**UNST Capstone: Grant Writing for Sustainability**

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**WELCOME TO YOUR CAPSTONE: THE CULMINATION OF THE GENERAL EDUCATION EXPERIENCE AT PSU!**

Your University Studies Program has this to say about capstones: "Senior Capstone is the culmination of the University Studies program. Capstone courses are designed by Portland State University's faculty to build cooperative learning communities by taking students out of the classroom and into the field. In Capstone courses, students bring together the knowledge, skills, and interests developed to this point through all aspects of their education, to work on a community project. Students from a variety of majors and backgrounds work as a team, pooling resources, and collaborating with faculty and community leaders to understand and find solutions for issues that are important to them as literate and engaged citizens."

You've come a long way to achieve this point in your academic career. Here is where you apply in a community-based setting the University Studies Goals that inform FRINQ, SINQ, and the Clusters:

Inquiry and Critical Thinking
Communication
The Diversity of Human Experience
Ethics and Social Responsibility

We will have occasion throughout the term to reflect on how these goals match the experience you will gain in this grant writing capstone, but quick speculation suggests how well suited our topic is. Because a grant is a persuasive document that seeks funding for a course of action, grant writers must use **critical, analytical thinking**in order to convince readers that their arguments are sound. Grants are proposals, and proposals solve problems; problem-solving is at core an exercise in critical thinking requiring research and audience analysis. **Communication**comes into play at many levels: grant writers are first and foremost collaborators, bringing together a variety of views from their constituencies in order to persuade the audience. The topic of our grants--sustainability in Oregon--brings up questions about the **diversity of human experience**, as we must question whether differences in ethnic and cultural backgrounds, class, race, and gender determine who has access to sustainable practices and by what means. Finally, participation in a grant that seeks to address the problem of sustainability fundamentally represents an exercise in **ethical, social behavior**.

**OVERVIEW**

A grant is a proposal that seeks funds to solve a problem and normally is directed by a nonprofit organization [IRS 501(c)(3) designation] to a federal, state, or local government agency, a foundation, or a corporation.

This term, we have several primary partners with multiple grant writing needs, one of which doesn't "look like" a partner in the business of sustainability.  As I hope to convince you, though, sustainability is an epistemology more than a disciplinary endeavor.  Sustainability is a lens through which we can see the world and a way of thinking about problem solving across disciplines.

These partners are described in the remaining modules that you can access through your course home page. Specifics about funding needs are provided in these descriptions.

Your first task is to read these descriptions and decide which partner you wish to work with. Remember that you have the option of a) bringing your own community partner into the class or b) identifying a faculty mentor in your major department who is working on a grant and help him/her to pursue it.

If several students express interest in the same partner/project, you can form a team to share the work.  Accomplish this by posting a self-[introduction](https://d2l.pdx.edu/d2l/common/dialogs/quickLink/quickLink.d2l?ou=538529&type=discuss&rCode=Portland_p-144284) in the Discussion topic and reading other class members' introductions.  Look for similar interests and approach other students about teaming up.  DO NOT BE SHY.  The sooner you form a team, the faster you can settle in and start working on the grant.

You should expect to gain valuable experience with the grant writing process. Grant writing involves several steps including preparing or revising a business plan for your partner, identifying potential grant sources for the projects available, and finalizing a grant that follows protocol required by the funding source. Because grant writing is a dynamic process that does not follow academic timelines, we can expect the need for a little flexibility regarding which of these tasks will require the most attention. Some of the projects available to us this term will emphasize research, for example, rather than drafting final text or identifying funding sources. The important outcome is that you, as a participant in the class, will have a chance to learn the fundamentals of grant writing and to help produce a living grant that you can showcase as part of your professional portfolio.

The course also challenges you to think about the topic of sustainability from a disciplinary perspective.

Your tasks can be categorized as 1) a community-based project, 2) a book review of a text that engages the issue of sustainability, and 3) a variety of short writing opportunities throughout the quarter that ask you to reflect on your experiences in the course.

**COMMUNITY-BASED GRANT**

The community-based project is the grant. It accounts for 70% of your final course grade and is due on Friday of finals week. General instructions about grant writing are contained in the Fundamental Steps in Grant Writing module on the Home Page. Access it here: [Fundamentals of Grant Writing](https://d2l.pdx.edu/d2l/common/dialogs/quickLink/quickLink.d2l?ou=538529&type=content&rcode=Portland_p-222449).

Other useful modules are contained in the Course Content area, so be sure to check it out by clicking [here](https://d2l.pdx.edu/d2l/le/content/442795/Home).

**BOOK REVIEW**

The book review gives you choices. You should read at least one book of your choice that promotes reflection on the general concepts at the root of this course. Choose a book on sustainability. If you want an "assignment" from me, here it is:

[Everyday Urbanism: Expanded, edited by John Chase, Margaret Crawford, John Kaliski.](http://www.amazon.com/Everyday-Urbanism-Expanded-John-Chase/dp/1580932010/ref%3Dsr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1372428493&sr=1-1&keywords=Everyday+Urbanism)

Your book review is worth 20% of your final course grade and is due on Friday of finals week. Specifics about the assignment are contained in the Book Review module on the Home Page.

