Student Guide for Hispanic Studies Learning Portfolio Project
2006-2007

Introduction

The Hispanic Studies faculty value active and self-reflective learning. A Learning Portfolio is a purposeful collection of artifacts - a collection of student work during his/her major - that characterizes the learning experiences of the portfolio owner and can be helpful in assessing student achievements and development. This collection of work and reflections permits the reader of the portfolio to see changes in student work and thinking over time. Artifacts may include items that were created by the student in the context of the learning experience during a two-year time. They may include written essays, semester abroad experience narratives, presentations, research, or artifacts that may otherwise represent the student's learning experience, such as a brochure, creative writing, translations, conferences, lectures or photos. Each item is accompanied by a reflection essay. An essential part of creating a Learning Portfolio is the process of thinking about the student’s academic and extracurricular work in order to understand more deeply his/her learning process. The set of artifacts contained in a portfolio together with reflections, show the student’s achievements in competency areas, and his/her engagement in self-reflection and self-evaluation. Portfolios give students ownership and responsibility for their own learning.

The purpose of the portfolio is to enhance the students’ engagement in their work towards the major, foster students' reflection as they assemble the portfolio, and help students explore potential areas of further study, research and career choices. The portfolio will reflect knowledge that has been gained and skills that have been acquired. The creation of a portfolio involves a process as much as a product. The time and effort required in creating a portfolio calls upon skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of the student. The portfolio creates a stronger relationship among the processes of learning, assessment, and teaching.

The development of a portfolio encourages students to personally fulfill one aspect of the mission of the Colleges—that of becoming a reflective professional. In addition, there are specific objectives and benchmarks for student performance throughout the program, which require documentation. The portfolio serves the purpose of providing a logical and organized system of documentation for demonstrating achievement of these objectives.
Components of the Portfolio

The final portfolio should include the following items:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>This should include a letter explaining what goals you are setting for yourself and how you plan to accomplish them. It should reflect on your academic strengths and weaknesses and how you plan to enhance the former while overcoming the latter in the Hispanic Studies major.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio summary</td>
<td>This should include page numbers and/or tabs to clearly indicate the portfolio’s content. The summary should be arranged sequentially, topically (Latin America, Spain) or according to artifacts (essays, research, journals, exams, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic writing samples</td>
<td>Each academic essay should be accompanied by a reflective essay. You may include as many essays as you choose. The minimum requirement is four essays.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All reflective essays</td>
<td>All reflections should clearly illustrate the ability to effectively critique work and provide suggestions for practical alternatives. Self reflection should be evident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracurricular writing</td>
<td>This should include all writing related to world cultures and experiential learning from outside the classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior year reflective essay</td>
<td>This essay should synthesize your academic experience. It should show evidence of critical thinking and problem-solving ability. It should assess individual growth and improvement, and academic strengths and weaknesses. It should also state future professional goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative writing or personal choice of artifacts</td>
<td><strong>This part is optional.</strong> You should choose artifacts that are clearly and directly related to the purpose of the portfolio.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrance and exit exams</td>
<td>You should include the scores of these exams, the exams, and your reaction to the results.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students’ Guide for Reflective Essays

Upon inclusion of any artifact in your portfolio, write a paper that looks back on the experience of this undertaking (reflective essay). Consult with your advisor so that you complete this reflection on time.

Format

When writing these essays in a word processor:

- Use only the Times New Roman font (or similar, if your computer does not have this font) with a size of 12 points.
- Double-space your typing.
- Leave one-inch margins all around.
- At the top left corner of the first page, place your name, the course and section number, and the date you have submitted the essay.
- Begin the essay with the title of your paper centered.
- Have the word processing program automatically number each page (except the cover page) in the top right-hand corner.
- Use the Word Count function of Word to measure the size of your paper.
- Essay must be at least 1000 words in length.

Describe

- Content of essay
- Title
- For what course was it written
- Date of assignment
- Why did you select this artifact (piece of work)? Give at least two or three reasons.
- What goals are you addressing?
- How many times have you re-written or edited the chosen artifact? You should provide an explanation of how you have improved the analysis in the assessment part. You should refer to specific assignments, drafts, and peer critiques as necessary.
- Explain what skills you possess and/or learned in order to be able to complete the assignment.

Submitting the Portfolio

- The portfolio is due the first week of February for spring graduates and first week of October for fall graduates. Exact due dates for portfolio entries, entrance and exit examinations will be emailed to you and posted each semester in the Hispanic Studies web page: http://www.csbsju.edu/hispanicstudies/
The semester preceding graduation and the semester of graduation, you should register for Span 399 in order to get one credit for portfolio for each of these semesters. (This course number will change once the PP becomes a requirement for all majors.)

