

**English Department Graduate Program  
English M.A. Capstone Portfolio**

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## A. Capstone Portfolio Descriptions

Based on the information and research gathered by the 2011 MLA Report on English M.A. programs, the Yardley Report, recent information gathered on comparator institutions, and the current needs of and prospects for LMU's English graduate students, the English department has recommended replacing the M.A. comprehensive exam with the following capstone portfolios.

**The English department reserves the right to minimally alter the descriptions and evaluation criteria with approval of the Graduate Director.**

### **Literature Track portfolio:**

3-4 components

#### **Component 1: Writing Sample**

- **One article length research paper** (20-25 pgs): This paper can be a substantial revision of a seminar paper or an entirely new paper. The paper must have at least **10 sources** on its Works Cited page and follow MLA guidelines with precision. **See Component Descriptions.**
- **One bibliography narrative** (20-25 pgs)
  - Bibliography narrative must include a minimum of **10 primary sources** (different from those found in the essay) that serve as key comparator texts and/or texts that are integral to historical contextualization of the genre, literary period and/or author. Students are required to explain how each primary source is relevant to the assertions and/or subjects covered in the research paper using precise details and persuasive evidence.
  - Bibliography narrative must include a minimum of **10 secondary sources** that are not cited in the essay but inform the critical context for the student's essay. These secondary sources should include at least one work of contemporary literary theory. Students are required to explain how each source is relevant to the assertions and/or subjects covered in the research paper using precise details and persuasive evidence.
  - **See Component Descriptions.**
- **One 250 word abstract** appropriate for a professional conference: **See Component Descriptions**

#### **Component 2: English 600 Engaged Learning Project**

- English 600 engaged learning project requires first-semester graduate students to produce a project based on their work at an L.A. non-profit. **See Component Descriptions**

#### **Component 3: CV or resume:**

- **Curriculum vitae** for those planning to enroll in another graduate program **OR resume** for job in public sector that highlights achievements and transferable critical reading and writing skills. **See Component Descriptions.**

#### **Component 4: Teaching Preparation**

REQUIRED FOR TEACHING FELLOWS AND OPTIONAL FOR ALL OTHER GRADUATE STUDENTS IN PROGRAM:

- **Teaching philosophy**
- **Sample syllabus**
- Two **written observations** of other classes taught by Teaching Fellows
- **See Component Descriptions.**

#### **Composition and Rhetoric Track portfolio**

3-4 Components

#### **Component 1: Writing Sample**

- **One article length research paper** (20-25 pages): This paper can be a substantial revision of a seminar paper or an entirely new paper. The paper must have at least **10 sources** on its Works Cited page and follow MLA guidelines with precision. **See Component Descriptions.**
- **One bibliography narrative** (20-25 pages)
  - Bibliography narrative must include a minimum of **10 primary sources** (different from those found in the essay) that situate the essay within composition and rhetoric. Students must analyze the relationships between the cited primary sources in the essay, the relationship of the additional 10 primary sources to the essay's topic, and the trajectory of the specific research area that makes the essay timely or relevant.
  - Bibliography narrative must also include a minimum of **10 secondary sources** not cited in the student's essay. Students must forge connections among her/his research topic, key concepts of composition and rhetoric studies that function as organizing principles in his/her project, and the ways in which these concepts organize or map the field more broadly. Selected examples of key terms include the following: invention, contact zone, memory, genre, discourse community, discourse community boundary, color filter, heuristic, ethnography, assessment, composing, basic writing, dialectic, essay, topoi, social epistemic rhetoric, scientific rhetoric, expressive rhetoric, cognitive rhetoric, error, and many others.
  - **See Component Descriptions.**
- **One 250 word abstract** appropriate for a professional conference: **See Component Descriptions**

*Composition and Rhetoric track portfolio shares Components 2, 3 and 4 listed in Literature Track.*

#### **Creative Writing Track Portfolio**

3-4 components

#### **Component 1: Writing Sample**

- **20-40 pages of polished manuscript** in a specific genre—poems, short fiction, or book chapter(s)—ready to submit for publication or for consideration by a literary agency. **See Component Descriptions.**
- **One bibliography narrative** (20-25 pages)
  - Bibliography narrative must include a minimum of **20 primary or secondary** sources that situate the original art work within the history of literature and its criticism; within broader aesthetic, intellectual, political, cultural, and/or historical movements or events, if applicable; within a genre or an intersection of genres that shape literary history and/or popular publishing markets; and within critical debates that shape past, current, and projected production and publication of original art in the candidate’s area of specialization within creative writing.
  - In summary, the bibliography should evidence the candidate’s ability to speak about literary works and movements that influence her work, about the history of ideas that her work orchestrates and mediates, about the ways in which her work figures the imagination and the material world, and about historical literary movements and current trends that may influence her plans for publishing her work.
  - **See Component Descriptions.**
- **One cover letter** addressed to a publication that the candidate has researched and believes will be receptive to her work. **See Creative writing cover letter template**

