



PWR 4999 – Writing Your Future

PH 325 | TR 2:40 – 4:05 p.m. | 3 credit hours

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

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Student Hours: Tuesdays 11 – 12:30, Wednesdays 11:30 – 1, and by appointment

COURSE INFORMATION

Description

This course is the senior capstone for the Public Writing and Rhetoric major and minor. It is meant to serve as the culmination of your work in the program and a bridge to your future personal, professional, and public goals as a writer. Coursework will emphasize the skills and steps involved in searching for and pursuing relevant writing-intensive careers, the creation of a professional portfolio that builds on projects you've done throughout the PWR program, and the editorial processes involved in the creation of that portfolio as well as other writing for public and professional audiences.

Objectives

The course is designed to:

1. allow students to synthesize and extend what they learn across the Public Writing and Rhetoric major or minor;
2. facilitate the creation of highly polished, public-facing portfolios consisting of revised versions of projects students have created throughout their college careers;

3. prepare students to seek out and apply to relevant professional opportunities (including in industry, the nonprofit sector, and relevant graduate programs) as they approach graduation;
4. foster interpersonal networks between students, faculty mentors, and professional contacts that they can draw on post-graduation.

Topics Covered

Key course topics will include:

- Finding and Pursuing Writing-Focused Careers
- Creating Public-Facing Writing Portfolios
- Revising and Editing Public and Professional Writing

Prerequisites and Co-requisites

Students in PWR 4999 must be PWR majors or minors and have at least junior standing. Students should take the course as close to graduation as possible.

COURSE MATERIALS

Required Textbooks

There are no required textbooks for this course. All course materials will be available through D2L as links or PDFs.

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Grading Procedure

All assignments in this course will be assessed on a pass/fail basis. That means if you do the assignment and meet the criteria listed at the end of the prompt for that assignment, you will get full credit for it. If you don't complete an assignment or miss particular assignment criteria, you'll get no credit for it. **Note that if you do not complete and submit the PWR Portfolio, you will not pass the course regardless of your overall performance.**

Assignments and Grading Scale

The following table lists the assignments for this course and what percentage of your overall grade they'll account for. More detailed prompts for all assignments will be provided as the class unfolds. All major projects will be submitted via D2L dropboxes.

Assignment	Points/Percentage
Career Report	15%
Application Materials	15%
In-Class Presentations	14%
Peer Feedback	15%

Assignment	Points/Percentage
PWR Portfolio	41%
Total	100%

Letter Grade	Range
A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79
D	60-69
F	59 and below

Incomplete Grades

Incomplete grades are given rarely and only in extenuating circumstances. Page 56 of the [MTSU Undergraduate Catalog](#) states: "The grade I indicates that the student has not completed all course requirements because of illness or other uncontrollable circumstances, especially those which occur toward the end of the term. Mere failure to make up work or turn in required work on time does not provide the basis for the grade of "I" unless extenuating circumstances noted above are present for reasons acceptable to the instructor." Please refer to the Undergraduate catalog for the complete Incomplete Grade Policy.

Feedback

- I will provide audio-recorded feedback on major writing assignments—basically, everything except the copyediting exercises. That feedback will be posted roughly one week after a draft of an assignment is turned in. If for some reason audio feedback is not accessible for you, let me know and I'm happy to provide written feedback instead. In some cases, we will have one-on-one conferences where I'll provide in-person feedback that will take the place of audio feedback.
- I will provide written feedback on copyediting exercises on an as-needed basis.
- Deadlines for all major assignments are provided in the course calendar and in the D2L dropboxes to which you'll be submitting them.

