

## CMN 4460: Public Relations Capstone (2 Credit Hours) – Spring 2024



**Instructor:** Anna Kochigina

**Class Time and Location:**

Buzzard Hall 2434

Mondays from 1:00 p.m. to 2:40 p.m.

**Office Hours and Location:**

Buzzard Hall 2546

- Mondays from 10:57 am to 12:57 pm
- Tuesdays from 3 pm to 4 pm
- Wednesdays from 12:30 pm to 1:30 pm
- or by appt

If you would like to come to my office hours or make an appointment with me, please email me at [akochigina@eiu.edu](mailto:akochigina@eiu.edu) in advance, so I can prepare for our meeting (Subject line: Class Name\_ Appointment Request\_Your Full Name).

Link to my LinkedIn profile at  
[linkedin.com/in/annakochigina](https://www.linkedin.com/in/annakochigina)  
Let's get connected!



### **Course Overview:**

This capstone course helps public relations students transition to the public relations profession. It discusses employment trends in the profession and aims to prepare students for the job market. Students learn and practice how they can leverage their public relations knowledge and experience to present themselves professionally and effectively to the industry and potential employers.

**Learning Objectives:** By the end of the semester, students will:

1. understand current trends in the PR profession.
2. analyze public relations job ads and understand requirements and scope of different types of PR positions.
3. write strong PR resumes and cover letters and adapt them to specific public relations positions.
4. present themselves confidently and professionally to prospective employers.
5. design strong and effective professional portfolio.

**Text:** Readings will be posted on D2 or be available through Booth Library

## How To Get in Touch?

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- **Office hours** or by appointment.
- **By email.** My email is [akochigina@eiu.edu](mailto:akochigina@eiu.edu). I will contact you at your university email in case of special announcements.
- Grades and assignment submissions will be administered **solely through D2L**.
- If you have any concerns that you do not feel comfortable discussing in person or would like to share with an instructor the feedback about the course, you can use this **anonymous survey link** to reach out to me.



Link to the anonymous survey:

[https://eiu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_bk2Si4hp6Hzvuce](https://eiu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bk2Si4hp6Hzvuce)

*You are expected to check D2L and email for materials, schedule changes, and announcements BEFORE every class meeting.*

## Communication Etiquette

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All electronic communication should be professional. If you decide to communicate with me via email, please:

- use only professional email (nothing like [donotcallme@yahoo.com](mailto:donotcallme@yahoo.com))
- always use the following subject line:  
Class\_Name\_Main\_Reason\_You\_Are\_Writing\_About
- have a professional greeting
- include your full name, class in the text of your email
- clearly state the purpose of your email in the lead
- be SHORT, professional, and respectful.

*I reserve the right NOT to answer any emails that do not meet these requirements.*

## Rules That Guide Class Discussions

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- **Asking questions is a key to finding answers.**
- **The classroom is a safe place to share your opinions.** We encourage diverse opinions in class.
- **We will respect each other.** The proper response to comments you do not understand or agree with is to ask the speakers to explain their viewpoints differently and probe for deeper understanding.
- **Talk and share your opinion.** Your opinion matters, and we need to hear everyone to be able to make better decisions.

## How to Get an A in this Course?

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1. **Communicate:** If not sure, ask. If uncomfortable with something, say. I value feedback and dialogue and am open to discussions regarding any topic. Please,

don't wait until the deadline is right around the corner to ask questions about the assignment or class materials. No question is stupid, minor, or unimportant.

2. **Dedicate Time:** Research, writing, and content creation are time-consuming tasks, so the more time you spend on this course, the more likely you are to receive a grade A. This includes reading, planning, and writing.
3. **Plan:** Stay on top of things to perform well in this class. Read the recommended readings before each class, review the materials that have already been covered, and start working early on the assignments, so you can plan and ask questions way before the deadlines. Make sure that you have access to the Internet on your submission dates. Again, plan. Have backup plans in different places (i.e., use removable storage devices, e-mail attachments, extra hard copies) for your writing just in case something goes wrong.
4. **Meet Deadlines:** It is expected that you submit assignments on time. If you must miss a deadline, communicate with me as early as possible. Failure to communicate and turning your assignment within 24 hours after the deadline has passed will result in losing 10% of your total grade for that assignment. After 24 hours, late assignments will not be accepted and will receive a grade of 0. Late assignments may not receive written feedback from the instructor. In case of an emergency, please get in touch with the instructor as soon as possible.
1. **Attend and Participate:** A high level of individual participation is expected throughout the semester. That said, I understand that life happens. Family issues, health issues, and other concerns may, and do, occur. So, everyone will get **2** absences with no penalty. They can be excused or unexcused. Use them wisely, as anything beyond these absences, will result in point deductions. So, don't use up your two excused absences just because. Something may come up later in the semester when you do need to miss class.  
**For your first two absences, you will not lose any points.** Absences beyond two—for any reason—will result in a grade **reduction of 5% of your final grade for each additional absence**. So, if your grade is supposed to be 92% and you have two absences, you receive 92%. However, if you have three absences, you receive 87%.