*Composition and Rhetoric track portfolio shares Components 2, 3 and 4 listed in Literature Track.*

## B. Component Descriptions & Evaluation Criteria

For all four components, we recommend George Colon Semenza's *Graduate Study in the Twenty-First Century* (Palgrave, 2010) as a reference guide. Students' portfolio proposals must be submitted to your advisor and second reader. Your portfolio must be submitted to your advisor. See Portfolio Advisors and Deadlines & Proposal Template.

### **Component One: Writing Sample**

#### ➤ **Creative or Critical Work**

Your writing sample will follow the stipulations listed on the Capstone Portfolio Descriptions page. The *minimum expectation* is that the essay's argument has been substantially expanded and/or improved if it is a revised seminar paper or creative work. If a critical essay, your argument would offer a significant insight into your topic, clear and well-organized evidence, research and analysis, appropriate grammar and MLA documentation. Creative works must exhibit a coherent and imaginative artistic vision and skillful application of the genre's conventions.

#### ➤ **Bibliography Narrative**

A bibliography narrative is a combination of an annotated bibliography and an essay synthesizing these sources. Approximately one half of each bibliography narrative will follow the format of an annotated bibliography. An annotated bibliography provides a summary of each text and comments on how it is relevant to your creative or critical writing. The remainder of the narrative is an essay that provides a wider context for your paper or manuscript. The essay should contain a thesis that assesses and reflects on these sources in a meaningful way. You might ask the following questions about your sources: What ideas, theories, assumptions or narrative elements do these sources share? What do these sources (or groups of these sources) say about literary genres, historical periods, and/or theory?

***While each track has specific requirements for the narrative's contents, all will be evaluated based on the following criteria:***

*\*Clear, concise summaries of primary or secondary sources.*

*\*Significant synthesis of primary and secondary texts in relation to historical period(s), genre(s) and/or theoretical orientation(s).*

*\*Mastery of the terms and issues specific to the primary and secondary works.*

**(see Annotated Bibliography Guidelines** for more info).

#### ➤ **Abstract**

Compose an abstract of 250 words summarizing the content of your essay. This abstract should provide the historical context and/or theoretical debate surrounding your argument, make plain

how your reading differs from or adds to this conversation, and state your thesis clearly and cogently. Thus the structure should resemble the following:

1. Provide historical and/or theoretical context.
2. Use a “situating move” to show your argument’s place within this context (see Semenza 105-107 for examples).
3. Present thesis.

As you are writing your abstract, ask yourself:

Does my abstract provide historical context or cover a scholarly debate?

Does my abstract have a “situating move”?

Does my thesis challenge existing scholarship and articulate its broader implications?

Does my abstract articulate my argument logically?

Does my abstract have correct grammar and syntax?

***Abstracts are evaluated based on the clarity of your argument and how well you provide context, a situating move, and a challenge to existing scholarship. Follow the word limit.***

### **Component 2: Engaged Learning Project**

In an effort to expose students to ways their critical reading, writing and research skills can be utilized outside of academia, and with the aim to collaborate with Los Angeles non-profits that engage in issues related to social justice, English 6600 requires graduate students to produce a project in relation to their work at a non-profit. Projects might include a paper describing the your experiences, situated within scholarship about the relationship between engaged learning and knowledge acquisition and/or non-profit work and its challenges; a scrapbook, video or slideshow of the your challenges and successes; a research project you completed for the organization (assessment strategies, best-practices manuals, institutional histories, web presence, grant proposals, etc.), or a project that provides research about comparative organizations and their relationship to the organization with which our program currently engages. Though these projects were already evaluated in English 6600 for their depth of analysis/complexity of reflections, quality and quantity of research, and the project’s creativity, professionalism, and organized presentation of information, **students are required to revise the project if it received a grade of D or below in 600.**

**Additionally all students are required to provide a list of *two* additional non-profits from the U.S. or abroad and how and why these two organizations might benefit from a similar project. *This additional material should be no more than two pages in length and will be evaluated based upon your ability to:***

- 1) illustrate that you have done the research on the named organizations and***
- 2) be persuasive in explaining how your critical reading, writing and/or research skills might contribute to the named organizations***

### **Component 3: Professional Context**

Compile a **curriculum vita (CV)** if you plan to enroll in another graduate program **or** compile a **resume** if you plan to get a job in the public sector.