Deadlines and Late Work

I have deadlines in my classes for three main reasons, which I think it's worth taking a moment to explain as a way of helping you understand where I'm coming from as a teacher:

1. Because of my own limitations. If I have every student turning in every assignment at a different time, it gets easy for me to overlook things, which can delay my feedback and cause confusion for you all.
2. Because you all will be learning to write together. As much as we sometimes think of writing as a solitary activity (a lone author sitting in their room typing away at a novel or essay), learning to write is a deeply social experience. We'll discuss this point in this course. But for now, it means you'll be developing your writing in conversation with each other, and you'll be providing each other feedback on what you're writing. For that to work, you'll need to be working on writing assignments at roughly the same time as your classmates.
3. Because the writing assignments in this class build on each other. That means you'll apply things you learn from writing earlier assignments while you're working on later assignments. If you try to do everything in the last few weeks of the semester, then you won't be able to build on what you've already learned. It would be like trying to climb a ladder by immediately jumping to the highest step—a difficult if not impossible task.

So there will be deadlines in this class, which you'll be able to see using the D2L calendar. I ask that you stick to those deadlines as much as possible. That said, if something comes up that prevents you from turning something in on time—an illness, a technological issue, a family emergency—please let me know. I am often, though not always, willing to give extensions as needed. I just ask that, if you anticipate needing an extension on a major writing project or other recurring work, you email me in advance of the deadline so that I can plan accordingly. If you don't provide me with advance notice, I may not be able to provide you with a way to make up coursework.

Academic Integrity/Misconduct

Please review the university's policy on [Academic Integrity and Misconduct](#).

When it comes to detecting and addressing plagiarism, I refuse to use Turnitin because I have [major problems](#) with its business model and the assumption that students are guilty of plagiarism until proven innocent. It's also not much good at detecting things like ChatGPT usage anyway. If I do notice that a student is plagiarizing, I will almost always use it as an opportunity to start a one-on-one conversation about plagiarism rather than automatically failing the student or reporting them to university authorities. If you're ever concerned that you might be plagiarizing in a project you're working on (by not citing sources correctly, etc.), I encourage you to check in with me. I hope this is obvious, but I won't penalize you for accidentally plagiarizing in an early draft of a project that you share with me. If you submit a plagiarized assignment to one of the D2L dropboxes, you will have to redo it to get credit for the assignment. Resources on how to cite work correctly are available through the website of the [University Writing](#)

[Center](#). You may read more about how to avoid plagiarism from the [Office of the University Provost](#).

Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to:

- submitting someone else's work (papers, themes, reports, drawings, laboratory notes, computer programs, etc.) as if it's your own;
- knowingly assisting another student in obtaining or using materials they attempt to pass off as their own work (this does *not* include collaborating with each other while you're working on a writing project, which I encourage you to do);
- turning in work primarily generated by AI tools (ChatGPT, Grammarly AI, etc.);
- submitting assignments previously used in other courses where you received credit for the work (in other words, you can plagiarize yourself); and
- improperly crediting or not crediting another author's work.

When it comes to text-generation tools, I ask that *if you choose to use them*, you carefully document your usage and submit that documentation along with the assignment on which you used it. For professional writers in a variety of fields, it's increasingly important to both (1) know how such tools work and how to navigate them effectively and (2) be able to make the case for what you can do that AI can't. So if you use it to, say, generate a list of starting points for a project, submit that list and an overview of how you used it when you turn the project in. If you use it to do a copyedited pass on a project, turn in the pre- and post-copyedited versions and note what it changed.

Ultimately, the consequences for plagiarism are my call. If you repeatedly and intentionally plagiarize assignments in this course, possible disciplinary sanctions (including expulsion from the university) may be imposed through the regular institutional procedures for addressing academic misconduct. I have the option of not giving you credit for plagiarized assignments until they're redone or of giving you an F for the course. Students guilty of plagiarism may be reported to the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs.

OTHER COURSE-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Attendance

I ask that you miss no more than four class meetings. If you miss more than four, you **must** schedule a one-on-one meeting with me to develop a plan to make sure you can keep up with the course. If you don't schedule that meeting, or if we can't come up with a sustainable way for you to proceed, you won't be able to pass the course.

