

Cynthia Shugart

Professor Joseph LoCicero

GRA 491

Professional Reflection

December 18, 2022

Professional Reflection

As I am typing this up Christmas break is approaching and that means that this graphic design capstone course is nearing an end. It is a bittersweet time as this course has taught me so much. But that also means that I have two more courses left before the completion of my Academic journey here at Southern New Hampshire University in April of 2023. The Graphic design capstone course has been so beneficial to me. Not only did I learn so much but it also challenged me not only to bring the best I have to offer to the table but to go the extra step and kick things up a notch to create pieces I would have otherwise never thought about creating. This course, I feel, is necessary for all graphic design students who attend Southern New Hampshire University. The goal of the graphic design capstone course was to help me not only create a more professional-looking website or online portfolio but also to create one for print. The idea was to make sure that they are cohesive with each other, meaning both portfolios look like the same person created them.

The graphic design capstone course also offered me a new insight into my past works and had me reexamine my work for the classes that I have taken here at Southern New Hampshire University. The capstone course was directly tied to my academic project program in ways that I did not even think about. At first, I thought this class was just throwing a portfolio together. That is, you are done with your portfolio. Instead, this course teaches us to take all our earlier work from our other classes, revise it or polish it during this capstone. And it gave me a chance to take what I learned during my journey here at Southern New Hampshire University and apply all that knowledge and those skills to the earlier work I have done. I was able to polish up my earlier works and present them more professionally than I did when I first created them.

My Professor Joseph LoCicero for this course taught me that mockups are important and how you present your projects to people is very important. You do not want to just put an image out there

or a logo out there. You want to create a mockup so people can look at it and see what your logo would look like on whichever item they want to place it on.

One of the pieces I never thought I would create is the print-ready portfolio that we had to do for this course which took me almost two weeks to complete because I am such a perfectionist and tend to second-guess myself from time to time. What started as 25 pages ended up being 68 pages in all. Initially, I expected to create a 10-page portfolio, a page for each project, and that would be it. Of course, I thought this during the first week of class when I was looking over the rubric for this graphic design Capstone course. As the capstone course went on and our instructor would explain to us that this is what the clients are looking for before they reach out to us.

The way your portfolio looks reflects on you as a designer. In this article I read on Creative Bloq.com the author says something that hits home with me, "And getting your portfolio right is vital – your portfolio can be the difference between getting hired or not (2022, Hamilton, R.)." You want your portfolio to look very professional. This course and that article had me thinking about how can present my work to the world. I had no idea how important that was. I mean, I knew a little bit, but thanks to our Professor Joseph LoCicero. After taking this graphic design capstone course I know that it is very important to display my work to the world.

Your print-ready portfolio is something that you put out there for the world to see. This print-ready portfolio is something that you would put out there as much as, if not more than your website or digital portfolio. Yes, you want people to look at your website, but you also want them to see all the work you did. So that is why we work as hard as we can, making sure we create this professional-looking portfolio and put it in a nice little package. When you do this, this portfolio shows them that not only do you know what you are doing, but you are professional, that you are

someone who can do what needs to be done and that you are willing to go above and beyond to ensure the client's happiness.

I can take everything I have learned here at SNHU and apply it to everything I do in the future or my professional life. I will be able to present my client not only with a professional-looking portfolio but a professional-looking branding package. I can apply what I learned by showing what I know about color palettes, typography, the hierarchy of a website, and the information they should put on their print-ready materials.

This graphic design capstone course has been a very nice way to end my academic journey here at SNHU. I can take all my work from earlier courses refine them and present them. In a way, I would not have been able to do had I not taken the graphic design capstone course. I would have just put everything together made a collage to showcase my work, and presented it, it would not have looked pretty. Not as nice as it looks now, I would not have included the typography, the color palette, or an understanding of what the client wanted. In my portfolio I would not be able to do what I do now, I would not have learned that creating something for a client is important had I not come to SNHU. I would not have learned how to make a proper brochure on my own. I would not have learned to create letterheads, envelopes, or even proper business cards. It is all thanks to the graphic design capstone course I can present all of that in a way that looks nice and professional and will get me more clients.