➤ CV

Your CV should summarize your academic achievements and contain the following sections:

- Name and University Affiliation (name, address, phone, email)
- Educational Background (higher education degrees listed from most to least recent with Latin honors e.g. *magna cum laude*)
- Dissertation Information (if applicable)
- Work Experience (academic jobs listed from most to least recent)
- Publications (book-length, article-length, and note-length entries listed from most to least prestigious)
- Conferences (conferences at which you participated listed from most to least recent)
- Awards and Honors (teaching or writing awards, fellowships, grants, and honor society inductions)
- Service (administrative or other service activities listed from most to least important)
- Memberships (memberships in professional societies and organizations)
- Languages (if relevant)
- References (three or four academic and professional references listed with their contact information)

Refer to Semenza (69-75 information, 288-291 example) for details.

### ➤ **Resume**

Your resume should be 1-2 pages in length. It should summarize your academic and professional achievements and highlight transferrable reading and writing skills. You may construct a resume specific to a particular job or field of employment:

- Name and contact information
- Educational Background (education degrees listed from most to least recent with Latin honors e.g. *magna cum laude*)
- Work Experience (relevant job experience listed from most to recent least)
- Publications and Conferences (book-length, article-length, and note-length entries listed from most to least prestigious, conferences at which you participated listed from most to least recent)
- Transferrable skills (applicable administrative, technological, management-based skills listed from most to least important)
- Awards and Honors (teaching or writing awards, fellowships, grants, and honor society inductions)
- Service (administrative or other service activities listed from most to least important)
- Memberships (memberships in professional societies and organizations)
- Languages (if relevant)
- References (three or four academic and professional references listed with their contact information)

We advise that you try to attend a resume fair at LMU. See Career Development Services website for details.

*Evaluation of CV or resume depends on its level of organization and concise expression.*

#### **Component 4: Teaching Preparation**

##### **➤ Teaching Philosophy**

Compose a teaching philosophy describing the pedagogical and ideological principles that inform your approach to teaching. Your teaching philosophy should include a description of your theoretical and/or personal pedagogical sources, as well as delineate your teaching praxis using concrete and specific examples. For more important info, see Semenza 140-142.

*Teaching philosophies are evaluated based on whether or not a description of your theoretical and/or personal pedagogical sources and teaching praxis are clearly and logically presented.*

##### **➤ Sample Syllabus**

In addition, you will put together a sample syllabus that includes course title, course description, course learning objectives, required text(s), required assignments, and class schedule. See Semenza (122-5 information, 291-5 example).

*Syllabi are evaluated based on whether or not they are clearly articulated and organized, and whether or not they reflect your teaching philosophy effectively.*

##### **➤ Class Observations**

Finally, you will attend two classes taught by Teaching Fellows and write observations on your experience. As you are observing the class, consider asking yourself:

What is the structure of the class period?

What topics are covered? How many topics are covered?

What is the teacher's style? (e.g. lecture-based, Socratic seminar, etc.)

What is the level of student engagement? How well do students respond to prompting?

What methods does the teacher use to evaluate student performance?

What are the advantages and challenges of this pedagogy?

*Teaching observations will be evaluated based on the level of your observation's detail and reflection.*

## C. Portfolio Advisors and Deadlines

Graduate students must attain signatures for their proposal from a faculty advisor of their choice and one additional faculty member/reader. Your portfolio must be submitted to your advisor and reader. Your advisor does not need to have expertise in the area(s) covered in your proposed article, though we suggest you consider the professor who oversaw your research/writing when you first turned in the essay/creative work (if you choose to revise a previous essay/creative work), or a professor who has some experience teaching or writing about the area of proposed research (if you choose to write a new essay/creative work). The second faculty reviewer need not be a specialist in any of the areas covered. You should contact your desired advisor and ask if she/he would be willing to meet with you to discuss your writing project (\*see below). If an advisor agrees to work with you, be sure to meet with your advisor to develop your revision plan and construct a bibliography list. Your advisor also has the option to suggest revisions, new directions, different methodologies, etc. but is not required to do so. When you and your advisor agree to a plan, contact your reader and ask if she/he would agree to serve as a reader for your capstone. Your advisor and your reader must be well-informed about your project before they receive the formal "Portfolio Proposal" form which all parties must sign. (*See Portfolio Proposal template*)

The "Portfolio Proposal" is a description of your writing project, a list of assigned primary and secondary texts appropriate for your bibliography narrative, and the list of any additional components required. Your proposal's bibliography may be constructed by your advisor, and/or constructed by you and your advisor collaboratively. Once your list is set and your project approved, you are to work on this project independently. You should not request that your advisor read drafts or comment on your responses to texts from the reading lists. Your portfolios are evaluated based on your competency at completing this project on your own and the mastery of your critical and/or creative research, reading and writing skills.