Email

If you need to get in touch with me outside of class or office hours, my MTMail address is the best way to do so: eric.detweiler@mtsu.edu. In most cases, I'll reply to emails I

receive during the workweek within 24 hours. I don't always check my email on the weekend, so if you have an urgent question and the weekend is approaching, email me by 5 p.m. on Friday.

Per the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#), if you email me with detailed questions about grades, I may recommend an in-person meeting as a way of keeping your educational records private. While we're on the topic of FERPA: I cannot and will not communicate with your parents, guardians, or others about your grades or how you're doing in the course. That's because of the privacy protections FERPA grants you as a college student. If there is a parent, guardian, or other person you want to grant access to your grades and other educational records, they will need to register through the [Partners in Education program](#). Once they are enrolled in that program, they can request relevant records through the MT One Stop.

MT Engage Designated Course

This is an MT Engage course. MT Engage promotes active engagement in learning and integrative thinking and reflection across educational experiences. In this MT Engage course you will participate in a beyond-the-classroom activity and submit at least one assignment to the D2L ePortfolio. You will also answer questions about your MT Engage experience in an end-of-course survey. You will receive important informational emails from the MT Engage program about ePortfolio training and how you can qualify for the MT Engage scholarship competition. For more information, go to <http://www.mtsu.edu/MTEngage>.

STUDENT RESOURCES

Students with Disabilities

Middle Tennessee State University is committed to campus access in accordance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Any student interested in reasonable accommodations can consult the [Disability & Access Center \(DAC\)](#) website and/or contact the DAC for assistance at 615-898-2783 or [DAC Email](#).

University Writing Center

The University Writing Center is a great resource for students. Its physical location is room 362 of the James E. Walker Library, and it's online at www.mtsu.edu/uwc. The UWC offers students valuable one-on-one assistance with their writing, and they offer virtual appointments. You can make an appointment for a conference using their website or by calling (615) 904-8237. Whether you feel like you're the best or the worst writer in the class, the UWC is a wonderful resource.

Grade Appeals

[University Policy 313, Student Grade Appeals](#), provides an avenue for MTSU students to appeal a final course grade in cases in which the student alleges that unethical or unprofessional actions by the instructor and/or grading inequities improperly impacted the final grade.

Title IX

Students who believe they have been harassed, discriminated against or been the victim of sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence or stalking should contact a Title IX/Deputy Coordinator at 615-898- 2185 or 615-898-2750 for assistance or review [MTSU's Title IX website](#) for resources.

MTSU faculty are concerned about the well-being and development of our students and are legally obligated to share reports of sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence and stalking with the University's Title IX coordinator to help ensure student's safety and welfare. Please refer to [MTSU's Title IX website](#) or contact information and details.

Hope (Lottery) Scholarship Information

Do you have a lottery scholarship? To retain the Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship

eligibility, you must earn a cumulative TELS GPA of 2.75 after 24 and 48 attempted hours and a cumulative TELS GPA of 3.0 thereafter. A grade of C, D, F, FA, or I in this class may negatively impact TELS eligibility.

If you drop this class, withdraw, or if you stop attending this class you may lose eligibility for your lottery scholarship, and you may not be able to regain eligibility at a later time.

For additional Lottery rules, please refer to your [Lottery Statement of Understanding form](#) or contact your [MT One Stop Enrollment Counselor](#).

Outreach and Support Programs

The MTSU community is committed to the academic achievement of each student, and we know that struggling to address basic needs can affect a student's ability to perform academically. If you are having trouble finding a safe and stable place to live or enough food to eat, please contact the MTSU Food Pantry at 615-898-2111 or mtonestop@mtsu.edu. You are also welcome to visit the MTSU Food Pantry at the MT One Stop, fill out our [Food Pantry Online Request](#), or speak with your instructor to get the assistance and resources you need.

