

Kayla Clarke
WRA 210
Module 3

1) Question:

What went into choosing the general design of your portfolio? Did you learn by looking at other portfolios/websites, or was it something that just came to you? I love the different (bubbles? I'm not sure what their technical name is) that link to each page.

Answer: Choosing the general design of my portfolio was quite a process! At the beginning of that process I had no idea what I wanted my portfolio to look like. I went through both WRA 210 and WRA 410 with the hope of becoming inspired and working really hard to make a super great website. However, by the end of each of those classes I realized the same thing: creating a really awesome portfolio website (like all of the neat ones on the PW website) by coding it from scratch is really hard. While that is something that can be really rewarding (having a well polished portfolio website as one of your most important portfolio pieces, because you made it yourself, can be really cool!) I knew that I didn't have the patience for such a large project.

Therefore, I decided to play to strengths. I worked as a web developer at The Writing Center @ MSU for my junior and senior years using WordPress; having this experience made me feel comfortable creating my portfolio in WordPress because my skills were strong and, instead of worrying about the code and technical aspects of my portfolio, I could focus my full attention on my content and branding myself.

Once I knew that I wanted to use WordPress, I started shopping around for templates that fit what I wanted my portfolio to do/how I wanted it to look. Eventually, I found a few templates I liked on themetrust and was able to purchase both during a buy one get one free sale. I am very glad that I was able to purchase both (even though I obviously just used one) because it allowed me the opportunity to play around and experiment with each one and determine which one I wanted by actually doing stuff.

The template you haven't seen was more typical, it had a slider on the homepage and similar tile/bubble thing going on at the bottom, but much smaller. While I thought there was room for potential there to prove that I could design a "typical" website and further showcase my practical skills as a WordPress developer, I ultimately decided to go with my template "Ink" for two reasons. First, I really liked how visually appealing Ink is. As a visual learner myself, it was really cool to incorporate that into my design choice! Second, I felt that the tile/bubble design was the best way to illustrate one of the main aspects of my portfolio: the variety of different types of projects I've done.

Synthesis: What I took from this reply is that in certain situations it may be necessary to give up something in order to achieve something more important. For me, designing my own theme is something that's very important to me. I know it won't be easy, especially with my limited knowledge of HTML but it'll be like putting a puzzle together. I know what I want, I just have to learn how to build it. Although I can also see where Ben is coming from, he needed his portfolio

to look nice and be ready to rock and roll quickly, thus a theme already made that just requires some customization is great in that situation.

2) **Question:** What was most challenging when it came to building your portfolio?

Answer: Aside from that whole process (question 1) I'd say deciding how I wanted to brand myself and therefore what content I would include on my portfolio. This was especially a challenge for me because I've never exactly had narrowed expectations for myself; some people grow up knowing they want to be a doctor or an actor or a teacher, but I never had such feelings. Honestly, I felt very lucky to stumble into PW where I knew my love for writing, technology, and thinking' about stuff could be put to good use, and ultimately made quite marketable. So yeah, higher concept "who am I and what do I want people to think of me?" type of issues, that's something I want to stress with my answers - the higher - order concerns of what your portfolio is and what it is saying about you are more important (at least to spend more time thinking about and worrying about) than getting a functional website, these can be thrown together rather quickly if need be.

Synthesis: I only have a general idea of the things I want people to see, the documents and creations I want inside my portfolio. The most important one being my screenplays. I only have one completed one so far, and it still needs to be edited quite a bit but I plan on fixing it up, registering it (so nobody can steal it) and posting it in my portfolio. Mostly because it was my first *real* screenplay with a plot and characters that I really love so I'm quite proud of it. Other than that-- I'm not sure what else to put. I suppose other things I've written, articles and such.

3) **Question:** What did you learn? Were there any mistakes, particularly ones that took a long time to figure out / correct that could have been avoided?

Answer: In the process of creating a portfolio I did learn a few things. However, I didn't really learn anything related to actually creating the website. Rather, I learned that having a good amount of time to think about what you will put in your portfolio, how much of it, and why is often overshadowed by the fact that "omg I have to make a website wow"; making an awesome website is kind of wasted if all of the content you have on it is shit or if it doesn't adequately represent who you are as a person or professional.

