"The one who knows the tricks wins the day": Cultivating *mētis* in an undergraduate, mixed-major professional writing course

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Abstract: This assignment demonstrates how writing instructors can cultivate students' *mētis*, a flexible and adaptive way of thinking, by requiring participation in naturalistic rhetorical situations that arise outside the classroom. The assignment, developed for an undergraduate, mixed-major professional writing course, asks students to pursue external professional opportunities. The affordances of naturalistic situations and the requirements of the assignment work together, enabling students to develop three key features of *mētis*: vigilance, tricks, and multiplicity. Exercising *mētis* improves students' chances of success when they pursue opportunities in competitive industries.

Introduction

One objective of undergraduate, mixed-major professional writing courses is to prepare students to take advantage of opportunities such as jobs and internships. The assignment presented here demonstrates how writing instructors can effectively meet this objective by cultivating *mētis*, which requires students to participate in naturalistic rhetorical situations. The term "*naturalistic*" denotes situations that arise outside of the classroom and are not controlled by the instructor, such as job opportunities in the professional sphere.

Naturalistic situations are unpredictable and dynamic. They have high stakes, and students' participation in them is not for practice. *Mētis* is a flexible, adaptive, and

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embodied knowledge appropriate for navigating naturalistic situations; it encompasses "many forms of wily intelligence" and "effective, adaptable cunning" (Detienne & Vernant, 1991, p. 3). Although *mētis* is closely intertwined with rhetoric, it is often excluded from rhetorical scholarship and pedagogy (Dolmage, 2009). Many professional writing courses employ a pedagogy that emphasizes teaching and learning conventions of specific genres such as the memo, report, or resume (Read & Michaud, 2015), thus constraining students' use of adaptive *mētis.* In contrast to the constraints of genre-based assignments, opportunities that arise outside of the classroom in the professional sphere not only permit but require the use of *mētis.* By structuring assignments around naturalistic opportunities, professional writing instructors and students can turn such opportunities into valuable learning experiences with outcomes that transcend the results of a particular job, grant, or internship application.

Mētis and Naturalistic Rhetorical Situations

Most contemporary scholarship on *mētis* draws upon Detienne and Vernant's (1991) seminal work, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society.* Detienne and Vernant trace the origins of *mētis* as a recurring theme or "mental category" in ancient Greek mythology, literature, and language (p. 3). *Mētis* encompasses "the skills of a basket-maker, of a weaver, of a carpenter, the mastery of a navigator, the flair of a politician, the tricks of a crafty character such as Odysseus, the back-tracking of a fox and the polymorphism of an octopus" (p. 2). One passage from Book XIII of *The Iliad* illuminates the many ways in which naturalistic rhetorical situations allow *mētis* to manifest itself (Detienne & Vernant, 1991, pp. 11–26). The passage concerns a chariot race involving two rivals: Antilochus and Menelaus, king of Sparta. The chariot race represents a naturalistic situation because it is not a mere educational exercise or practice run where no one gets hurt. Charioteers are free to deploy manifold strategies, tactics, and tricks to gain a competitive advantage, and then the judges deliberate about the merits of each contestant's performance. Although Antilochus is a skilled horseman, in this race Menelaus is better-equipped with faster horses and a state-of-the-art chariot. Antilochus's father Nestor counsels him that he will need to deploy *mētis* to defeat his rival. Pointing out a weathered narrowing in the track, Nestor suggests that Antilochus drive "obliquely across that [chariot] of Menelaus at the risk of causing a crash: the maneuver takes his adversary by surprise and he is forced to reign in his horses" (Homer, as cited in Detienne & Vernant, 1991, p. 12). The track's irregular terrain, Menelaus's incensed reaction to the trick, and the spectators' subsequent quarrel about the rules upset the status quo. After extensive deliberations, Antilochus is awarded second place—losing to another contestant but beating Menelaus. This literary anecdote demonstrates how, by cultivating a "greater grip of the present where nothing escapes" (Detienne & Vernant, 1991, p. 14), the student of *mētis* leverages the warp and weft of naturalistic situations to overcome disadvantageous circumstances.

