

ONLINE PORTFOLIO / PERSONAL WEBSITE

The capstone project in CAT 125 is a website that showcases your expertise in a particular area.

Because the focus of this course is on developing rhetorical awareness, your website does not have to be a technically or artistically ambitious. Websites with too many deluxe features may actually irritate visitors, be seen as inappropriate or inauthentic, or otherwise undermine trust.

Using a web service that provides website templates or easy editors for publishing online content, such as blogs, wikis, e-portfolios, etc. is completely acceptable. You do, however, need to purchase an original domain name and redirect it to the site that is hosting your materials. The cost of doing this should be less than the cost of a typical college textbook, but talk to your section leader if you feel the financial burden is a problem.

You may want to focus on the practical by creating an online portfolio that you think would enhance a cover letter, résumé, or personal statement. Such online portfolios for college graduates often highlight research, coursework, fieldwork, clinical experience, or community service that would be considered important to a graduate or professional school or to a future employer.

If you choose to create an online portfolio that is specific to your major, be aware that different disciplines have different conventions when it comes to the basic elements of an online portfolio.

For example, teachers often include a statement of teaching philosophy, information about their experiences out in the field at different schools, and sample teaching materials such as syllabi or lesson plans. Because of the need to respect student privacy, teachers rarely show photographs of their interactions with students on their online portfolios. In general, such portfolios tend to emphasize text rather than images.

In contrast, art students may include many different photographs in their online portfolios. Viewers generally expect access to large, high-quality images that document artistic work. Text on an artist's online portfolio may be limited to a biography, artist statements from particular exhibits, or captions that explain the meaning of or provide additional information about specific pieces.

You can see examples of online portfolios created by students from many different majors – including science majors – on the page for the smart classroom exercise that is on TED and linked to the online syllabus at losh.ucsd.edu.

However, many students in CAT 125 feel hesitant to focus on their career goals for this project, so you are not required to create a website that reflects your future profession or current major. You may want to use this requirement in CAT 125 to promote a cause, organization, or personal interest, which is perfectly acceptable.

As long as you satisfy the following requirements, section leaders have been instructed to interpret the website guidelines very broadly:

- 1) There must be an “about” section or its equivalent. Even if you use a pseudonym or only use your first name, your audience needs to know why you might be a credible authority on a given subject.
- 2) There must be evidence of research appropriate for the work of an upper-division college student. As I explain in lecture, however, “research” can be constituted by many different activities. Even creating a totally fictional alternative reality probably requires research. Much like your “about” section, research will enhance the credibility of your website. Furthermore, if you link to specific sources, it will also likely increase traffic to your website as well.
- 3) There must be focus and coherence to your website. Random assemblages of cool things may be interesting and provocative, but they don’t give a strong impression of authorship, which is important in any writing course.

For more information, please consult the grading rubric for this assignment and meet with your TA or professor during office hours.