If you have to miss the class, email the instructor about the absence (no explanation is necessary). You should keep track of your absences by yourself. The instructor will not provide a count of absences individually (but if you emailed an instructor about your absences, you will be able to count it yourself by simply searching your absences through your email). Students are responsible for all classwork missed and should make sure that they are ready for classes.

2. **Be on Time:** Attending the classes on time is strongly required for this course. You are expected to attend every meeting, arrive on time, and stay until the end of the class. **If you arrive at or leave the class more than 5 minutes late/early, it will be considered ½ absence.**

3. **Read the Guidelines of the Assignments and Be Professional:** Communicate and write in a professional manner. Avoid errors.

### Expectations from the Professor

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- Make the course fun
- Be flexible
- Be clear on instructions
- Give instructions ahead of time
- Give timely feedback
- Be respectful of other people's ideas

### Grading

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Assignments will be evaluated based on a Pass/Fail scale, which means that you will either receive all points for the assignment or none.

### Grade Points

A (100-90%)

B (89-80%)

C (79-70%)

D (69-60%)

F (59-0%)

### Grading Scale

#### “At least a D” Assignments

Homework, Participation & Class Activities (at least 25% out of 31%)

Mock Job Interviews (10%)

Resumes and Cover Letters (10%)

Professional Portfolio (Final Project) 15%

#### “At least a C” Assignments

All for D and **three** Career Center Events & Reflections (10%)

#### “At least a B” Assignments

All for C and AI Workshop (10%)

#### “A” Assignments

All for B and **two A assignments** of your choice (14%)

**Total 100%**

### Assignments

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#### “At Least a D” Assignments

To receive a D in this class, you need to earn at least 25% out of 31% on Homework, Participation & Class Activities and complete, submit, and pass all “at least a D” assignments (including revisions of your submitted work). “At least a D” assignments include:

*Homework, Participation, & Class Activities (31%):* Weekly homework and various in-class assignments will be assigned throughout the semester.

Assignments will not always carry the same weight. In-class assignments must be completed during the class period.

*Mock Job Interviews (10%):* You will complete two mock interviews and serve as an interviewer for one of your classmates. Your preparation, performance, and reflection on the interviews are part of this assignment. Detailed instructions for this assignment will be shared on D2L.

*Resumes and Cover Letters (10%):* You will compose at least one cover letter and resume for a job of your choice. Detailed instructions for this assignment will be shared on D2L.

*Professional Portfolio (15%):* Employers often want to see your best PR work before hiring you. You will develop a professional portfolio as part of this class. Detailed instructions for this assignment will be shared on D2L.

### **“At Least a C” Assignments**

To receive a C in this class, you need to complete everything needed to earn a D and complete, submit, and pass all “at least a C” assignments (including revisions of your submitted work). “At least a C” assignments include:

*Career Center Events & Reflections:* The career center is a great resource for students and alumni. You will attend at least three career center workshops or events of your choice this semester and submit a written reflection on your take-aways for each.

### **“At Least a B” Assignments**

To receive a B in this class, you need to complete everything needed to earn a C and submit and pass all “B” assignments (including revisions of your submitted work). At least a B” assignments include:

*AI Workshop:* You will deliver a 30-minute workshop to introduce your classmates to an AI tool relevant to a specific task in public relations (social media, graphic design, content production, data analysis, writing, etc). Your workshop will blend theoretical knowledge with practical exercises, demonstrating how AI can be applied in real-world PR scenarios. The assignment details will be discussed in class and posted on D2L.

### **“A” Assignments**

In order to receive an A, you must meet all criteria for a B and complete two A assignments, adding up to 14%.

All “A” assignments can be submitted to the corresponding dropbox throughout the semester for feedback. Since the assignments are evaluated based on a Pass/Fail scale (you will either receive all points for the assignment or none), it is recommended that you submit the assignment to receive the feedback first and then resubmit the final version. The final deadline to submit “A” assignments is on the last day of the class, April 22, at 11:59 pm.