The American Democracy Project - Voter Registration

The American Democracy Project is a multi-campus initiative that seeks to create an intellectual and experiential understanding of civic engagement for undergraduates

enrolled at institutions that are members of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU). The goal of the project is to produce graduates who understand and are committed to engaging in meaningful actions as citizens in a democracy. Currently more than 250 campuses participate in the American Democracy Project. To find out your voter registration status, go to [American Democracy Project: Get Registered](#) today.

The True Blue Pledge

As a member of this diverse community, I am a valuable contributor to its progress and success. I am engaged in the life of this community. I am a recipient and a giver. I am a listener and a speaker. I am honest in word and deed. I am committed to reason, not violence. I am a learner now and forever. I am a BLUE RAIDER. True Blue!

COURSE CALENDAR

The following schedule lists the deadlines for readings and major course projects. Major project deadlines are in **bold**. Both readings and projects are due by the start of class on the day they're due unless otherwise noted. Some days also include a brief overview of the topic we'll be covering that day or other things we'll be doing.

I will do my best to keep us in line with this schedule throughout the semester. However, I reserve the right to make changes as needed (in the event of things like inclement weather, personal health issues, etc.). If I ever do make changes to this calendar, I will announce them in class and via a news item on our D2L homepage. If you ever see any discrepancies between this calendar and a deadline listed somewhere else in D2L, please let me know and I'll address it ASAP. Readings will be available as PDFs or links via D2L.

<i>Date</i>	<i>What We're Up To</i>
Week 1	
Jan. 21	Introductions, Syllabus, and Course Calendar
Jan. 23	Prompts for Major Course Projects
Week 2	
Jan. 28	Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eva Brumberger and Claire Lauer, "The Evolution of Technical Communication: An Analysis of Industry Job Postings"
Jan. 30	Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jennifer Goode, Bremen R. Vance, and Erica M. Stone, "What's Trending in Tech Comm Job Ads?"
Week 3	
Feb. 4	Initial Planning Discussion for PWR Portfolio Introduction to Microsoft Sway
Feb. 6	Guest Presentation from Career Center
Week 4	
Feb. 11	Guest Presentation from Career Center, Continued
Feb. 13	Individual Conferences in Peck 323A
Week 5	
Feb. 18	Career Report (First Draft) Workshop Career Report in class.
Feb. 20	Guest Speaker: Laura Micciche
Week 6	
Feb. 25	Guest Speaker: Chris Pilny
Feb. 27	Career Report (Revised Draft)
Week 7	
Mar. 4	PWR Portfolio Progress Discussion
Mar. 6	Application Materials (First Draft)

	Workshop Application Materials in class.
MAR. 10 – 15: SPRING BREAK	
Week 8	
Mar. 18	Work on Application Materials
Mar. 20	Application Materials (Revised Draft) Sample Presentation, Discuss and Prep for Presentations on 3/20
Week 9	
Mar. 25	In-Class Presentations on Career Reports and Application Materials Practice Elevator Pitches, Work on Portfolio Pitches
Mar. 27	PWR Portfolio Pitches
Week 10	
Apr. 1	Discuss and Work on Portfolios in Class
Apr. 3	Initial Revision of First PWR Portfolio Piece Workshop portfolio piece in class.
Week 11	
Apr. 8	Guest Speaker: Amanda Clelland
Apr. 10	Initial Revision of Second PWR Portfolio Piece Workshop portfolio pieces remotely. No regular in-person class meeting.
Week 12	
Apr. 15	Work on Portfolios and Prep for Wednesday's Event
Apr. 16	Non-Class Event: MT Engage Spring Reception, Student Union Ballroom, 2 – 3 p.m.
Apr. 17	Initial Revisions of Third PWR Portfolio Piece Workshop third portfolio piece in class.
Week 13	
Apr. 22	Practice Interviewing Skills
Apr. 24	Workshop Entire Portfolios
Week 14	
Apr. 29	Practice Portfolio Presentations, Reflect on Semester
Finals	
May 6	Final Exam Session, 3:30 – 5:30 p.m. In-Class Presentation of Final PWR Portfolios