About the Assignment

In many ways, my own students are a lot like Antilochus: They must learn to navigate competitive and shifting situations. I teach technical and professional writing at a large, urban arts and media college to students who will seek employment in fast-paced, cutthroat creative industries such as fashion, graphic, or game design. My undergraduate, mixed-major professional writing course, entitled *Writing for the Creative Workplace*, is designed to equip students with writing and communication skills and competencies necessary for success in these industries. The course is listed at the 200 level with first-year writing as a prerequisite, and it attracts a diverse mix of students seeking to fulfill a writing intensive requirement in their second, third, and final years of college. Many students bring at least some work experience in a part-time job or internship to the course. When these students enter the workforce in the creative industries, they will compete with more experienced and better-equipped industry professionals for contracts and entry-level positions (see, for example, Rozentale & Lavanga, 2014; Townley, Beech, & McKinlay, 2009).

This assignment evolved over two semesters of teaching *Writing for the Creative Workplace,* as I grew increasingly aware of the constraints of genre-based assignments: They lack flexibility, constrain potential outcomes, and often fail to bridge the distance between the classroom and the professional sphere. When I first taught the course as a new assistant professor, I used genre-based assignments that I had developed for a mixed-major professional writing course that I had taught in graduate school—including a resume and cover letter, proposal, memo, and report. However, my new students in the creative industries challenged these readymade assignments. One student, a successful local disc jockey, only corresponded with professional contacts through instant messaging. Another student wanted to donate her artwork to a campus computer lab. Faced with naturalistic rhetorical situations that did not fit my pedagogical approach, I began to question what professional writing instructors *can* teach to students with diverse professional goals, aspirations, and identities.

My turn to *mētis* as a frame for the assignment was serendipitous. In Spring, 2016, I taught *Writing for the Creative Workplace* for the second time while concurrently drafting a scholarly article that describes a case of tactical technical communication (TTC). Briefly, TTC is technical communication that is produced outside of established organizations, such as user-authored tutorials, enthusiast guides, and even terrorism manuals. The article (Sarat-St. Peter, 2017), like much scholarship on TTC, draws upon Michel de Certeau's (1984) work on organizational strategies and individual tactics. Certeau, in turn, draws upon Detienne and Vernant's work on *mētis* to explore how individuals navigate and circumvent systems that are "imposed" by institutions (de Certeau, 1984, p. 18). De Certeau and Detienne and Vernant suggest that people transmit *mētis* by sharing narratives about practicing it, such as recounting the story of Antilochus's race or telling colleagues about a clever shortcut that one took when driving through a city. As ideas from my scholarly project percolated into my teaching, I started thinking of the course

as cultivating *mētis* instead of attempting to teach many industry-specific standards for writing and communication. The verb "cultivating" highlights the instructor's facilitative role. By encouraging students to participate in naturalistic rhetorical situations, providing platforms for students to share experiences, and challenging students to reflect upon their own communication practices, instructors create an enabling environment in which *mētis* can develop.

The resulting assignment, entitled "Seize Opportunities in Your Creative Field," prepares students to wield adaptive *mētis* as a means of flipping the odds of successfully obtaining a job, grant, or internship. When students seize opportunities outside of class, the instructional setting of the mixed-major professional writing course offers a forum in which to share and reflect upon individual experiences—thus expanding each student's use of *mētis* beyond knowledge that the student already possesses. Students who complete the assignment will be able to identify current opportunities in their own creative field, tailor application materials for each opportunity, and efficiently produce polished applications for multiple opportunities.

