

Information on Portfolios for English 1100 and 1500

General Information:

We ask students to assemble portfolios of their work—folders containing several pieces of writing that have been revised over a semester. We believe that there are advantages to grading students on portfolios rather than on individual papers and that there are also advantages to letting students select which pieces of writing they want to revise extensively enough to be considered for a grade. (If you'd like to read a more extensive discussion about the advantages of portfolio grading, please let me know, and I'll forward you the handouts from last year's portfolio workshop.)

In our portfolio review groups, we meet at mid-semester and again at the end of the semester to read, grade (pass/no pass), and discuss student papers and portfolios.

English 1100

In this portfolio review group, every student in the class will submit a mid-term paper and a final portfolio, and the review group will decide whether the student's writing should enable him or her to pass the class with at least a "C."

Basic Information:

- If you are teaching more than one section of English 1100, you should select only one section for this portfolio process. If you are teaching both English 1100 and English 1500, you are welcome to participate in both groups.
- Dates and procedures for the portfolio group are described below. By joining the group, you're making a commitment to meet on these dates and participate in the readings, so please clear your calendar ahead of time.
- We recommend that you make time for these readings by canceling one of your classes at mid-term and the final week of classes at the end of the semester.
- We are trying to make room in the budget to pay for the mid-term and final readings as "workshops." At this point, we can't make a definite commitment that this will happen.
- All students in your class must participate by submitting a single paper for the mid-term practice portfolio and a portfolio of 2-3 papers totaling 10-16 pages at the end of the semester.
- The process dictates that at least two readers (you and one other reader from the portfolio group) must agree that the portfolio passes in order for the student to receive at least a "C" for the course. However, the final decision about whether to pass student always rests with you. You may decide to "override" the portfolio group's decision if you feel there is good reason to do so.

What to Put in Your Syllabus:

Here is what we suggest telling students:

At the end of the semester, you'll submit a portfolio containing two or three papers totaling 10-16 pages of writing. At least one of the paper must be thesis-driven and not primarily a narrative. Each paper included in the portfolio must be substantially revised and must include multiple drafts as well as feedback and/or notes on feedback.

For your portfolio to pass, it must be approved by me and by one other reader in a portfolio group. The portfolio group readers are instructors who are teaching English 1100 this semester. If two readers disagree about the portfolio, it is given to a third reader. In order to get a passing grade for the class, your final portfolio must be approved by two readers.

To give you a sense of how the portfolio works and what readers' standards are, we'll do a practice-run with one of your papers at mid-semester. The portfolio readers' decisions for this practice run will not affect your grade.

Reading Dates:

TBD

Mid-Term Reading Process:

Preparing For the Portfolio Group Reading:

We encourage you to cancel one of this week's classes in order to make time for the mid-term reading.

Before the reading, you should collected one paper from each of your students to use for the "Portfolio Practice Run." We suggest allowing students to choose whatever they believe is their best writing at that point in the semester. They must have done significant drafting and revision at this point, and they should present you with evidence of this in the form of drafts, notes, and feedback. However, you should not include this rough work when you bring the paper to the portfolio reading. The portfolio readers will only read and consider the "final" draft.

The portfolio readers will try to decide if the paper is passing work (meaning a grade of "C" or better) if it were submitted at the end of the semester. (Of course, if the group does not pass the paper, the student still has the rest of the semester to revise it.)

You should read all of your students' papers before the time of the portfolio reading. You should indicate your own opinion about whether the paper should pass by writing "P" or "NP" on the back of the paper along with your initials.

At The Reading:

We will begin the reading with a "norming" session. The portfolio coordinator will select several papers and make copies for everyone in the reading group. All of us will read these papers together and discuss whether we think they should pass or not and why. The point here is not to impose a

single standard on the group, but to get a sense of what each other's standards are—where we agree, where we disagree, and what the range of reactions are.

After the norming session, we will divide up the papers so that each paper is read by one reader. That reader will rate the paper as either "Pass" or "No Pass" and write this on the back of the paper along with the reader's initials. No feedback is required for a passing paper, but if the reader gives the paper a "No Pass," then the reader must briefly indicate why. (We'll provide forms for giving this feedback.)

If the portfolio reader's rating matches the classroom teacher's decision, then the paper is done, and it's returned to that teacher. If the classroom teacher's decision is different from the portfolio reader, then it's a "split decision," and the paper is given to a third reader in order to break the tie.

Passing papers will receive a form letter congratulating the student. The portfolio group will provide no additional feedback, although you as the teacher may decide to provide some feedback.

Non-passing papers will receive a form letter, explaining the decision and encouraging the student to keep working on the paper over the rest of the semester.

Final Portfolio Reading Process:

The final portfolio reading will occur during the last week of classes. We will read portfolios over two different sessions. In order to make time for this reading, you should cancel classes for this week. This means that you will need to collect the final portfolios from your class the week before.

Other than this, our process for the final portfolio reading will be the same as at the mid-term reading. You should read your portfolios ahead of time and indicate whether or not you believe the portfolio should pass. The portfolio coordinator will select several portfolios for "norming" and distribute copies of these for the group to read and discuss. We will then distribute the other portfolios for second readings and (if readers disagree), third readings.

English 1500

Unlike the English 1100 group, in this one, we won't read every student's work. Instead, each teacher in this group will select one student's paper (at mid-semester) and portfolio (at the end of the semester) for review. The purpose of our readings will be to informally discuss standards as well as to help us give feedback that might guide our students in their revision.

Basic Information:

- If you are teaching more than one section of English 1500, you should select only one section for this portfolio process. If you are teaching both English 1100 and English 1500, you are welcome to participate in both groups.
- Dates and procedures for the portfolio group are described below. By joining the group, you're making a commitment to meet on these dates and participate in the readings, so please clear your calendar ahead of time.
- If necessary, you can make time for these readings by canceling one of your classes at mid-term and one during the final week of classes at the end of the semester.
- We are trying to make room in the budget to pay for the mid-term and final readings as "workshops." At this point, we can't make a definite commitment that this will happen.

Mid-Semester and End-of-Semester Reading Process:

About a week before both readings, the portfolio coordinator will contact you and ask you to submit one or two papers (or, at the end of the semester, one or two portfolios) that you would like to discuss in the group. Most often, teachers select portfolios that are problematic in some way; perhaps they are borderline in terms of a grade or perhaps the teacher is looking for ways to give the student productive feedback. We'll try to read the papers/portfolios before our meeting so that we have time at the meeting for a full discussion of all of them.

Reading Dates:

TBD