

Major Requirement: The English Department Portfolio Project

English majors with a concentration in creative writing currently need not submit a Portfolio. If you declared a major prior to Fall 2006, you also need not submit one, but are strongly encouraged to do so. As you prepare for graduation, the Portfolio Project provides an opportunity for you as an English major to review your best work and track the progress you have made. In addition, this material enables the English Department to conduct better self-assessment and planning. In the accompanying instructions, we provide all the information you will need to create and submit your Portfolio. Your advisor can also answer any questions you have.

Portfolios for the 2011-12 academic year should be submitted by the following dates:

- for Fall 2011 graduation, October 28
- for Spring 2012 graduation, March 23
- for Summer 2012 graduation, June 1

Portfolio Content:

Two Essays from 300-level or 400-level English courses

At least one of these essays should demonstrate competence in writing research-based scholarship. In addition, one of the essays should demonstrate familiarity with literary or rhetorical theory or criticism. The choice of papers is completely yours, though you may want to consult with your professors as you review your past work. In order to complete the portfolio, then, and give yourself as many choices as possible, you should save paper or electronic copies of all the papers you complete in your upper level courses.

Self-Reflective Synthesis Letter

This should be addressed to faculty members at the University of South Alabama, specifically the Committee responsible for reviewing Portfolios. Remember as you write that you will be addressing your words to readers who might not be familiar with you or the particular work you are presenting, and therefore need an adequate introduction on both points. Bear in mind, too, that this letter sets the tone for what follows, so you need to explain as specifically as possible why you chose the essays you did and how they represent what you as an individual have learned as an English major. The most useful letters of this kind typically give a full sense of the context in which the essays were written—the purpose and scope of the original assignments.

Ideally, your letter would give an overview of your career as an English major, with mention of turning points in your intellectual development, ones perhaps associated with a specific text, class, or teacher. Also helpful would be some sort of discussion of why you chose your two papers and what you think they represent about you as an English major. For the department, the letter is primarily a way of obtaining useful feedback on what sort of experience we're providing; but imagine how helpful it would be for your own purposes if you were interviewing for a job and your prospective employer wanted to know what you gained from being an English major.

Essential Instructions

You should title your Self-Reflective Synthesis Letter as such and augment the titles of your submitted essays to indicate which requirements they are fulfilling (e.g. "Research-Based Scholarship"). If you submit a paper that has gone through one or more substantive drafts, you may want to paperclip previous drafts to the most recent draft. This is especially true if you want to address the revision process in your cover letter.

Please be sure that each paper includes your name, the course title and number, and your instructor's name. Portfolios should be submitted in manila envelopes to Karen Burns in the English Department Office or to the Department Chair.