The following section describes how the professional opportunities that galvanize this assignment enable students to develop three key features of *mētis* identified by Detienne and Vernant (1991): vigilance; a repertoire of tips, tricks, and tactics; and the use of multiplicity and tailoring (pp. 12-21). Three major requirements of the assignment (identifying opportunities, consulting informants, and tailoring) motivate students to exercise *mētis* as they pursue professional opportunities. Then, the conclusion addresses the strengths of this assignment, its potential difficulties, and implications for the student and instructor's role in the undergraduate, mixed-major professional writing course. The fourth requirement of the assignment, a reflective narrative, makes this learning explicit to the student and instructor.

Although the assignment explicitly introduces the concept of *mētis*, it is not crucial for students to understand, adopt, or use this term—but it is generative for students to encounter it. **The value of explicitly introducing the term *mētis* is twofold: it names a type of knowledge that is often tacit or occluded, and it contextualizes this knowledge by connecting it to an intellectual tradition of historical and rhetorical inquiry. (The latter is particularly valuable when students are asked to read academic sources about *mētis*, such as Detienne and Vernant's (1991) analysis of Antilochus's race.)** In my own course, the term *mētis* functions as a springboard for conversations with students about what the assignment accomplishes. For instance, most students have a hard time relating to the reading from Detienne and Vernant about Antilochus's race that is assigned in Session 1. Because the reading covers unfamiliar subject matter and is written in a scholarly register, many students question how the reading connects to their own professional lives. Such perplexity provides an occasion for inviting students to share anecdotes about times that they reversed expected outcomes through clever and quick thinking at home, work, or school: what words would students use to describe the thinking that they do in such situations? I share my hope that the assignment will help students extend the same mental agility to

their professional writing and communication. In a similar vein, the assignment concludes with written reflection in which students describe what they learned. I again share with students that—given my own academic background—I always think of the assignment as cultivating *mētis*. I find that students rarely adopt the term *mētis* to describe their own learning, but they do report becoming more vigilant, conversant in a diverse range of tips, tricks, and tactics, and able to tailor their writing to various audiences.

Key Features of the Assignment

Cultivating Vigilance

Naturalistic rhetorical situations often arise and unfold in unpredictable ways. A job ad in one's field unexpectedly appears; a social mixer turns into a mini interview. This assignment requires students to cultivate a measure of what Detienne and Vernant (1991) call "premeditated vigilance" (p. 14)—an attitude that observes and even anticipates opportunities as they arise. *Mētis* enables individuals to "foresee" opportune moments and to "prepare [. . .] well in advance" for opportunities to arise (p. 15-16). Thus, *mētis* includes "mastery over the *kairos*" (p. 16). The first requirement of the assignment asks students to identify at least three current opportunities in their own creative field. These opportunities, which provide the stimulus for the applications that students will create and submit, must be:

- real and current (i.e., not outdated or hypothetical),
- appropriate in light of the student's current qualifications, and
- desirable or appealing to the student.

To fulfill the criteria outlined above, students must watch out for opportunities in their field, check a variety of sites and listings, and sift and sort through opportunities as they appear. **I also encourage students to look for both unlisted opportunities and for problems or situations that they might leverage as opportunities. To help students imagine opportunities beyond jobs and internships, it is helpful for the instructor to solicit anecdotes from the students themselves. One student, an intern in game design, initiated a conversation with his employer about prospects for full-time employment at the company. The student was then invited to apply as an internal candidate for an unlisted position. When students share such anecdotes with the class, they embolden peers to think out of the box and explore unlisted, hidden, or overlooked opportunities in their own lives.**

All of these activities require students to develop an attitude of watchful waiting and to broaden the range of opportunities that they are willing to consider. For example, a second-year student majoring in American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation was initially discouraged by strict licensing requirements that disqualified her from most ASL interpreter positions. As she continued browsing ASL-related job postings, she discovered that she did qualify for many non-interpreter positions such as internships at a regional

ASL conference. By keeping an eye out for non-interpreter positions serving the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community, the student expanded her immediate employment options, and she also began to consider what professional experiences she might obtain *now* (before obtaining her ASL interpreter license) to enrich her future career as a licensed interpreter.