The graphic design capstone course is a nice way to take all my work worked all of the work I have done since I first started here at SNHU and put it all together in this nice package that I can present to potential clients. That is the main goal of this course. You need to just polish everything up and put it together in a professional-looking package. Without this course

everything you have done at SNHU up until this point would not be put together nicely, you could put it together, and put it in a portfolio that you think is great. However, if you do not take the graphic design capstone course, it is not going to look that great. That is how important this course is. It is. Something everybody should do is take this capstone course, as it helps you not only on a professional level but also on a personal level. You learn not only to handle criticism from your peers and your instructor about your portfolio, what you need to do, how you need to fix it, and any changes you need to make. These are all things that this course teaches you if you do not take this course. As I said, your portfolio's not going to look professional if you are not putting your best foot forward. That is the importance of this course.

I noticed that while we were doing this entire course, I was like, oh wait, I just have to pick ten things that I have done for this portfolio. I thought it was going to be easy, but it was not, which is a blessing. I love the challenge I had, but for this course, you present them in two different batches. You have five for one and five for another. But these all have to be works that you have done that you are proud of but there is always room for improvement. Your peers and your instructor will see things you do not see, and this class was truly a revelation. Everything I have learned up until this point I was able to learn more and refine my skills and put everything together in a portfolio which I never thought I would be doing. I had initially thought that it was just a resume. That is all it is. But no, your professional print-ready portfolio is much more than that.

Everything I learned. I can. Apply that with future clients. I can present them with a wireframe for a layout they want for their website and get their feedback on it. I can walk my clients through the steps, I want to take when working on their website whether it is building one from

scratch or updating their current website. Which is something now I can do thanks to all my classes here at SNHU. What I have learned is that every single class in the graphic design program goes together, it is all cohesive. You learn how to not only make a logo, but you learn how to Present that logo. You learn how to make a website layout and you learn how to create wireframes for it to map out how you want it to look before you just sit down and try to throw it all together.

Here at SNHU in the Graphic Design program and even in the graphic design capstone course, you learn that in every single piece of work we do there is a process. That is what I am taking with me after I graduate and start working in a more professional capacity. The knowledge that when we start on a project, we have these steps we have to take. You have to put together a proposal before you can get hired. And even after that, you have to make another proposal that has more detail about what you want to do for the client. Such as? Here is the wireframe layout for your website, or even a wireframe layout for letterhead, business card, or a hand-drawn logo you have in mind for a client. These are things that you present to them. You have to let them know that you are there for them. You have to take what your client wants and create it for them digitally or in some cases make it more tangible for them and do it in a way that is not only professional but ethical. You do not want to use copyrighted images for your client. And risk them getting sued for copyright infringement, or yourself getting sued for copyright infringement. You do not want to copy anybody else work either. You want to make sure that the work is your own, something that you created on your own. you want to make sure that you are listening to your client and what they want, what they need, and who their target audience is. You do not want to make a big flashy sign or a logo for a company whose target audience is people who are sixty-five or up. You do not want to have this drab, boring logo for younger

people. You have to constantly learn. And that is the great thing about taking this course and the graphic design program at SNHU as a whole, it has helped me be able to do better research on what I want to do.

With all that I learned at SNHU from my courses, including this capstone course I can create more than just business cards, letterhead, or envelopes. I can also create invitations for their wedding, for their baby shower, birthday parties, and an anniversary. I can create brochures, flyers, banners, websites, logos, and an entire branding suite. Because of what I have learned here, SNHU. Before coming here. I was stuck. Using the same. Graphics program. At the time, and, since 2003, I had been using. Macromedia fireworks. MX 2004. I was not even interested in touching Photoshop because it seemed. Too difficult for me. It was very daunting and intimidating. But here at SNHU, it was a requirement to use Adobe. Because it is the leading program That designers are using today, and their creative suite has so many different programs you can use. My favorite programs that Adobe Creative Suite offers that I love to use and have used a lot for my projects are Adobe illustrator. Adobe InDesign, Photoshop, and Adobe Express. That I love those. That just makes things a lot easier. Especially whenever you have a client call you up on the phone that's super excited saying, hey, I have this idea for this flyer I want you to make for me. Can you do this? Do that. They are firing off all these ideas and you're quickly trying to. Write it all down and they want to mockup or draft for something within 24 hours. That is when you can just. Open up, you know, Adobe Express, and create something quickly for them. And let them know, hey, this is just a rough draft, what do you think? And go from there. So, Adobe is great because it has all these different products for you.

