

## The Portfolio Requirement

First year students and sophomores majoring or concentrating in English are required by the department to begin an English Studies Portfolio. A completed portfolio must be presented to the department for final review during English 400, the Senior Seminar; a copy of the Seminar paper will be added to the portfolio upon completion of the course. In addition to the Senior Seminar paper, this portfolio is a requirement for graduation with an English major or concentration.

Faculty advisors in the English Department will discuss your portfolio with you throughout your career at Monmouth College, particularly during Mentoring Week and before you register for your classes. Please ask them about the portfolios if you have any questions that are not covered here.

### What is an English Studies Portfolio?

A portfolio is a collection of documents relating to your work and educational experiences during your college career and especially to your experiences as an English major. It also includes your reflection on your process and your work. One theory is that your best work, polished and perfected, ought to be included in the portfolio. The department's intent here is not only to reflect your best work but also to show your progress during your career at Monmouth College. Thus we ask that you include course essays that have been evaluated by your instructors; since you have full access to your portfolio at any time, the essays may be revised at a later date for graduate school and job applications.

A portfolio serves a number of purposes. **First**, it helps you evaluate your disciplinary goals and progress during your time at Monmouth. By looking at earlier work, you can get a sense of your development as a writer and scholar, evaluate your strengths and weaknesses, and work on those things that are most important to you. **Secondly**, a portfolio will give you the documentation you need when you're applying for jobs, graduate and professional schools, scholarships, internships or other special programs. Since it includes such a thorough record of your undergraduate experience, having a well-organized portfolio can help you prepare writing samples, statements of purpose, and other application elements. **Finally**, the portfolio can provide useful material for your faculty mentors to review when writing your letters of recommendation.

### What should go in my portfolio? (Table of Contents)

Minimally, the English Studies Portfolio must contain each of the components listed below, with no single component counted in multiple categories:

- One basic analytical or argumentative essay written in a first-year composition course, English 200, or literature survey course.
- A total of seven other class essays: two for the sophomore year (at least one of them an English essay); three for the junior year (at least two English and one other); and in the senior year, the Senior Seminar essay, and an Issues and Ideas, Reflections, or Honors essay.

- The English research paper or project from English 200 or an advisor-approved substitute.
- Poetry, short stories, and drama you have written in conjunction with class work, especially if you have published the work on campus or elsewhere.
- Course descriptions, summaries, and other documents relating to experiences you have had and work you have done on off-campus programs; internships; and campus newspapers, magazines, newsletters.
- Copies of LSAT, GRE, Illinois Certification, or other test scores related to your work in English Studies.
- Annual self-evaluative education-in-progress reports.

### **What Is An Education-In-Progress Report?**

Majors will be asked to write annual education-in-progress reports which will usually be reviewed during the spring registration period. Typically these reports will include:

- Your goals in English Studies
- Your incremental progress toward achieve of those goals
- The challenges that face you in English Studies
- Your perception of your strengths and weaknesses in the areas of reading, writing, and speaking
- Your resolutions and means of improvement

In addition to this general self-examination, we also ask that you reflect on particular goals of the English Studies program by examining departmental objectives during each of your years at Monmouth College.

- In your first education-in-progress report, if you are already an English major in your first year at Monmouth College, analyze your writing skills and abilities and any development in English 110 and English 200. Focus on rhetorical strategies, process writing, and thesis statements. Also analyze your ability to understand figurative language such as simile, metaphor, etc.
- As a sophomore, please emphasize writing skills including process writing strategies and thesis statements. Explain any development of your library resource skills. Additionally, make clear what you know about the special uses of language in literature including figurative language and literary structures. Finally describe your overall ability to read, explicate, analyze, and interpret works of literature.
- During your junior year, tell us about your understanding of the special uses of language in literature with an emphasis on figurative language and literary structures. Also, how has your ability to understand and appreciate the cultural and historical contexts for the study of English and American literature improved? Finally, have you develop a basic knowledge of the

history of the English language including traditional grammar and modern grammar theories? This will apply more directly to students who have taken English 314 (History of the English Language) and English 201 (Grammar).

- Your Senior Seminar professor will request that you review your portfolio, assessing your progress toward your degree in English Studies. At this time, include a discussion of your ability to recognize and appreciate literary genre and sub-genre distinctions, literary movements, critical approaches to texts, and diverse cultural and historical literary traditions. Do you understand the cultural and historical contexts for English and American literatures? Finally, please comment on your ability to read, explicate, analyze, and interpret works of literature. Remember that this is an assessment of your academic progress, not just of this academic year.

Your advisor will read and orally respond to your report, and you will then be asked to summarize your advisor's response and your own reaction to that response in a paragraph appended to the in-progress report. The department expects self-evaluations conducted early in your college career to be projective, looking ahead to academic and internship goals; likewise, we expect self-evaluations conducted during your senior year to be reflective, looking back at the experience and knowledge you've gained. *Your advisor may not release your registration if you have not completed your education-in-progress report and updated your portfolio.*

For examples of effective education-in-progress reports, please visit the online version of this information at <http://department.monm.edu/english/portfolio.htm>

### **Portfolio Procedures**

- Your English Studies Portfolio begins in discussion with an English department adviser. At that time you will need to save all your graded essays for your portfolio and your progress reports (EIPs).
- The department will provide a black, one-inch three-ringed binder with inside pockets and a label for your name and anticipated year of graduation (on front cover and binder edge. This binder will become the departmental copy of your portfolio and will be located in a file cabinet in the English Department office, MLC 202. You will find copy of a "Table of Contents" that represents the minimum requirements of the portfolio, as listed above. Save and keep an electronic copy of the table and print it for your hard copy portfolio binder. You may use that "Table of Contents" or elaborate one of your own based upon the model provided. That "Table of Contents" may be revised regularly but should be reviewed carefully once a year and again before turning in the portfolio in the spring of your senior year.
- A three ring punch will be left atop the file cabinet in the department office. Students are required to update their hard copy binders at least once a semester (typically at the end of the Fall Semester and during the registration period in the spring).

- Class papers included in the portfolio notebook should be the marked, graded copies of assignments. It is imperative that you include essays as soon as possible after receiving them back from your professors. You may keep originals as long as copies of graded essays are included in your portfolio.
- Though they become the property of the English Department, contents of your portfolio notebook will never be released or shared with anyone without your explicit permission.
- By the fourth week of the Senior Seminar, you will submit your updated and completed English Studies Portfolio to your advisor who will review the portfolio for completeness and give you oral feedback on the portfolio. After you've made any necessary changes, you will then present it to your seminar instructor who will review and mark it S/U, normally prior to consideration of your seminar essay. With an S you become eligible for completion of English 400, graduation with a major or concentration, and departmental Honors.
- After you have completed your senior thesis, you will write a brief, one-page self-evaluation of the essay and include it as an appendix to your portfolio.
- The department retains your portfolio notebook (you will have established an electronic portfolio of your own), though you may have access to the hard copy version for resumes, job applications, and graduate school applications.