Although some students may have searched for opportunities in the past, most have received little formal instruction regarding how to do so. In order to strengthen and expand students' *mētis,* instructors must prepare in-class sessions that scaffold and support the opportunity-seeking process. In my own course, I invite a representative from the campus Career Center to provide guidance as students search. The Career Center visit is particularly helpful for students who cannot find three opportunities on their own. The representative highlights industry-specific opportunities advertised on campus, introduces the Career Center's jobs portal—Handshake—and offers practical tips about how to search for jobs, grants, and internships. Students who require more individualized guidance can visit the Career Center on a one-on-one basis, and the Career Center serves alumnae for at least one year after graduation. Similar career services on other campuses are well-equipped to provide invaluable guidance to students regarding how, where, and when to look for opportunities in their own field or industry.

As students identify opportunities, they share them in an online forum on Canvas, the learning management system for the course. Once most students have shared one or two opportunities on Canvas, I then ask each student to comment on opportunities that a peer has found so far and to offer suggestions about where their peer might look next. Many opportunities and venues are relevant to students across majors; their own searches provide a basis for pointing out useful leads to peers. This step challenges students to extend their search skills to a new context and to explore leads that they might not otherwise have considered.

Discovering Tips, Tricks, and Tactics

Most naturalistic rhetorical situations are open-ended, accommodating a range of responses from participants. For example, professional opportunities require the candidate to make a range of rhetorical choices about self-presentation and the presentation of materials. As Nestor advises Antilochus, "The man who knows the tricks wins the day" (Homer, as cited in Detienne & Vernant, 1991, p. 12). To guide students in making rhetorical choices, this assignment asks students to explore tricks of *mētis* that individuals employ to effectively seize an opportunity (see Detienne & Vernant, 1991, p. 12). Such tips and tricks are ubiquitous; simply Googling the phrase "job interview" yields an array of tips and tricks for designing an eye-catching resume, planning attire, anticipating interview questions, or sending a thank-you note. These tips and tricks are eminently rhetorical: candidates employ "methods of a different order" (Detienne & Vernant, 1991, p. 12), or persuasive strategies on top of industry-specific knowledge, to establish a professional *ethos* and amplify credentials. Throughout this step, I ask students to create

and organize a running list of tips and tricks that they have discovered in a collaboratively edited Google document. The list enables students to record tips and tricks they have discovered, as well as to recognize occasional contradictions in the advice that students have discovered or received. Although tricks of *mētis* potentially improve the odds of success, they must always be considered in the context of the opportunities that the individual is pursuing—just as Nestor's advice to Antilochus considers the terrain of one particular track (Detienne & Vernant, 1991, p. 12). One student in Graphic Design was advised by peers to use the resume as an opportunity to demonstrate industry-specific expertise. The first iteration of his resume included a customized font, logo, layout, and color scheme. However, when the student began filling out online job applications, he discovered that many positions require applicants to input work history information into web-based text boxes instead of uploading a resume. Because the text boxes did not recognize his font, the student could not cut and paste work history information from his resume to the forms. After several frustrating rounds of re-entering his work history, the student ultimately redesigned his resume as a one-column, black and white document with a conventional font to facilitate cutting and pasting.

Students may already possess some tips, tricks, and tactics for navigating professional situations, which they have acquired through their social networks or past employment experiences. Conversely, existing social inequalities hinder students in acquiring professional know-how (see, for example, Davis & Geyfman, 2015). Although instructors may be unable to remedy such inequalities fully, we can heighten students' professional savvy by designing activities that involve informal contact with knowledgeable informants. To facilitate this process, the second requirement of the assignment tasks students with independently consulting up to three informants in their own field for advice on applying for opportunities. Informants include knowledgeable individuals such as industry professionals, academic experts, or alumnae; students may consult informants through any mutually agreeable channel (e.g., email, Skype, texting, or a face-to-face meeting over coffee). I also encourage students to query prospective employers when it is feasible and appropriate to do so.

