help you understand what goes into developing a useful and good site, to get you familiar with standard web site design and writing strategies, and to get you some experience with the language involved with building a site. You will not be graded on how fancy or sophisticated your pages are but on how well they meet audience needs. I'm shooting for clean, well-designed, easy-to-navigate sites and pages that are well-written and well-organized.

Thus, given these caveats, try to think of a type of online portfolio you would like to build, using the following parameters to help guide you:

1. It should have a home page that links to at least three other pages/sections: your already-completed online resumes/work experience section as a way of exhibiting expertise and credibility, a description of your ENG 438 class project and related materials, and at least one other project/paper.

2. It should contain several graphics, keeping our text's overall guidelines for use of online graphics in mind. Any multimedia is highly recommended but not required.

3. It should show credibility, in all the ways we will discuss this semester (what makes a credible web site, in other words?).

4. It should be appropriate for its audience and purpose.

5. It should be clearly organized, with informative links that make sense and that work. From any one page you should be able to reach the site's home page.

6. Remember that this is a writing class! I will be closely examining the quality of your writing on your pages and how well you adjust to writing for the web.

WIX templates provide a solid starting point, so as part of your site-building you will submit an internal proposal memo to discuss how you will adapt the WIX template you've chosen and why. You will also complete several web writing and web design exercises.

Progress Report (I)

A progress report provides information on the tasks and time associated with a project. It is commonly written periodically (weekly, monthly, quarterly) to been identifies problems (if any have surfaced) and identifies upcoming tasks. It also assesses the project's viability: time is an important consideration, as is money, so the status report usually refers to an identified schedule and budget (in this case, no budget).

For this assignment, direct your 2-3 page memo to me. Please report on the status of your clients' projects, based on your proposal. You may organize your report either by time or by task pattern; choose
whichever you feel will be most rhetorically effective. Be as specific as possible. Some items you may want to consider (though this is by no means an exhaustive list):

> • what has been accomplished thus far (make reference to hours spent and hours remaining based on work plan, as time is an important consideration) and what still needs to be completed
> • your adherence to the group's schedule, and how contributions by other team members, including the project leader, affect your work
> • any problems and possible solutions--given what has been done and what remains to get done, will the project be completed as originally envisioned?

Web site Usability Assessment

This assignment is a variation of the usability evaluation described in the text. Each of you will be assigned others' sites to evaluate and test. Visit all of the pages of the site you're evaluating, read all of the text at the site, view all of the images, and try all of the links. Then write your responses to the following questions. You'll be giving your responses both to me and to the author of the site. Remember that the more information you can give them, the better they will be able to revise it effectively.

This does not necessarily need to be in memo format; however, it should look professional and fully address audience/purpose needs.

I. Content
a. At which page or pages of the site did you spend the most time and the least time? why?
b. Is there any information offered on the site that you weren't interested in? In other words, are there any pages or parts of pages on the site that should be revised or omitted?
c. What would you like to see on the site that isn't currently there? Why is this information important to you? Where should this information go?
e. How would you assess the credibility of the site? That is, how reliable does the information seem to be? What makes the site seem reliable or unreliable?

II. Organization/Navigation
a. How easy/difficult was it for you to navigate the site? Did you become lost or confused at any point? If so, where and why did you become lost or confused, and what can be done to remedy the problem?
b. Do the links provide an accurate sense of their destination? That is, from the image or text of each link, do you get a good sense of where it's taking you?
c. Do all of the links work properly?

III. Look and Feel
a. Describe the site's "look and feel"—what impression does it give you? Consider the kind/color of background, the colors used in the text and in images, the type of header on the pages, the font size and style. What changes could be made to make the site look more appealing?
b. Comment on the quality of the images used at the Web site. Which images are particularly effective, and why? Which images could be omitted or improved, and why? How well do image and text correlate with each other?
c. How can the site be made more professional-looking? Consider everything that you have learned from the beginning of the semester and any outside research you have done to help out.

IV. Writing Style
a. Are there any grammatical or spelling mistakes on the site? If so, point them out and suggest how they can be revised.
b. Does the material project a professional ethos? How can it be improved, if needed? Be specific about words or paragraphs that need work.

V. Overall Summary and Additional Comments

Usability Assessment Response (I)

For this short memo, write up how you might revise your online web portfolio based on the usability assessment you received from your classmate and from my comments. To prepare writing this memo, first go through the comments you received and collate and list the general results. I would try to organize these by the "type" of comment you received, or by the section under which each comment was received (i.e., the Look and Feel section), rather than listing each comment individually.

Then address the following:

1) List the type(s) of suggestions that you accepted and how you changed your website accordingly. Why did you feel these comments were useful?

2) List the type(s) of suggestions you chose not to work into your revised web site. Be clear as to why these comments weren't incorporated or taken into account.

Again, you can decide how you would like to organize this material; it just needs to be professionally presented and rhetorically effective.

Presentations (G)

In seven to ten minutes, present your projects to the class using MSPowerpoint. Begin by discussing the overall project--why you wanted to tackle it, its purpose and intended audience. In presenting the content, address why you chose certain information to include; what was eliminated; what, if you had the time, would you like to have added.

Then, discuss the overall construction of the products, including any overall design decisions you deem important--typography, color, graphics, etc. If appropriate, you may want to discuss any major changes in the materials you ultimately created, from inception to final version. Look at your proposal to review how you initially conceived the work, and then look at the way(s) the final version changed. What was the reason for these changes?

Remember the guidelines of good oral presentations:
- introduce yourselves and give an overview of the presentation.
- provide advance organizers between sections
- briefly summarize your main points at the end.
- invite the audience to ask questions.
- stay within the allotted time for your presentation.
- face the audience; speak in an appropriate tone and at a proper pace

Try to engage the audience in your presentation by choosing to discuss those things that you think your audience will be most interested in (as always). You won't be able to discuss everything, so choose carefully, and practice at least once!

Other "important" homework/in-class assignments (see schedule andTBA):

Formatting Long Documents with MSWord: You will create a mock-up of your proposal. Create one to two paragraphs, with at least one graphic and at least one level-2 heading, for each section. Each group will hand in a perfectly organized long document, correctly paginated, with all styles chosen and integrated, containing a title page, sample content for all sections, space for graphics, and a correctly formatted TOC and LOF.

Writing for the Web: You will submit several exercises on how to write appropriately for the web, including design of information.