So the simple answer to your question is not really, my web development experience helped me go through the technical process rather smoothly. Play to your strengths when doing the technical stuff for your portfolio!

Synthesis: This is a great point, and something I hadn't really put that much thought into. I need the best of the best in my portfolio, I need to look professional and intelligent and make a good impression. Especially if future employers will be looking at my website.

4) **Question:** I'm just beginning to build mine now, I know very little about HTML and CSS but I'm hoping this class will teach me. Is there anything that you wish you'd known when you were just starting off? Any pro-tips for beginners?

Answer: You can Google anything and probably get a good answer. Lots of times if you're working on a project in class (I'm thinking of WRA 210 and WRA 410) and you have a

question, your professor might not have time to get to your problem in a timely manner—having your own research skills is really useful for this purpose, and just in general. Also on that note, more so than in any other class, use office hours! Mmmm don't let it intimidate you. I know I had fear when I started learning HTML/CSS because I thought it was a super secret code and to get good you had to perform ritual sacrifices or something—it's nothing as exciting or scary.

Synthesis: I've already started using Google to set up things I wouldn't otherwise know how. Like in the tab (with Google Chrome at least) you can have a little picture, found the code to make it so my own icon will show up there. I also figured out how to set up a custom URL to GitHub pages and while it was a lot of work and took me a lot of time I finally figured it out which was rather rewarding.

5) Question: How did you decide which works and information to post on your portfolio? Did your portfolio come in handy when it was time to apply for a job?

Answer: There were a couple of ways I decided what portfolio pieces I would include on my websites. The most inane reason was that I wanted to have 16 pieces so I could have a nice pretty 4x4 grid when viewed from a browser. Aside from that, I wanted to make sure I had a good variety of pieces to display the different types of work I can do. One good example is my political philosophy paper, which I included 1. So I could meet my 16-piece goal and 2. Because, unlike the others, it showed my abilities to write a longer work. I've since basically decided that was a mistake, but I think my reasoning was reasonably sound.

As far as whether my portfolio has come in handy or not, I'd have to say both yes and idk. I'm hesitant to flat say yes because, while I have certainly put my portfolio's link on my resume, LinkedIn, and cover letters I'm not 100% certain that it is getting looked at a lot or not. Therefore, if you can manage it and think it would be worth it, I would recommend trying to get your website set up to receive analytics data, like from Google Analytics (I know it's great, but I've never set it up for my own site so idk how to do that). You'll also get feedback from those in WRA 455 or in the portfolio presentation process, so there will be no shortage of feedback—it would just be awesome to have more data now from where I am. However, there is one reason why I am very happy to have my portfolio. Keeping my portfolio up to date results in revising my samples decently often as well as providing me with an easy to access place to get writing samples for job applications. It is especially helpful to have an organized portfolio because it allows you to easily pull whatever type of piece you want for a job application.

Synthesis: I think I'll take his advice and find out how to set up Google Analytics, it'll be nice to know if my portfolio is coming in handy or not because if it's not getting any hits it might not be worth the upkeep. I'd still keep it, of course, especially if I'm putting up screenplays because then even if future employers aren't looking at it my family can. They're always asking to see my work but I tend to be too shy or just not have enough time to email it or print it for them.

6) Question: Have your HTML/CSS skills come in handy in situations that did not involve your portfolio. Do you think knowing HTML/CSS is vital these days?

Answer: Absolutely, though that's coming from someone that was a web developer and took other web authoring courses! I think it is, though it depends on what types of jobs you're looking for. At the very least, having a base of HTML/CSS skills keeps you competitive with others

candidates for jobs. At best, it can push you over the top and make you a prime candidate right away. So at worst, it's expected and at best it's a pleasant surprise that gives you a leg up on the competition.

Synthesis: I've always been fascinated with HTML/CSS but haven't had the time/energy/skill to teach myself how to use and understand it. Which is why I'm very excited for this class.