Students prepare a written list of questions, take informal notes during the consultation(s), and share what they learned with peers during class in an informal roundtable. To help students craft their list of questions, I ask them to review the running list of tips and tricks and ask what they would like to know that is not yet covered on the list. Knowledgeable experts are a useful source of field-specific advice, and they can help students navigate contradictions. Then, to help students evaluate the advice that they received from the expert consultation, I ask students to share the best piece(s) of advice, explain why they think this advice is applicable to their own situations, and recount advice that they discarded as invalid or inapplicable. This activity expands each student's repertoire of professional tips, tricks, and tactics beyond the knowledge that they may have already gained from professional experience.

At this stage, students have received a variety of advice from sources including experts, peers, and the Internet. In order to help students wade through all of this advice, I advise

students to adopt as their default position a skeptical *null hypothesis* that regards each tip or trick as potential waste of time or resources. I then ask students to determine their own standard of proof for rejecting the null hypothesis and adopting a particular tip or trick for themselves. This conversation often entails vigorous debates about whether it is worthwhile to hire talent agents or a resume service, invest in business cards, or send thank-you notes after interviews. Professional writing instructors cannot resolve such debates once and for all. However, encouraging students to adopt a skeptical position reduces their vulnerability to gimmicks and services that prey on cash-strapped college students.

Multiplicity and Tailoring

Once students have identified opportunities and consulted knowledgeable experts, they prepare and submit at least three applications for external review. The third requirement of the assignment stipulates that students must not only apply for multiple opportunities, they must also tailor application materials for each specific opportunity. This requirement takes advantage of the recurring nature of professional opportunities to teach multiplicity, a key feature of *mētis* (Detienne & Vernant, 1991, p. 18). *Mētis* is an "art of many facets" (Detienne & Vernant, 1991, p. 18). The term "multiplicity" captures the variegated nature of *mētis*—its mobility, its ever-expanding repertoire of tricks, and its propensity for shapeshifting (pp. 18-21). Of course, an individual can only execute a limited number of maneuvers at any given time, and they must choose which maneuvers to deploy in response to an unfolding situation. In the professional sphere, adapting application materials for many different opportunities is known as "tailoring." For instance, one popular blog advises job candidates to rework each resume they send out so that the most relevant qualifications appear at the top of the page (Zhang, n.d.). Multiplicity and tailoring work hand-in-hand: applying for multiple opportunities increases the odds of success, whereas tailoring enhances the appeal of each application to its target audience.

Multiplicity opens the door for unexpected outcomes; students are often surprised to discover that they can improve the likelihood of a successful outcome by applying for more than one opportunity. One student, a photography major, used the assignment to pursue the goal of exhibiting her artwork on campus. The student began with a thinking-out-of-the-box approach that involved seeing bare-walled campus facilities as opportunities to exhibit her work. Noting that the computer lab in the Science and Math department had no artwork on the walls, the student concentrated her efforts on donating a colorful set of prints for display in that lab. After consulting knowledgeable informants who work in the recipient department, she prepared a proposal—addressed to the department chair —that outlined the purpose and process of the prospective donation (thus, this was an unlisted opportunity). To fulfill assignment requirements, she also applied to exhibit artwork in a selective gallery associated with our institution. This opportunity called for a more polished proposal, which required several rounds of revision and proofreading. At the time, the student and I both thought that the donation was the more likely opportunity to come to fruition. However, the outcome was the

opposite of what we expected. The target department could not accept the donation due to restrictions on mounting objects to the walls of campus facilities. The selective gallery accepted the student's proposal, resulting in a two-month exhibit dedicated entirely to the student's work. This anecdote illustrates how students can leverage multiplicity to mitigate the disappointment and frustration that rejection sometimes brings. When students apply for multiple opportunities, they experience rejection as part of a spread of outcomes that also includes unexpected victories and other valuable experiences.