Here is a list of “A” assignments. You can pick and choose the ones you are most interested in:

- *Progressions Blog Post (7%)*: A good way to get established and have a footprint as an aspiring professional is publishing work related to PR. PRSSA has a continuing call for blog posts, and for this assignment you will write one on a topic of your choice related to professional development, job market readiness, etcetera (and who knows, maybe you feel strongly about it and submit it to the blog) <https://prssa.prsa.org/publications-media/progressions-blog>. The blog posts need to be your original work and follow all criteria for publications with the progressions blog.
- *Personal Brand Digital Portfolio (7%)* – having a professional portfolio that you can take to an interview is important, but having an online portfolio is even better. A digital portfolio allows you to showcase your unique skills, achievements, and personality through visuals, projects, and interactive elements. It tells your story beyond the one-page resume, giving potential employers a better understanding of your value. Think of it as your chance to brag (but in a professional way, of course!) about everything awesome you've done.
- *Additional Mock Interview (7%)*. You may team up with another student to conduct an additional mock interview. Your partner cannot have been your interviewer or interviewee for the first peer mock interview. You will also submit an interview guide and a reflection together with a recording of the mock interviews.
- One additional *Career Center Event and Reflection (7%)*.
- *Pitch a project*. You may pitch completing a different assignment, to advance your professional footprint. We will determine the point value and expectations together.

Completing worth 14% of “A” assignments can also bump a final grade of C or D by one letter grade.

### **Grade Appeals**

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**There is a limited period to discuss and/or appeal your grades for assignments in this class.** You can ask questions about the grades, discuss your grades on a particular assignment, or look at your assignments **ONLY WITHIN TWO** weeks from the date the assignment grades were posted. There will be no discussions or possibilities to appeal your grade, ask questions about your grades, or look over your assignment after that time has passed.

**Keep Graded Materials:** It is required that students keep all submitted assignments, returned and graded materials until a final grade appears on that student’s transcript. Graded materials may be necessary to settle discrepancies regarding your final grade for the course.

### **Tech Requirements**

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For this class you will need:

- Stable internet access

- An internet browser that runs D2L and its features, plays videos.
- Software that allows you to read PDF and .doc files
- MS PowerPoint and MS Word to complete assignments.

Students must have basic computer skills, including the use of word processing software, email, and the ability to use internet browsers, such as Safari, Firefox, or Chrome. Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the D2L.

### **Tech Support**

For problems with D2L and other software used in this class, contact EIU's Technology Support (<https://www.eiu.edu/panthertech/>) at (217)581-HELP

### **Personal Electronics**

Lectures may not be recorded. You may use your laptops or iPads to take notes. If you get caught using text messaging, playing games, sending or receiving pictures, SMS, emails, etc., or surfing the Internet, you will first receive a warning. On the second time, you will be asked to leave the classroom immediately and lose 20% of your total grade for the course.

### **Student Well-Being**

EIU is committed to supporting and advancing the mental health and well-being of our students. Students may experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and their personal mental health and well-being. These may include academic pressure and challenges associated with relationships, anxiety, depression, alcohol or other drugs, identities, and finances.

If you are experiencing concerns, seeking help is a courageous thing to do for yourself and those who care about you. Below is a list of available campus resources to assist with student well-being:

- **EIU Counseling Clinic:** Human Services Building, 1st floor; 217-581-3413; for after-hours urgent support, call 1-866-567-2400. The Counseling Clinic offers individual and group counseling, emergency services, and resources.
- **Online Mental Health Screening:** online, private screening tool for depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and alcohol and substance misuse.
- **EIU Health Clinic:** Human Services Building, 1st floor; 217-581-3013. The Health Clinic services include lab work, pharmacy, and women's health and men's health programs.
- **Health Education Resource Center (HERC):** 2201 Blair Hall; 217-581-7786. The HERC offers health programming in the areas of alcohol, tobacco and other drug prevention and education, flu and cold prevention and education, nutritional analysis and education, and sexual health education, in addition to other health-related topics.
- **Center for Gender and Sexual Diversity (GSD):** Stevenson Hall, lower level; 217-581-7117. The GSD Center provides services such as the Trans\*formation Station, a large library full of books and movies, year-round programming, and a comprehensive Safe Zone Training program.
- **EIU Campus Food Pantry:** 1347 McAfee. The EIU Campus Food Pantry is a means to support students and the campus community by alleviating barriers to

- consistent, adequate, and healthful food. Anyone with a Panther Card can visit the pantry two times per month.
- **Student Legal Service:** MLK Jr University Union Room 2420; 217-581-6054. Student Legal Service can assist with off-campus housing issues, traffic violations, misdemeanor criminal offenses, municipal ordinance violations, and expungement.
  - **Financial Aid and Scholarships:** Student Services Building East Wing; 217-581-6405, Fax: 217-581-6422, [finaid@eiu.edu](mailto:finaid@eiu.edu). The Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships provides information and guidance to secure the necessary financial resources to meet educational goals and financial obligations to the university.