**REFLECTIVE WRITING**

The short reflective writings take the form of every-other-weekly status reports. I might also ask for status reports from time to time throughout the course to make sure the grants are on track. Primary among these is the Timeline that you'll complete in consultation with your community parter: [Timelines and Check Lists Grant Writing for Sustainability.pdf](https://d2l.pdx.edu/content/enforced/538529-OFFERING_UNST-421-517_201504/Timelines%20and%20Check%20Lists%20Grant%20Writing%20for%20Sustainability.pdf?_&d2lSessionVal=AuHXPqiB340MwOHQ1Sn58DedW&ou=538529).

For example, in week 1, your first post will be a self-introduction. You should respond to your colleagues' and consider forming teams based on common backgrounds and interests; alternatively, pitch your own project idea.

I'm asking for this self-introduction right away so that we can get to the important business of forming teams, but the remaining assignments will be due on Mondays throughout the week.  Check the "Timeline for Reflections on Critical Thinking" on the course opening page, which provides links to the discussion areas.

By week 2, I hope that you will be able to report positively about having contacted your community partner.

The traditional "attendance /participation" grade will reflect your diligence in working to complete the grant as well as the effort put forth in these reflections and in responding to your colleagues' posts.  After you have completed your own response, you'll have two weeks to read through your colleagues' offering and share your feedback.

Also, if you do work in a team, and if the grant is excellent but your team members report that you did not contribute, you will not share in the "A". Team members should expect to give full participation to the grant and to evaluate the performance of their fellow members at the end of the term. (For the book review, by contrast, you can fly solo.)

These reflective writing responses and your feedback to fellow class members account for 10% of your final grade.

You can access the Reflective Writing Assignments in the Discussions area of the class or through links on the opening home page.

**GRADING CRITERIA**

The assignments listed above will be graded holistically using a 5-point rubric that characterizes performance in the following areas: Completeness, Literacy, Attitude, Strategy, and Style:

Completeness: The response satisfies the basic goals of the assignment in interesting and imaginative ways.

Literacy: The response observes the rules of conventional American English grammar and usage; errors are not serious or frequent enough to distract or confuse the reader.

Attitude: The response demonstrates effective audience analysis and use of tone.

Strategy: The response adapts the message to the reader primarily through a problem-solving approach that places the reader's needs for information over the writer's desire for action.

Style: The response reflects the writer's voice and personality without resorting to the flat, official language that usually happens when writers rely on passive constructions and extraposition.

We'll go over these criteria in greater detail as the assignments unfold. For now, remember the acronym CLASS. Write "classy" assignments and you'll do well!

**GRANT WRITING PROJECTS**

As mentioned, we have at several partners this term with multiple grants to work on. Get to know these by accessing the descriptions contained in the Course Content area.  You also can access these Course Content modules from the home page.

**NEXT STEPS**

1. Read over the Course Content modules. The module on Fundamental Steps in Grant Writing provides a linear discussion of what happens in the grant writing process, as well as reviewing basic rhetorical strategies.

The module on Funding Sources provides just that: a comprehensive list of funding sources. This information is for your general use; remember that your partner's needs may require some extra digging.

The module on the Book Review available in the Course Content gives specifications for the assignment.

2. Familiarize yourself with partners/ projects by accessing descriptions provided in the remaining modules.

Contact me immediately if you’d like to pitch a different partner of your own choice.  I encourage you to bring in your own interests and experience.

3. Post a self-introduction during week 1 in the [Introducing Yourself](https://d2l.pdx.edu/d2l/common/dialogs/quickLink/quickLink.d2l?ou=538529&type=discuss&rCode=Portland_p-144284) Discussion Topic. Tell us a little about yourself: your major, why you are interested in the class, and other relevant information including a self-assessment of your preparation for the work of grant writing.

4. Read your colleagues' self-introductions and consider rallying a team around a topic of shared interest.

5. Work with me to solidify teams and topics in week 1, if possible, or early in week 2 at the latest.

6. When you decide on a project and get the go ahead from me, send a message to your contact and start communications.

7. Start working on grants and individual book reviews. Post status reports in the Discussion Topic as requested.

8. Contribute to a great grant for your professional development portfolio and a thoughtful book review by Friday of finals week. You may choose any book you wish on the topic of sustainability. Just check in with me to clear the title. (Note that a title is suggested in the Course Content description.)

9. Check "Capstone" off your TO-DO list and come ever closer to graduation!

**OTHER MATTERS**

One obvious question is, "Do we have a textbook for this course?" I don't require one, although you might want to pick up any number of references for your own use. I recommend, for example, Karsh and Fox's *The Only Grant-Writing Book You'll Ever Need* (2006) and Barbato and Furlich's *Writing for a Good Cause: The Complete Guide to Crafting Proposals and Other Persuasive Pieces for Nonprofits*(2000). Because you'll be jumping into projects midstream and adapting the templates and groundwork that your partners have already accomplished, you might find that the overview in the module on Fundamental Steps in Grant Writing available on the Home Page will meet your needs.

As a matter of general policy, I want to bring the Student Code of Conduct to your attention. It details your rights and responsibilities as a student and as a member of the Portland State community.

Finally, if you have a disability that requires accommodation, please let me know. Here is the University's statement on disability accommodation: "Accommodations are collaborative efforts between students, faculty, and the Disability Resource Center. Students with accommodations approved through the DRC are responsible for contacting the faculty member in charge of the course prior to or during the first week of the term to discuss accommodations. Students who believe they are eligible for accommodations but who have not yet obtained approval through the DRC should contact the DRC immediately."

Last words: Let's have fun. You are about to engage in important social work. That's a good thing that should make you feel proud about your contributions to the community.