Conclusion

Because this assignment requires students to participate in naturalistic rhetorical situations that arise outside of class, it has the potential to produce long-term outcomes in students' professional lives. Often, those outcomes prove to be beneficial. Many of my students have obtained jobs, internships, grants and publications as a result of the assignment. By inviting students to share and celebrate such successes, instructors can motivate the entire class to persist in seeking and seizing opportunities. Moreover, the assignment develops every student's professional *mētis*. The fourth requirement of the assignment, a narrative reflection, asks students to describe in their own words what they have learned. Instructors can then reinforce *mētis* with subsequent assignments that encourage a flexible and adaptive approach to professional writing. Although the assignment is geared towards students in the creative industries, professional writing instructors can adapt it to any undergraduate, mixed-major course with minor modifications. Instructors at STEM-focused institutions might adapt the assignment by focusing on helping students find opportunities that they can leverage to stand out over and above other candidates with similar credentials.

However, naturalistic participation also entails risks. Although the assignment includes a grading rubric to guide the instructor's evaluation, it cannot offer students a prescriptive formula for success in the professional sphere. Even when students consult knowledgeable informants, their practical questions ("Should I include a headshot on my resume?" or "What font should I use?") yield contradictory and contingent answers. Rejections arrive without explanation, making it difficult for students to determine what to change the next time around. One theme that I have noticed is that students are much more vocal about successes than they are about rejections. In future semesters, I plan to follow up the assignment with an informal and celebratory "Fail Fair" in which each student highlights and reflects upon one professional rejection that they received before, during, or after the assignment (see, for example, Fail Faire, 2012). Again, instructors play a vital role in motivating students to persist in seeking and seizing opportunities—and to continue persisting long after the assignment has ended.

Beyond the risk of frustration and failure, naturalistic participation also has the potential to compromise students' privacy. As with any assignment that engages the outside world, each point of contact involves risky exchanges of information. Every time a student applies for a position, there is a chance that hiring managers might Google the student

and check their social media profiles. Although professional writing instructors cannot neutralize these risks, the concept of *mētis* offers a basis for empowering students to make savvy rhetorical choices. Just as hiring managers will perform vigilant background research on candidates, students can protect their own privacy by adapting settings on social media accounts, by using a nickname, or by using multiple accounts (one public, and another private). It is not necessary for the instructor to provide detailed instructions for protecting one's privacy on each platform. I have found that once the instructor opens up the conversation about privacy, students will readily share tips, tricks, and tactics with each other.

Finally, the assignment represents a development of my own *mētis* as a professional writing instructor. In light of my inability to provide students with authoritative, genre-based rules for professional writing in the creative industries, the assignment empowers students to develop discernment and make savvy rhetorical choices in consultation with peers and experts. The greatest strength of this assignment is its open-ended, student-directed approach. Participating in naturalistic rhetorical situations enables students to acquire an eclectic repertoire of tips, tricks, and tactics that extends beyond any instructor's knowledge of specific industries. Our role as teachers of *mētis* is to help students survey the shifting terrain of their own field and master the art of navigating it.

Assignment: Seize Opportunities In Your Creative Field

See the Supplementary Files for this article at thepromptjournal.com for a PDF facsimile of the original formatting of this assignment.

Weight: 25 points

Due: Week 5, Session 1 (By the Start of the Class)

Rationale

The purpose of this assignment is to prepare you to take advantage of professional opportunities as they arise in your own creative field, such as jobs, internships, scholarship, grants, and other opportunities to showcase your work.

If you have ever applied for a scholarship, created a resume, or prepared a professional portfolio, then—like most college students—you already have some experience presenting yourself and your credentials.

Even if you have applied for opportunities before, a candidate's dossier of credentials evolves with changing circumstances. The resume that won an internship must soon be reworked for paid and full-time positions, and even the most polished portfolio requires regular updates to remain fresh and current.