*The portfolio proposal must then be approved or rejected by the Graduate Director and English department chair. See proposal template.*

### \*A note on drawing up your bibliography list:

You and your advisor should agree on a reading list as described in the Component Descriptions. As it says in the Component Descriptions, this list may consist of a list you've devised and is approved by your advisor, or an entire list suggested by your advisor, or a list the two of you put together. If there are whole journal issues related to your topic, you might just list the journal and year of the issue, or, if there is an entire journal devoted to your topic, you might say 'select issues of *Rhetorica*' for example. You should first confirm with your advisor about this plan in case they have more advice. But your list should be you and your advisor's best informed prediction of what will be useful, and these texts will be the focus of your bibliography narrative. If it turns out you complete much more additional reading, that's fine (it will be useful for your research paper); you should still write about the sources you submit for approval this

week, since this part of the portfolio is intended to examine how well you can distinguish between relevant and irrelevant sources for research.

If, in exceptional cases, a student and advisor agree it is vital that a source be replaced by another source on the list after your proposal has already been approved by the director and the chair, you will need to email the Graduate Director the title of the new source, what it is replacing and why. This is to avoid the possibility of students changing sources to ones that haven't been approved by their advisor and thereby run the risk of failing the bibliography narrative due to not following the requirements.

**For graduate students choosing the portfolio capstone for Spring, the process before your advisor signs off will look something like this:**

\*Before or over the holiday break, decide which seminar paper/creative work you want to substantially rewrite or develop a new paper topic.

\*When you have decided, email the advisor with whom you hope to work. Describe the paper/creative work you wrote (or a thesis or research question), how you may rewrite it, and why.

\*If the professor agrees to work with you, ask if you could meet the first or second week of the spring term to work out the details. Remind them that you will need a reading list and ask if they would like you to bring in some suggestions for the list or if the professor prefers to assign you a list of her/his own.

\*Write your formal proposal using the template provided. Attain all signatures by the date indicated in the Capstone Deadlines document.

\*Work on your project independently, and turn it in to your advisor and reader by the date indicated in the Capstone Deadlines document. You are not permitted to ask your advisor for an extension. Notify your advisor and reader when you have submitted your portfolio. The components should be well-organized and professionally presented.

**Students will be notified by their advisor if their portfolio earned a pass or fail typically by May. Faculty advisors will file a reader's report and may meet with you as well. Faculty who split on their evaluation will refer the portfolio to the Graduate Committee for evaluation. If the portfolio fails, the student must revise accordingly and re-apply for graduation the following semester.**

## **D. Proposal Template**

### **Cover page:**

Dear Professor xx and Professor xx (your advisor and second reader),

Please consider this description of my portfolio project for approval. I will submit this portfolio to you by xx. Attached you will find a description of my [literature/comp & rhet/creative writing sample], a list of 20 sources for my bibliography narrative, and a list of the additional components comprising my portfolio.

Thank you,

Student's Name

### **1. Description of Proposal:**

The description of your portfolio project should be a paragraph explaining why you chose to rewrite a seminar paper/creative work or compose a new one. What needs to be revised, rewritten or composed anew and why? Additionally, you should explain what you hope to accomplish in writing this essay/creative work (submit to journal or publisher?).

### **2. Bibliography Sources:**

### **3. Additional Materials:**

\*Altogether sections 1,2, & 3 should be no longer than 2 pages in length.

**Signatures:**

Professor\_\_\_\_\_ (Advisor) Date:

Professor\_\_\_\_\_ (Second Reader) Date:

Graduate Program Director\_\_\_\_\_ Date:

English Department Chair\_\_\_\_\_ Date:

## E. Annotated Bibliography

An annotated bibliography is a list of cited sources about a particular topic, in which each citation is followed by a brief annotation, or discussion of the source. The annotation usually consists of just one paragraph, but your advisor may require more. Unless otherwise specified by your advisor, we suggest that each annotation be no longer than half a page. An annotated bibliography is useful for documenting your research in a specific area, exploring varying viewpoints, and summarizing main points from different sources. There are two parts to every entry in an annotated bibliography: the citation and the annotation.

