



Assignment Sheet: Portfolio Cover Letter

Chris Friend • ENG 121 • Fall 2017

1. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Your portfolio combines, organizes, and presents content you created this semester, and it will **demonstrate how well you have achieved the objectives of this course**. Your portfolio will begin with a cover letter, which allows you to guide Friend through your portfolio and draw attention to the elements you wish to emphasize.

This document reviews what you've learned and the progress you've made in this class, and it uses your essays and other work as evidence to support your claims. Demonstrate how well you achieved the expected outcomes for this course (see Section 4) and explain how those achievements are evident in the portfolio. Your cover letter serves as a guide to the important parts of your portfolio by:

- making a claim about how your writing as a whole responds to the course outcomes (This claim is about your *accomplishments*, not your grade.);
- identifying, analyzing, and arguing how the work included in your portfolio demonstrates key course outcomes (Do this by quoting from and analyzing your own work in direct relation to the outcomes); and
- using the language of the course outcomes and your own assignments in ways that support your portfolio claim (Remember: You are not stating *that* you accomplished the outcomes, but you are arguing *how well* your work shows you accomplished them.).

Taking the form of an actual letter, this document will be somewhat different from a traditional composition paper. Whereas you typically work to maintain a separation between the writer and the subject of your papers, in this case, you *are* the subject. This letter uses a more personal tone and a more direct approach than most of your essays—first person pronouns make sense here.

It's important to note two things this cover letter does *not* do. First, it does not work to inflate my ego or score brownie points by discussing my role in the class. This is about you, your work, and the course outcomes. The instructor's role isn't involved. Second, this is not a narrative walking readers through the semester. I was in class; I read your papers and know what assignments you did. However, I don't know your thoughts on how well you achieved the outcomes, and I'm interested to learn more.

2. PROCEDURE

Create your cover letter *before* you compile your portfolio but *after* you've reviewed and revised your essays. Your portfolio will be assessed using the rubric in Table 1. To create a successful cover letter, you should:

- (1) Establish a purpose for writing, based on a context. (Think CARS.)
- (2) Using concepts and terms from this semester's readings, showing comfort with course content. You should use key vocab terms and at least one text from each of our units:
Writing Process: Contreras, Stommel, Dila, etc.
Discourse Communities: Swales, Gee, Devitt, Wardle, Mirabelli, and Penrose and Geisler
Rhetorical Situations: Haas and Flower, Grant-Davie
- (3) Evaluate how your learning progressed through this semester. Consider each element of the course: reading, writing, researching, and thinking. What activities, assignments, etc. helped you reach the course outcomes?
- (4) Find evidence of that growth in the papers you have written. Cite the content you wrote, changes you made, or process you used, as needed.

3. QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

This semester, you learned new ways to think about writing, which you demonstrated in the papers you wrote. You can argue *how* your work demonstrates the course outcomes by comparing drafts and discussing revisions. This way, you can point to specific parts of your writing where you used feedback to revise your work. (If you need to access older versions of your work, remember that you can download anything you previously uploaded to D2L.)

While drafting your cover letter, you may wish to consider the questions below as idea starters. Avoid creating an interview-style Q&A list. Instead, use the questions below as a menu of suggestions for other ideas you could discuss in your paragraphs.

- (1) **Does the paper satisfy the assignment requirements?** Look at your homework assignments, look over your draft and instructor and peer comments, and consider whether your paper is on track. Satisfying the assignment also includes using assignment-appropriate conventional formatting and mechanics.
- (2) **Does the paper effectively demonstrate the course outcomes? Which ones?** Consider the course outcomes your writing employs and practices. Look at the course outcomes, assignment sheets, and instructor feedback to determine which paper supports which outcomes. What skills or concepts are used, for what purpose, and to what degree? How does your paper demonstrate the outcomes, and how important are the outcomes in your writing?
- (3) **How much revision does the document require?** While the ease of revision should not be your sole reason for selecting assignments for your portfolio, be realistic. Don't choose a paper that requires a monumental investment of time and energy. Go with the assignments that stir interest, have a number of positive aspects upon which to build, and already received positive feedback from your peers and other readers.
- (4) **Where did you struggle the most?** In this class, the most difficult tasks often provide the greatest opportunities for growth and learning. Think about what you struggled the hardest to figure out, and see whether that process works as a demonstration of one or more course outcomes.

4. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

According to the Course Syllabus, now that you have completed the semester, you should be able to

- see writing as a complex, fluid, recursive process (not as merely a tool);
- adapt your ideation, revision, and products to reflect the affordances, constraints, and expectations of various rhetorical situations; and
- develop your critical reading, writing, and thinking skills.

Your course syllabus has additional details on each of these outcomes, including actions you may have taken that you can look for in your work, making it easier to find supporting examples.

TABLE 1. Final Portfolio Grading Rubric

	ASSIGNMENTS	OUTCOMES	RHETORIC
A	Purposefully incorporates references to assignments from each unit	Connects course outcomes in a unified demonstration of progress	Writing fits naturally with the rhetorical situation
C	Refers to assignments from each unit; may obscure rationale	Provides evidence of all course outcomes	Author shows an attempt at rhetorical appropriateness
F	Does not refer to assignments from all units	Outcomes not addressed	Writing is sloppy, lazy, or inappropriate for the situation