This assignment will introduce you to a new way of thinking about opportunities—a flexible, adaptive way of thinking that the ancient Greeks termed *mētis*. The concept of *mētis* includes vigilance, a repertoire of tricks and stratagems, and a willingness to try out multiple approaches.

Students who complete the assignment will be able to identify current opportunities in their own creative field, tailor application materials for each opportunity, and efficiently produce polished applications for multiple opportunities.

Requirements:

For this assignment, you will:

1. Identify more than 3 current, appropriate, and desirable opportunities in your own creative field.
2. Consult knowledgeable informants for advice on preparing your applications and make use of this advice as you prepare your application materials.
3. Apply for at least 3 of the opportunities that you identified in Step 1, and tailor your application materials for each specific opportunity that you apply for.
4. Prepare a portfolio for grading that documents your process of applying for opportunities. The portfolio must include the materials that you submitted for all 3 applications,[1] evidence that you submitted your applications, and a reflective narrative that describes what you learned from the process.

Process Timeline

Week 1, Session 1: Introduction to the Course and Assignment 1

> **Homework:** Read selections on Antilochus's race from Book XXIII of *The Illiad* and Chapter 1 of *Cunning Intelligence In Ancient Greek Culture And Society* (PDF available on Canvas)
>
> **Week 1, Session 2:** Defining the Scope of Your Search—Your Field, Your Goals, and Your Qualifications
>
> **Week 2, Session 1:** How to Search for Opportunities / Visit from the Campus Career Center
>
> **Homework:** Students search independently for additional opportunities. Bring in a list of 3 current, interesting, and appropriate opportunities for next session. Begin filling out data-entry areas of applications (demographics, etc.).

Week 2, Session 2: Identifying & Consulting Knowledgeable Informants

Homework: Students consult informants through any mutually agreeable channel (e.g., email, Skype, texting, or a face-to-face meeting over coffee). Be sure to prepare a list of questions for each informant and take informal notes during the consultation(s). Continue working on applications.

Week 3, Session 1: Tips, Tricks, and Tactics: What We Learned from Informants

Homework: Begin working on supporting documents for applications.

Week 3, Session 2: Workshop on Tailoring Applications

Homework: Complete Your Applications for Peer Review

Week 4, Session 1: Peer Review of Applications

Homework: Submit all 3 applications by Week 5, Session 1.

Week 4, Session 2: Review of Portfolio Requirements, Workshop on Writing the Reflective Narrative (in-class writing time & peer review)

Homework: Revise the Reflective Narrative, assemble your portfolio, and submit all 3 applications by next session.

Week 5, Session 1: Assignment 1 Portfolio Due at the Start of Class (hard copy or digital). Introduce Assignment 2: *Pitch A New Idea.*

Grading Rubric

Criteria	D-F (2-0 points)	C (3 points)	B (4 points)	A (5 points)
Quality of application materials	Application materials are incomplete or not up to standards.	Application materials are complete.	Application materials demonstrate that you fulfill the requirements of each opportunity.	Application materials position you as uniquely qualified for each opportunity.

Criteria	D-F (2-0 points)	C (3 points)	B (4 points)	A (5 points)
Tailoring of application materials	Application materials show no evidence of tailoring.	Application materials are correctly addressed to the reviewing authority and are free of major tailoring gaffes (e.g., wrong organization name, etc.).	Application materials are somewhat tailored for each opportunity.	Application materials are tailored for each opportunity; you clearly did background research and considered the fit between your credentials and each opportunity.
Resourcefulness	The process documented in your portfolio does not utilize resources supplied in or outside of class.	The process documented in your portfolio demonstrates adequate use of resources.	The process documented in your portfolio demonstrates extensive use of links and resources supplied in class, such as the Handshake portal.	The process documented in your portfolio demonstrates independent and strategic use of resources obtained in and outside of class (e.g., informational resources, informants, tricks and stratagems, etc.)
Quality of Reflective Narrative & Documentation	Reflective Narrative or documenta-tion are incomplete / absent.	Your Reflective Narrative adequately describes your process of applying for opportunities.	Your Reflective Narrative describes insights that you gained from the assignment.	The insights described in your Reflective Narrative are evident throughout the materials presented in your portfolio.

