

Assignment: Introduction/Preface to Your “Retrofolio”

“Senior Seminar” (Eng. 300) with Professor Bob Broad

Strategic tips developed 9/20/2009:

- Quote Goals, quote your texts, convincingly argue the connection between them
- Create a T.O.C. for your Retrofolio with text titles, topics, dates, and the courses in which they were written
- Don’t worry about intros, conclusions, creativity, or themes during the early phases of your process; focus on quoting passages from your texts and quoting Goals; generate material along these lines that will be shaped more creatively later

Senior Seminar (Eng. 300) at Illinois State University requires each student to compose a special portfolio comprised of “best works” from each of her or his undergraduate English courses. Since this is a “retrospective portfolio,” we give it the nickname *retrofolio*.

The purpose of the retrofolio assignment is to give you the opportunity to reflect on and study the work (intellectual, critical, creative, poetical, rhetorical, etc.) you’ve done in your various English classes. Specifically, the retrofolio provides a solid body of data on which to base your (and potentially others’) assessment of the extent to which you have achieved the [“Goals of the \[ISU\] English Major”](#) described on the ISU English Department website.

In order to make the collection and construction of your retrofolio rewarding, educational, and useful, you need to compose for it an introduction, preface, or reflective letter. Picture this document as an introduction and guide for readers of your retrospective portfolio. You can call their attention to particular aspects of the work contained in the portfolio. With this new piece of writing, you will shape how readers experience your portfolio.

At the same time, the intro/preface is an example of *writing to learn*. In the process of writing it, you should make discoveries about your written work, your learning, and your experiences in the English major at ISU. You may want to conclude your intro/preface with observations and recommendations to the Department of English about how its faculty most effectively and successfully help students (i.e., you) achieve the Goals for the Major, how faculty might do so *more* effectively, and even new goals you think should be added to the list (or goals you think should be deleted).

It is important to work closely with the “Goals of the [ISU] English Major” as you compose your portfolio and your intro/preface. However, you need *not* try to address all thirty goals in your portfolio or your intro/preface. Instead, look for the goals most important to your learning and growth during your time as an English major. These will likely be goals you feel you have met, but you might also choose to address some goals you did not meet. Also, as mentioned above, while the “Goals” statement is a necessary framework for your reflections, please feel invited and challenged to transcend that framework. If you recognize important values or goals in English Studies not on the list, please consider discussing how you have (or have not) met

those other goals, and perhaps suggest that the Department of English add to, delete, or revise some of its goals.

You will have the opportunity to workshop a draft of your retrofolio intro/preface in class, and I (Prof. Broad) will also read and respond to a revised intro/preface so you can develop your final version with input from your peers and your professor.

Please endeavor to make the process of composing your retrofolio intro/preface a creative and rewarding one for you, a process in which you find a way to discover and communicate important and distinctive insights into your journey as an English major.