Master of Liberal Arts Program

Portfolio Description

The Portfolio (450.082: Liberal Arts Portfolio) is an option within the MLA Capstone. Students who select the Portfolio option will take ten courses in the program. The Portfolio will be completed within the same semester as the tenth course, and for students not selecting the graduate project option, the Portfolio is a degree requirement. The Program Director (or designee) serves as the Portfolio Advisor.

The portfolio consists of a sampling of the best papers and projects written over the course of the student’s graduate career. The Portfolio is not simply a collection of papers but is designed to help students see how all aspects of the program are interconnected. It also provides a travel log chronicling the student’s development of their own “way of knowing,” their own approach to knowledge.

The goal is self-reflection as the student considers intellectual, and perhaps personal, growth. Portfolios can have a practical application in areas of certification, professionalization, or indicate a change in professional direction. The papers/projects submitted should come from at least three different areas of the liberal arts (i.e., music, literature, history, political science, interdisciplinary studies). The submitted documents should consist of the final versions of the papers with grades and faculty comments.

**Portfolio Due Dates** - Your portfolio is due no later than one month prior to the last day of classes in the semester of graduation. This allows time for evaluation and, if necessary, a revision of the submitted work. A portfolio submitted late could result in a delayed graduation.

**Grading** - Pass/Fail - If a student fails the Portfolio they will be allowed to revise it for re-submission. You should consult with the MLA Associate Chair about the Portfolio before enrolling and submit the Portfolio on-time for consideration and to allow time for revisions should they be needed.

Portfolio Structure and Presentation

**Organization of Portfolio**
- Cover-Title page
- Section 1 – Essay: Why I came to the Master of Liberal Arts Program
- Section 2 -- Courses Taken in the Program by Semester and Year
- Section 3 – Assignments chosen for inclusion in the portfolio
- Section 4 – Essay: Overall MLA Experience

**Section Descriptions**

- **Section 1 – Why I came to the Master of Liberal Arts Program (3-5 pages)**
  Essay should indicate what originally drew you to the MLA program and what your goals were in coming to the program. This section can be accompanied by a copy of the original Admissions essay.

- **Section 2 – Courses taken**
  - Syllabi from all courses taken (optional)
  - Course Descriptions
  - Student Response to Courses. Consider: What were the course objectives? What was learned? What was good about the class or why was the class disappointing? Do you see connections to other classes you have taken in the MLA program?

*Course Descriptions and Student Response (Example)*

**450.764 Medicine in the Ancient Near Eastern and Classic Worlds** (Summer 2002)
Instructor: Dr. P. Kyle McCarter, Jr.
From the syllabus: This seminar examines the practices of medicine in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Israel, as well as classical Greece and Rome. The primary emphasis is on early ideas about health and disease. Students discuss such issues as the practice of surgery, methods of hygiene, knowledge of contagion, definitions of illness, and concepts of ritual purity. Readings include primary texts surviving from ancient Near Eastern documents (e.g., Egyptian papyri and Mesopotamian cuneiform tablets), as well as the Hippocratic treatises and other medical literature from the Greco-Roman world.

This course was one of the best courses I have taken in all my undergraduate and graduate studies. It was primarily a lecture-style course, but Dr. McCarter actively encouraged questions and participation. I learned so much from this course – not only the specific science behind these ancient medical practices, but also how to think about the history of this science and the history of the geographic areas. I thought that this course was a good juxtaposition for the Popular Culture class in that it also approached a historical subject but from philosophical, scientific, and anthropological perspectives whereas Popular Culture was a socio-historical survey of the material.

❖ Section 3 – Assignments Chosen for Inclusion in the Portfolio with Essay

Part 1 – Essay
Overall essay on why these particular seminar papers (with comments) represent your experience in the MLA Program. You should not necessarily include the papers in which you received the best grade. Please consider courses/papers from which you learned the most, or which pushed you into a higher level of understanding in a field or area in which you had little or no background. For example, one student wrote in her essay, “I do not necessarily think that all of these assignments represent the best of what I have done in the MLA program (though, they are not my worst, either). Instead, I chose to incorporate these items because they show a breadth in the type of work I have done in the program.”

Some questions to be considered:
- How do these papers illustrate the process of journey through the program as you have developed your own way of knowing?
- How does this paper integrate into the course goals and objectives, and how did the paper help your understanding of this particular area of study?
- Did you revise your paper in significant ways?
- How did this specific assignment assist you in synthesizing or critically assessing course information?
- How did it assist you in developing relevant skills?
- How does this paper connect to what you learned in other courses in the program?

Part 2 – Copies of at least five papers with instructor comments

❖ Section 4 – Overall MLA experience (5 pages)
Some questions to consider:
- How has the program contributed to the development of your own way of knowing?
- How have your goals changed?
- How has your understanding of the world changed?
- What personal and intellectual goals have you reached through your studies in the Master of Liberal Arts?
- What would you do differently?
- Are there courses or areas of study you wish you had pursued?