

Teaching Portfolio Workshop

March 7, 2007

Checklist for a Teaching Portfolio – Starred items are those that are usually required for the UW funding application. However, all of the following are standard elements of a teaching portfolio.

- **Cover Letter*** – For UW funding applications, a specific Application Form will go here.
- **Curriculum Vita*** – The academic version of your resume, emphasizing your degrees, your publications, and your teaching experience.
- **Statement of Teaching Philosophy*** – There are many schools of thought on how this should be constructed. Basic things to include are what you believe your role as a teacher is in a classroom, how you encourage student learning, how you approach historical education, your teaching goals (some address this in a separate element, see below), among others. This should be a place where you speak from the heart and show your passion, but also give the reader a sense of how you show this in the classroom.
- **Self Assessment:** Many portfolios include a section of self-assessment. Frequently these address shortcomings identified in student comments, or other areas you've noticed that you could improve upon. Of course you should also address your strengths. Taking an honest and direct tone is best – use this as a confessional. The cover letter is where you sell yourself.
- **Statement of Teaching Goals:** Although some include this in the Statement of Teaching Philosophy, many others prefer a separate section. Here you will want to explain what your professional goals are as a teacher, often in reaction to shortcomings you may have identified in your self-assessment. This may include things such as better use of technology, improved ability to engage students in discussion, developing student research skills, addressing different student learning styles, etc.
- **Syllabi**
 - **Course Syllabi:** Put these first. Include syllabi of the courses you have taught on your own. It is encouraged to provide one or two syllabi for prospective courses.
 - **Section Syllabi:** Put these second, if at all. If you have not taught a course on your own before, these should definitely be included in your portfolio. If you have taught a course or two, these are unnecessary.
- **Evaluations*** – These fall into two categories:
 - **By Professors:** For the UW funding application you will want to include the written evaluations you have received from the faculty you have taught for as a TA. In your application for an academic position, the letters of recommendation will fill this role, and those are not usually part of your portfolio.
 - **By Students:**
 - Statistical Evals:** You will always want to include the statistical evaluations from courses you have taught, or sections you have taught as a TA. For the UW History Department copies of the form are required, and it is good practice to submit copies for an academic job.
 - Written Student Evals:** Opinions vary as to how these should be handled, or even if they should be included at all. If you do include them, you will want to include a representative sample – do not just give the good comments. One tactic is to give negative or critical comments that you then deal with in your self-assessment or teaching goals (see below). Some schools ask that if you provide any written evals, you should provide ALL of them from a given course or section. Be careful, as this may wind up making your portfolio too large. Search committees do NOT want to read too much.
- **Course Materials:** These can include any number of things you have used in your course as part of your teaching. Of the items listed on this page, this is the least commonly included item, but these items can round out your portfolio.
 - **Assignments:** Some teachers often include sample assignments, especially for research projects.
 - **Discussion plans:** These can be a useful method of showing how you interact with students, how you encourage them to become active learners (especially valuable for teaching-oriented institutions)

Other possible material – These are recommended by some scholars, but are not yet common elements found in teaching portfolios. Use your judgment about whether to include these.

- **Samples of Student Work:** Some include sample essays or other forms of student work. This can help show the quality of your teaching, but this raises the question of completeness and representativeness that we encountered with the written student evals.
- **Video/DVD of Yourself in the Classroom:** An applicant for the Imperial Russia job this year sent a DVD of himself teaching a section and a lecture. This may be especially useful if you are applying to a school that emphasizes teaching. You can also post these as video on a website.
- **Other Forms and Experiences of Teaching:** Many of us have experience in teaching that was not based in a higher education setting. Your teaching portfolio is a great place to include details about these experiences, to help explain your commitment to teaching. If you've taught English in China, tutored in West Oakland, worked at an adult literacy program in Seattle, led corporate trainings in New York, this is all pertinent to your teaching portfolio – which, after all, is a document that chronicles your life as a teacher.

Presentation – What makes a good portfolio?

Informative, yet Brief – This is not your dissertation, though it serves an analogous purpose for your preparation as a teacher. The best portfolios are succinct, conveying to the reader your experience as a teacher and how you have reflected on it. Few search committees want to wade through reams of paper as part of your portfolio, yet they are intensely interested in what you have to offer as a teacher. Strive to be as informative as you can be, while also being brief about it. Web-based portfolios are a very effective way to present information in a style that isn't overwhelming to the eyes.

Web Portfolios – More and more, people are putting their portfolios on the web. This offers a great deal of opportunity to create really interesting portfolios. There's the practical aspect of being able to link to an entire course site of yours, allowing search committees to see the entirety of your course, not just the syllabus. There's also the chance to show off yourself and your ability to be creative and design something engaging – if you're into that sort of thing. Even if your knowledge of web design is limited to the clunky Catalyst system, you can still use the web to present your information in an accessible manner. Some schools are moving to online job applications, and provide a place for you to link a website in lieu of submitting paper or Word attachments for the portfolio. Finally, this can also be an opportunity for you to show your ability and proficiency with online methods of education.

Tailor to your Audience – If you're submitting this portfolio as part of an application, you may wish to tailor some aspects of it to your audience. Some scholars suggest that if you apply to a research-oriented institution, you should only give the minimum, so as to not overwhelm the search committee with too much information, while also assuming that they're mainly going to be interested in your research and CV. However, many “research institutions” are emphasizing teaching much more strongly. If you are asked to submit more to the search committee – i.e. you made the first cut – this would be a very good time to give them a much fuller portfolio.

If you are submitting this to a teaching-oriented institution, then it is generally a good idea to provide as much of a portfolio as possible early in the process, unless of course you're specifically directed not to do that.

Conceptual Vision – The best portfolios are those that show some kind of conceptual unity to them, that are more than the sum of their parts.

Helpful Links

Teaching Portfolio Advice

Betty Dessants, Shippensburg University, in Sept. 2003 *AHA Perspectives*
<http://www.historians.org/perspectives/issues/2003/0309/0309for2.cfm>

Frederick Drake and Lawrence McBride, Illinois State University, in *The History Teacher*, Nov. 2000
<http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ht/34.1/drake.html>

Online Portfolio Examples

Carolyn F. Austin, Dept. of English and Comp. Lit., UCI
<http://www.ags.uci.edu/~cfaustin/>

Stephanie Evans, Dept. of African American Studies, Univ. of Florida
<http://plaza.ufl.edu/drevans/TEACHING%20PORTFOLIO.htm>

Tracy Penny Light, Dept. of History, Univ. of Waterloo
http://gallery.carnegiefoundation.org/collections/keep/tplight/waterloo_5.html

Bryan Edward Stone, Dept. of History, Del Mar College (TX)
<http://www.delmar.edu/socsci/Faculty/Stone/Vita/Teaching%20Portfolio/Portfolio.htm>

“Jane Doe” (portfolio template), Minnesota State Colleges and Universities
<http://sample19.efoliomn2.com/>

Lead TA Website

<http://staff.washington.edu/ric1/leadta/leadta.shtml>