Criteria	D-F (2-0 points)	C (3 points)	B (4 points)	A (5 points)
Editing and Proofreading	Your portfolio is disorganized, incomplete, or reveals patterns of error that interfere with readability and/or meaning.	Your portfolio is mostly complete, and your documents are free of grammatical errors that interfere with meaning.	Your portfolio is effectively organized, and your supporting documents are largely free of grammatical errors.	Your portfolio, supporting documents, and reflective narrative are edited and polished so as to convey a positive professional ethos.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q: How do I determine whether or not a given opportunity is "in my field?"

A: For our purposes, your "field" denotes the profession or sector in which you aspire to work full-time after graduation. Your field is often, but not always, related to your academic major. This assignment presents an occasion for you to reflect on the field within which you position your work, and to expand the scope of your search for opportunities. Some students might consider applying for opportunities in more than one field. For instance, English majors might apply for positions in technical writing, apply to graduate school, and/or submit creative work for publication. Because our focus is on your long-term career goals, this assignment *excludes* opportunities for which you might apply just to make money on a short-term basis (e.g., holiday retail positions, etc.). We will talk more about your goals, your field, and the scope of your search in class on Week 1, Session 2.

Q: How will I find my three (3) opportunities or consult knowledgeable informants? I don't know where to look or who to talk to.

A: As you search, you will have access to a range of resources including a visit from the campus Career Center on Week 2, Session 1, basic instruction in searching, and assistance from classmates. Many students find that the assignment expands their search skills, enabling them to find opportunities that they might have overlooked before.

Knowledgeable informants include a wide range of individuals such as industry professionals, academic experts, or alumnae. We will identify knowledgeable

informants in class on Week 2, Session 2. If you have difficulty identifying knowledgeable informants or an informant bails on you, I will help you find and contact appropriate individuals.

Q: I'm confused about what is required. Do I have to actually apply for these opportunities in real life? Do I just fill out application forms, or do I have to prepare any documents that they ask for? Can I recycle documents from one application to the next? How will you grade my applications?

A: You will apply for opportunities exactly as you would in professional life. This includes filling out forms (online or offline) and preparing supporting documents (resumes, proposal, cover letters, etc.). You will likely find that you can recycle some documents from one opportunity to the next. However, you will also need to tailor those documents to each specific opportunity. In addition to submitting your applications for external review, you will also prepare a portfolio for grading that includes all of your applications and a reflection (see grading criteria).

Q: What should my portfolio include?

A: Your portfolio should include all 3 applications, proof that you submitted your applications, and your reflective narrative of approximately 750 words explaining what you learned from the process.

As long as your portfolio meets these requirements, you have some freedom and flexibility in formatting the portfolio. You may create a portfolio in MS Word, a PDF portfolio, or even a physical binder. Regardless of the medium, your portfolio should be polished, complete, and easy to navigate—leaving me with no questions about what opportunities you applied for, what materials you submitted, or what you learned from the process. To ensure that you receive credit for your work, consider using section dividers and presenting a simple Table of Contents on the first page of your Portfolio.

Q: What if my applications are unsuccessful?

A: Professional situations that occur outside of class can be unpredictable. As we have no control over the external review of your applications, outside responses to your applications (including acceptances, interviews, and rejections) will have no effect on your grade. Even if you receive no response, you will learn habits, tips, tricks, and tactics that you can use to gain a competitive advantage when pursuing opportunities in the future.

Footnote

1. Sometimes it may not be feasible to capture certain parts of an application. For example, if you applied for an opportunity in the Handshake portal, I might not be able to see what you entered into every text box on the portal—but you can still show me all the documents that you submitted, and a screenshot or confirmation email acknowledging receipt of your application. Please consult me individually if questions arise about documenting your process.

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