It is the student’s responsibility to include all required entries in the portfolio. Missing entries will delay graduation. Incomplete or late portfolios will not be accepted after the final deadline for submission.

Timeline

September 2006
- Students take the Entrance Exam

Spring 2007
- Students planning to graduate spring of 2008 or later meet with their respective advisor at least twice per semester to discuss the portfolio in process.

The meetings should be devoted to:
  a. comparing the portfolio-in-progress against a list of the recommended artifacts and documents that should go into the PP
  b. the students' planning of their work
  c. reading and discussion of the documents already in file
  d. identification of problem areas if applicable
  e. recommendations to the student

Students may start selecting from formal and informal texts they have already written or will write for their courses.
- For those students pursuing language study overseas, or doing independent work (overseas experiences/internships/experiential learning), such meetings will be substituted with a comparable number of extensive emails with their advisors and the Assessment Committee.

Spring 2008
The first group of PP majors prepares for graduation:
- Majors take the Graduation Exit Exam
- The PP advisors will have a series of meetings with seniors who plan to graduate in May 2009. During these meetings the students will revise documents, give the finishing touches to their portfolios, and share their documents and reflections with their fellow majors.
- Majors submit the complete portfolio at the due date published in the Hispanic Studies homepage, in classes, and by e-mail.
- Majors present the finished portfolio for the closing ceremony, which will be a showcase of the portfolios of graduating students. At the portfolio ceremony students will give an oral presentation of their Senior Year Reflective Essay. This
ceremony keeps the celebratory reading spirit of the current Senior Project requirement. Date of celebration will be announced.

Students Self-Assessment on Reflective Essays
- What kind of progress has been made with the essay that accompanies this reflective paper?
- How does the assignment reflect that progress?
- What could you have done differently in the selected essay to help you meet your personal/intellectual goals and those of the program?
- What was particularly important to you while you were completing this piece of work?
- What things did you struggle with while you were doing this work?
- What were some of the reactions you received from those who looked at this piece of work?
- How is this piece of work the same as or different from other projects you have done?
- What do you see as the strengths of the artifact you selected?
- What areas would you need to continue to work on?
- How have your grown intellectually during the course for which you have written this assignment?
- Which of the Hispanic Studies goals did you show growth in?
- What areas of personal/intellectual growth would you like to focus on your next assignment?
- What kinds of skills or critical thinking do you exhibit in your “best,” “worst,” and “most improved” work? When discussing your “worst” work, the goal is not self-deprecation, but an evaluation of skills.

Note: The required elements of assessment are separated in this reflective essay guide, but you may integrate them. For example, you may explain the portfolio items within a discussion of your learning. No matter how you address each element, your essay needs to proceed in a logically, organized manner.

Suggested Guidelines for Student’s Senior Reflective Essay

In preparing this essay, think about your background, your expectations as a Hispanic Studies major; compare your expectations with the goals of the major. Try to include relevant facts about your background, your strengths and weaknesses in the language, literature, and culture areas of the program. Develop the self-reflective essay using specific examples of texts, authors, and theories. Remember that any written artifact you are composing requires a coherent narrative.

Give an account of your background in Spanish, American, and other cultures and literatures. Mention the authors and the literary and cultural works that you studied; state why they are meaningful to you academically and personally. You don’t have to be comprehensive; write down whatever you can remember. State your progress in Spanish language, cultures and literatures. State your experiences with studying world cultures and foreign languages. Were you changed because of these experiences?
Take a look at the goals in the Hispanic Studies major. Do you believe that reading, analyzing, writing, and thinking critically serves an important function in our society? What does it mean to be proficient in a foreign language, culture or literature? What is the importance of writing Spanish in a variety of situations? What is the importance of symbolical or metaphorical thinking? What kind of critical reflection did you engage in daily with your work in the major? What are the key ideas in your major that have shaped or reshaped your thinking over the past two years? What are the key ideas that you suspect will continue to shape your life and thought in the future? What are some of the fundamental concepts and beliefs that inform your intellectual growth, your sensibility, or the values you have developed up to this point?

As you think about what sorts of things to say in your reflective essay, think of the many aspects of your educational experience inside and outside the classroom. Besides your courses, you should narrate about your participation in an overseas program, experiential learning, internship or any other experience in another country or in parts of the USA where you experienced a different culture.

You should also focus on your short-term and long-term planning for the future, which might include preparations for attending graduate school or preparations for a possible career—or really anything that demonstrates your thinking about the next stages of your life. How do you think the course of study as a Spanish major will help you attain your goals?

Your senior reflective essay does not reflect a finished product. It just shows the intellectual growth and maturity at this point in your career. The processes you describe in your reflective essays will also apply to your professional life.