### The Citation:

The citation includes the bibliographic information of the source. Your citation should be in MLA format. Your citations should be in alphabetical order. **You should organize your citations into two sections:** Primary Sources and Secondary Sources. Primary sources are fiction, non-fiction or other texts that are relevant to your creative work or critical analysis. Secondary sources are articles about your topic and/or volumes of criticism or theory.

*Sample Journal Citation in MLA format:*

Gilbert, Pam. "From Voice to Text: Reconsidering Writing and Reading in the English Classroom." *English Education* 23.4 (1991): 195-211. Print.

### The Annotation:

The annotation is a brief paragraph following the citation. Purpose of the Annotation:

- condense the content of the source (write a brief summary of the information)
- assess the usefulness or relevant application of the source
- describe your reaction (value of source? analytical reaction?)

Please note that given the half-page limitation for the annotations, you should focus on contextualization of your primary sources and the main argument of your secondary sources.

### IMPORTANT NOTES:

- The bulk of the bibliography narrative should consist of the synthesis of these sources, so construct your annotations accordingly.
- The focus of the following sample annotated bibliography entries is the use of reading and literature in the composition classroom. It matches the examples of annotated bibliographies from *Purdue's OWL website*. *Note: to reduce paper consumption, we have used single space lines; however, MLA format requires double spaced lines throughout your document.*

### Narrative:

Your narrative about your annotated bibliography will likely result in 10-12 pages of persuasive writing. Though each track is slightly different in its description (*see Capstone Portfolio Descriptions*) think of this essay as your chance to ask the questions and write the responses for

a comprehensive exam. You might brainstorm by asking yourself: what are the similarities and differences between my sources and how does such a comparison inform the topic of my paper/creative work? How do individual sources challenge the arguments in my paper/story/poems, etc. and how how/why do these challenges inform your writing? These are brainstorming questions to get you going, but your advisor may have specific questions for you to think about as well, so check in with her/him as you write this section.

### **Sample Annotated Bibliography (MLA)**

Gilbert, Pam. "From Voice to Text: Reconsidering Writing and Reading in the English Classroom." *English Education* 23.4 (1991): 195-211. Print.

Gilbert provides some insight into the concept of "voice" in textual interpretation, and points to a need to move away from the search for voice in reading. Her reasons stem from a growing danger of "social and critical illiteracy," which might be better dealt with through a move toward different textual understandings. Gilbert suggests that theories of language as a social practice can be more useful in teaching. Her ideas seem to disagree with those who believe in a dominant voice in writing, but she presents an interesting perspective.

Greene, Stuart. "Mining Texts in Reading to Write." *Journal of Advanced Composition* 12.1 (1992): 151-67. Print.

This article works from the assumption that reading and writing inform each other, particularly in the matter of rhetorical constructs. Greene introduces the concept of "mining texts" for rhetorical situations when reading with a sense of authorship. Considerations for what can be mined include language, structure, and context, all of which can be useful depending upon the writer's goals. The article provides some practical methods that compliment Doug Brent's ideas about reading as invention.

Murray, Donald M. *Read to Write: A Writing Process Reader*. Fort Worth: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1987. Print.

Murray's book deals more specifically with the ways writers read other writers, particularly the ways in which writers read themselves. *Read to Write* provides a view of drafting and revising, focusing on the way a piece of writing evolves as an author takes the time to read and criticize his or her own work. Moreover, the book spotlights some excellent examples of professional writing and displays each writer's own comments on their own creations, in effect allowing the student reader to learn (by reading) the art of rereading and rewriting as exemplified by famous authors.

Newell, George E. "The Effects of Between-Draft Responses on Students' Writing and Reasoning About Literature." *Written Communication* 11.3 (1994): 311-47. Print.

This study reflects the advantage of teacher responses on student papers. When reflected upon as "dialogue" questions to the student, these comments can lead to further interpretation and deeper understanding of a text. Newell found that responses which prompted students to work from their initial drafts brought about more final papers than teacher responses that led them away from their initial drafts with "directive" remarks.

## F. Creative Writing Cover Letter Template

Date

Your name

Street Address

(Addressee's) Mr./Ms./Dr. First Name Last Name

Street Address

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. Last Name,

First Paragraph: Description of your status and any previous awards or publications you would like to highlight.

Second Paragraph: "Please consider the enclosed (name of enclosed pieces) for possible inclusion in (name of publication)."

Final Paragraph: A brief description of why you think your writing is a good fit for the publication. End with something like: "Thank you for considering (enclosed piece(s)) for publication."

Sincerely,

Handwritten Signature (for a mailed letter)

Typed signature

Email address

## **G. Capstone Deadlines**

**-See Capstone Deadlines document in “Student Resources.”**