### **Academic Freedom Statement**

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Some of the material dealt with in this class may be perceived as controversial/offensive to some students. While students are encouraged to respond to the material and freely offer their opinions, if any student becomes uncomfortable with any of the topics or finds any of the material questionable, they are urged to contact the professor about alternative assignments.

### **Diversity in Practice**

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An essential component of the study of public relations will be to incorporate cultural and social diversity, wherever appropriate, in course readings and assignments. The class includes components related to diversity, multiculturalism, and inclusivity. You will be exposed to these ideas repeatedly, and we will discuss gender, race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, disabilities, and other areas of difference as they relate to research topics. Awareness of these differences is the first step for communication professionals to succeed in their work.

Whenever possible during this course, students should explore elements of cultural and ethnic diversity within the parameters of classroom and field assignments. A greater understanding of the cultural differences in our society will enhance the learning experience and help students develop work that is of greater value to the worldwide audience.

### **Plagiarism and Cheating**

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For information on Eastern's policy on plagiarism and academic dishonesty, please check EIU's current Academic Regulations in the undergraduate catalog.

You are responsible for knowing the university policy on what constitutes academic dishonesty. Here is the short version: **ALWAYS** give credit—I will assume that everything you turn in (unless otherwise noted) is your work.

**It is important to remember that plagiarism is not based on intent.**

If you turn in something without giving credit to others whose ideas or words you used, you will receive a 0 for the assignment; additional consequences can include failure of the course and even expulsion from the university.

If you collaborate with someone else on an assignment and turn in substantially similar



work, you are both guilty of plagiarism.

If you turn in something written by someone else, expect to fail the course and be reported to the Dean of Students. Do your work. Give credit where credit is due.

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**Academic Integrity**

Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>). Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards.

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**Artificial Intelligence**

You may use AI programs e.g., ChatGPT to help generate ideas, brainstorm, build outlines, and check grammar and writing style. However, you should note that the material generated by these programs may be inaccurate, incomplete, or otherwise problematic. Beware that use may also stifle your independent thinking and creativity.

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**Students with Disabilities**

If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Accessibility & Accommodations (OAA). All accommodations must be approved through OAA. Please stop by McAfee Gym, Room 1272, or call 217-581-6583 to make an appointment.

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**Academic Support Center**

Students having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Academic Support Center ([www.eiu.edu/success](http://www.eiu.edu/success)) for assistance with time management, test-taking, note-taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to McAfee Gym, Room 2230.

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**Booth Library**

Located in the center of campus, Booth Library is the best place to do research, find expert help, or study in a calm, distraction-free environment. In addition to the many print resources, Booth provides access to high-quality e-books, journals and scholarship not freely available on the Web. Stop by the Reference Desk or go to <http://library.eiu.edu> to explore library resources. Get expert help with your research by contacting the Booth Library reference librarians. Visit, call 581-6072, or go to <http://booth.eiu.edu/ask> to connect with a librarian.

**Tentative Course Outline and Schedule** (All assignments are due before class unless specified)

Week		Topic	Due
W1	M 01/08	Course Introduction. Professional goals and job market preparation.	
W2	M 01/15	<p align="center">NO CLASS. See D2L for details.</p> <p><b>Professionalism. Email</b> Tue. Jan. 16 4 – 4:30pm, EIU Career Services</p>	
W3	M 01/22	Navigating the Job Market: Trends. Specializations. Emerging Opportunities.	<p><b>Guest Speaker:</b> Bobbi Kingery, EIU Career Services Director</p> <p><b>DUE:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. AI Certificate <a href="https://www.udemy.com/course/chatgpt-midjourney-google-bard-dall-e-ai-course/">https://www.udemy.com/course/chatgpt-midjourney-google-bard-dall-e-ai-course/</a></li> <li>2. Complete materials posted on D2L</li> </ol> <p><i>Professionalism - Interactions in a Virtual Environment</i> Wed. Jan 24. 4 -4:30, EIU Career Services</p> <p><i>Advice with a Slice</i> Fri. Jan 26. 12 pm to 1:30 pm Human Services Center, 2086 7th Street, Room - Office 1303</p>
W4	M 01/29	Understanding and finding job ads and identifying entry-level positions. Decoding job descriptions: Identifying key skills and expectations.	<p><b>DUE:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete materials posted on D2L</li> <li>2. <b>AI Workshop:</b> The use of AI in PR. Pros and Cons. Best Practices. How to Write Prompts _____</li> </ol> <p><i>Professionalism. Civility.</i> Thur. Feb 1, 4 pm – 4:30 pm. EIU Career Services.</p>
W5	M 02/05	Crafting Your Story and Preparing to Enter the Market. What are employers looking for in a job candidate and how you can prepare for it?	<p><b>DUE:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete materials posted on D2L</li> <li>2. <b>AI Workshop:</b> How to Use AI to Get Your First Job. Optimizing Resumes and Writing Cover Letters. _____</li> </ol> <p><i>Virtual Speaker Series: Quincy Marr, Founding Partner, Entrepreneur, AQtion Marketing</i> Wed. Feb 7, from 5 pm - 6 pm</p>
W6	M 02/12	Networking	<p><b>DUE:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete materials posted on D2L</li> <li>2. Schedule a meeting with Career Services to go over your Resume and Cover Letter</li> <li>3. <b>AI Workshop:</b> How to Use AI to Get Your First Job. Optimizing Your</li> </ol>