Yes, you have to pay for it. But you make that money back that you put into it because you have clients, actual clients, which hire you and love your work. These clients will not only come back to you for more work, but they will also spread the word with their friends. That is what happened to me. I had a client; I was just doing a website for them. I started on the website and after I completed that job, they hired me to maintain said website. I had to get a camera for a digital photography course. Now they want me to take pictures for them at events they have and things that they do for the community, which I do. I do not charge them because they are a fire department. I do not charge him for pictures. I give them a discount and that. It makes them happy. I also made. Stationary for them, I would not have been able to do that had I not learned it here at SNHU. I can think about how I am going to design a business card instead of just making a plain business card with logo text and calling it a day. I have learned that you can add a QR code to business cards, brochures, flyers, and magazine ads, the possibilities are endless. You can link it to a document, form, website, and event to a menu for someone to look at and order takeout. The possibilities are endless, endless. And had I not learned all that I would not have been able to make the awesome brochure and flyer my client wanted.

During this entire process, I received a lot of good feedback from my peers. And when I got this feedback. I would consider it. I tested them all out on my designs. And then if it worked, I would implement it and. 90% of the feedback I got I implemented. Because the feedback I received made my work look more professional and easier to read. As most of my issues were with the legibility of the text and making sure it was legible. I feel that as a designer you need to be able to take all kinds of criticism whether it is good, bad, or indifferent. I think that implementing feedback is also important to do. No, not all of the feedback you get, but most of it. That is if the feedback improves your designs.

As I continue to work and expand my portfolio, I intend to add more pages to that portfolio or have different portfolios for different services I will offer.

I am going to end this with something I typed earlier, a reminder for myself. Finding it hard to sink in. As I am typing this Christmas break is approaching, and this capstone course is nearing an end. It is a bittersweet time as this course has taught me so much, but that also means that I have two more courses left before the completion of my academic journey here at Southern New Hampshire University in April. I will have my bachelor's degree in graphic design with a concentration in Web Design. I may or may not continue my education by getting my Masters. I do know that will be continuing to work as a freelance designer. I have had my own business since 2003, however, it has not been as successful as I did not have the knowledge and the tools that I have now.

Sources:

18 brilliant design portfolios to inspire you. (2022). Retrieved 4 December 2022, from

<https://www.creativebloq.com/portfolios/examples-712368>

Butler, P., Butler, P., & profile, V. (2012). New and improved Elements and Principles of Design icons. Retrieved 4 December 2022, from

<http://splitcomplementary.blogspot.com/2012/08/new-and-improved-elements-and.html>

Mark Otto, a. (2022). Navbar version 4.0. Retrieved 11 December 2022, from

<https://getbootstrap.com/docs/4.0/components/navbar/>

Mark Otto, a. (2022). Navbar version 5.2. Retrieved 11 December 2022, from

<https://getbootstrap.com/docs/5.2/components/navbar/>

Roger Dario Design – Design Work Life. (2022). Retrieved 4 December 2022, from

<https://designworklife.com/2014/05/30/roger-dario-design/>

Successful Design Reviews Look Like This — Hello Brio. (2022). Retrieved 18 December 2022,

from <https://www.hellobrio.com/blog/design-reviews>

Taylor, F., Clark, T., & Antoniou, Z. (2012). How to Create a Portfolio & Get Hired: A Guide for Graphic Designers and Illustrators: Vol. Second edition. Laurence King Publishing.