

Details: Critical Analysis (Paper 1)

Overview: Your task is to study one writer's online portfolio and to assess for classmates its strengths and limitations as a model for their own portfolios. To complete the assignment, you will need to

1. familiarize yourself with the genre of online writers' portfolios;
2. analyze how the sample portfolio compares and contrasts with conventional expectations for online writers' portfolios;
3. evaluate the effectiveness of the portfolio writer's rhetorical decisions; and
4. compose an essay that presents your analysis and evaluation of the selected portfolio in light of what you know about the genre of online portfolios and about the writer's purposes, the needs and expectations of the audiences, and the context and situation.

Goals: The main goals of this project are for you to learn more about

- scholarly, systematic approaches to written analysis and evaluation;
- writing in academic situations where you are asked to analyze (e.g., to characterize, classify, or examine) or to evaluate (e.g., to assess, critique, judge, measure, rank, or rate);
- genre analysis as a tool for yourself and other writers;
- genre conventions of writers' online portfolios; and
- ethical responses to others' writing—whether or not the authors' are known personally to you.

Audience: Your primary audience is other ENG 101 students who are interested in your assessment of the sample portfolio's potential as a model for their work. You and I are also audiences for this paper. This is a writing-to-learn project, and your writing should formalize what you learn about the online portfolio genre and the effects of a writer's choices to use (or not to use) the conventions of this genre. One additional audience to keep in mind is the public, as a version of your paper may also be posted to your Web portfolio for this course. It will be important that your critical analysis be fair and respectful of the portfolio's author, and, simultaneously, that it also be useful to your English 101 peers, as they are counting on your honest and knowledgeable assessment of the sample portfolio.

Procedures and Requirements: To compose the critical analysis paper, complete the steps below. Keep all notes, graphic organizers, and drafts of your work.

1. Study examples of writers' online portfolios. (Links to portfolios may be found on our course Web site.) Using the heuristic "Guidelines for Analyzing Genres" (Devitt, Reiff, and Bawarshi pp. 93-94), identify characterizing patterns of the writer's online portfolio genre. Analyze patterns across at least 7-10 samples; it is important to draw samples from a variety of contexts and situations. Take notes on your observations.
2. Select one writer's online portfolio for further analysis and evaluation. The portfolio you choose may not be one of the samples posted on the course Web site; nor may it be the same portfolio that another ENG 101 student has selected. (There are thousands of writing portfolios online; entering well-chosen key words in a search engine would be a good way to find an "unclaimed" writing portfolio to study.) When you have selected a portfolio, post the name of the author as well as the URL to the Courses@Dordt forum "Writers' Online Portfolios" so that other students may see which samples are already claimed.
3. Analyze how the sample portfolio compares and contrasts with conventional expectations for online writers' portfolios (as described in your notes about patterns for this genre). Use a graphic organizer to chart your findings (see VanderMey et al pp. 46-47).
4. Evaluate how the writer uses (or doesn't use!) conventions of the online portfolio genre. What do you think about the form and function of this portfolio? Does it "work," given what you know about online portfolios and about the writer's purposes, the needs and expectations of the audiences, and the context and situation? Which strengths and limitations are especially notable? Again, use a graphic organizer to chart your conclusions (see VanderMey et al pp. 46-47).

5. Compose a formal essay that assesses the strengths and limitations of the selected portfolio as a model for ENG 101 writers. Present your analysis and evaluation of the selected portfolio in light of what you know about the genre of online portfolios and about the writer's purposes, the needs and expectations of the audiences, and the context and situation. The final draft should be 4-5 double-spaced pages long and should meet the standards listed in the grading section below.

Due Dates: The final draft of this paper is due on Tuesday, September 19. Due dates for workshop drafts are listed in the syllabus. Meeting the due dates for the workshop drafts is important for you and for your classmates who will be learning with you. Each time that you come unprepared for a workshop will result in a .5 reduction (on a 4.0 scale) from your grade on the final draft of this paper.

Grading: The Critical Analysis essay is worth 10% of your final grade. I will grade your paper holistically, taking all of the components together into account—with attention given to content and rhetorical moves as well as to structure, coherence, and conventions of format, style, grammar, and usage.

A quality Critical Analysis essay will:

- ✓ Present a thorough, accurate, and insightful assessment of the strengths and limitations of the selected portfolio as a model for ENG 101 writers.
- ✓ Show scholarly, systematic study of the conventional patterns of the genre of writers' online portfolios and of the rhetorical decisions made by the writer of the sample portfolio.
- ✓ Use rhetorical appeals (to logos, ethos, and/or pathos) that support the purposes of the paper and facilitate communication with the intended audience.
- ✓ Structure the organization of ideas in a clear, cohesive manner that supports the purposes of the paper and facilitates communication with the intended audience.
- ✓ Employ appropriate conventions of format, style, grammar, and usage to support the purposes of the paper and facilitate communication with the intended audience.
- ✓ Document in an appropriate, consistent style any and all sources whose words, ideas, or illustrations are cited or used in the paper.
- ✓ Demonstrate an ethical approach to writing processes and products.
- ✓ Exhibit a developed and accurate understanding of the principles addressed in class and workshop sessions, in the assigned readings and activities, and in my responses to your work.



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