			<p>Social Media Presence and Building a Professional Profile. Content Creation for a Personal Brand. _____</p> <p><i>2024 Spring Networking Night</i> Mon. Feb 12, 4 pm - 6 pm. Tarble Arts Center</p> <p><i>Professionalism: Workplace Conflict, EIU Career Services</i> Tue. Feb 13, 4 pm – 4:30pm,</p>
W7	M 02/19	Resumes and Cover Letters	<p><b>DUE:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete materials posted on D2L</li> <li>2. Complete the first Draft of our Resume and Cover Letter. Schedule a meeting with _____</li> </ol> <p><i>Advice with a Slice: Job Fair</i> Fri. Feb 23, 12 pm, Human Services Center, 2086 7th Street, Room 1303,</p>
W8	M 02/26	Resumes and Cover Letters	<p><b>DUE:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete materials posted on D2L</li> <li>2. <b>AI Workshop:</b> How To Use AI to Get Ready for Your Job Interview. _____</li> </ol> <p><i>Career Fair</i> Tue, Feb 27 from 1 pm to 4 pm, MLK Grand Ballroom</p>
W9	M 03/04	Interviewing	<p><b>DUE:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete materials posted on D2L</li> <li>2. Interview Assignment</li> </ol> <p><i>Professionalism. Work/Life Balance</i> Tue. Mar 5, 4 pm, EIU Career Services</p>
W10	M 03/11	Interviews Weeks	<p><b>DUE:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete materials posted on D2L</li> <li>2. Mockup Interviews</li> </ol>
W11	M 03/18	<b>HAPPY SPRING BREAK!</b>	
W12	M 03/25	Professional Portfolios	<p><b>DUE:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete materials posted on D2L</li> <li>2. <b>AI Workshop:</b> How To Use AI to Get Identify Your Tribe: AI-powered Audience Insights &amp; Segmentation. _____</li> </ol> <p><i>Virtual Speaker Series: Curtis McGinnis, Head of US DevOps @ AWS</i> Tue. March 26, 5 pm to 6 pm</p> <p><i>Media Internship and Job Fair</i></p>

			<p>Wed. Mar 27, 11 am. TBD</p> <p><i>Advice with a Slice</i>  Fri. Mar 29. from 12 pm to 1:30pm, Human Services Center, 2086 7th Street, Room - Office 1303</p>
W13	M 04/01	Professional Portfolios	<p><b>DUE:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete materials posted on D2L</li> <li>2. Professional Portfolios; First Draft</li> <li>3. <b>AI Workshop:</b> How To Use AI to Create Presentations. _____</li> </ol>
W14	M 04/08	Professional Portfolios	<p><b>DUE:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete materials posted on D2L</li> <li>2. <b>AI Workshop:</b> AI for Social Media. Content Creation to Help Your Client. _____</li> </ol> <p><i>Professionalism – Adaptability.</i>  Tue. Apr 9, 4 pm- 4:30pm. EIU Career Services.</p>
W15	M 04/15	Professional Portfolios	<p><b>AI Workshop:</b> Your Choice. _____</p> <p><i>Advice with a Slice</i>  Fri. Apr 19. from 12 pm to 1:30pm, Human Services Center, 2086 7th Street, Room - Office 1303</p>
W16	M 04/22	Professional Portfolios	In-class workshop
Final Exam	Wednesday, 05/01	Professional Portfolios are due on D2L by 11:59 pm.	