**UNST 421 Capstone: Indigenous Grant Writing  
Elizabeth LaPensée**

**Use the Mail Tool inside D2L or lapensee@pdx.edu.**

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

Grants support the self-determination of Indigenous peoples by funding events, educational programs, archival materials, and multimedia development. In this course, you will learn grant researching, writing, and editing skills by developing real proposals for one of our community partners. The urban Indigenous community in Portland, Oregon offers many services through non-profit organizations such as Wisdom of the Elders, Northwest Indian Storytellers Association, Native Wellness Institute, and Red Lodge Transition Services, just to name a few. The options for partners and pre-determined projects change from course to course.

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](http://www.pdx.edu/unst/goals.html) 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--Indigenous cultural sustainability--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 the disintegration or appropriation of knowledge. Finally, participation in a grant that seeks to address the problem of Native American cultural preservation 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.

We will be writing grants on behalf of an Indigenous 501(c)(3) not for profit corporation committed to Indigenous culture and wellbeing.

You will work in a team of approximately four colleagues. Your team 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 phenomenon of Indigenous cultural sustainability from a disciplinary perspective.

Your tasks therefore can be categorized as 1) a community-based project, 2) a book review of a text that engages the issue of Indigenous culture from the perspective of your academic discipline, 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 60% of your final course grade and is due on Friday of finals week.

**BOOK REVIEW**

The book review gives you choices of any fiction or non-fiction book written by an Indigenous author based on your major. Your choices are wide open and should reflect your interests. Below are a few possibilities.  
  
English majors may be interested in fiction; anything by Vine Deloria, Jr., Leslie Marmon Silko, N. Scott Momaday, Simon Ortiz, or Louise Erdrich, to name a few. For poetry, check out Sherman Alexie and Paula Gunn Allen. For horror, look into Stephen Graham Jones. For science fiction, I recommend Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction by Grace L. Dillon.

Art majors may be interested in Norval Morrisseau: Shaman Artist by Greg A. Hill. In this unique case, you may choose a non-Indigenous author if the artist featured is Indigenous.

Philosophy majors can look into books such as Grandmothers Counsel the World: Women Elders Offer Their Vision for Our Planet, Original Instructions: Indigenous Teachings for a Sustainable Future, and This Is Not a Peace Pipe: Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy.

Social Sciences majors might be interested in books such as Indigenous Miracles: Nahua Authority in Colonial Mexicoor Indigenous Social Work Around the World.

Science majors can check into Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence by Leroy Little Bear and Our Knowledge Is Not Primitive: Decolonizing Botanical Anishinaabe Teachings by Wendy M. Geniusz and Annmarie Geniusz.

Anyone doing any research involving Indigenous peoples should check into Marie Battiste's Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage: A Global Challenge, Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts by Margaret Kovach, and Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples by Linda Tuhiwai Smith.

If you're interested in comic books or videogames, check out Native Americans In Comic Books: A Critical Study by Michael A. Sheyahshe.

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.

**REFLECTIVE WRITING**

Every Friday, each individual should respond to the prompt in the D2L Discussion tool.

For example, in week 1, your first post will be a self-introduction. You should respond to your colleagues' introductions by forming groups.

As a group, you will need to: choose a grant funding source, draft your grant/letter of inquiry (what your project is depends on the funding source), and finalize your grant/letter of inquiry after receiving edits and suggestions.

The traditional attendance/participation grade will reflect your diligence in working as a group member to complete the grant as well as the effort put forth in these weekly reflections; your participation thus will be considered in calculating the reflective writing portion of your final grade. If the grant is excellent but your group members report that you did not contribute, you will not share in the A. Group 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 will write individually.)

The weekly reflective writing responses account for 20% of your final grade.

**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 class assignments and you'll do well!

**NEXT STEPS**

1. Read over the Course Content modules.

2. Read over the Discussions.

3. Research the possible community partners and pre-determined projects.

**OTHER MATTERS**

There's no required textbook for the course, but I do recommend, 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 their templates and groundwork to your needs, you might find that the overview in the course module on "Fundamental Steps in Grant Writing" will meet your needs.

As a matter of general policy, I want to bring the [Student Code of Conduct](http://www.pdx.edu/dos/conduct.html) 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](http://www.pdx.edu/uasc/drc.html). 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: Enjoy! You are about to engage in important work with the Indigenous community. Your help is much appreciated.