

# ENSTU 300: Critical Thinking and Writing in Environmental Studies

## ePortfolio Assignment

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### Purpose

Electronic student portfolios, or ePortfolios, are tools to document and reflect on your learning and to showcase yourself to prospective employers. Approximately 60% of colleges integrate ePortfolios into their curriculum, and many employers request ePortfolio links as part of their application processes (Eynon & Gambino, 2017). ePortfolios allow you to demonstrate more than a resume can. They allow you to provide a more comprehensive, and self-driven representation of who you are and who you seek to become as a professional. You will generate an ePortfolio in this class and will build future pages in the ENSTU capstone course series.

### Task Overview

In this course, you will generate a website platform and the following content: i) home page with a personal mission; ii) 2-3 core competency reflections; iii) a professional statement and goals; iv) a resume; and v) a page for your ENSTU 300 papers (4 fact sheets, final paper, and reflection). You are also invited to create optional pages that represent extra-curricular or co-curricular work, create a blog page, showcase creative works, or present community-based or service-learning projects or research.

### Personal Mission Assignment Details

A personal mission statement is the beginning of personal leadership. It sets guidelines for life. By referring to a mission and internalizing its meaning, we make choices that serve values and reject the things that oppose them. A personal mission statement answers questions like these:

- What do I want from my life?
- What do I value?
- What are my talents?
- At the end of my life, what do I want to have accomplished?

To prepare students to write a personal mission statement:

- Prior to class, students read Dianne Glave's Preface to *Rooted to the Earth: Reclaiming the African American Environmental Heritage* (Lawrence Hill Books, 2010). Students identify specific ideas and phrasing that resonate with them. [Note that I often swap out this reading with other short writings that share how someone connected to the earth or environmentalism.]

- In class, students listen to a 4:50 minute segment from NPR's "This I Believe" series by Majora Carter: "This is Home." (Available from: <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=98908295>)
- In small groups, students discuss the themes and influences they identify for Dianne Glave and Majora Carter.
- Next, (if available), have students review 2-3 personal mission statements of their peers.
- Then ask each student to respond to questions like: "what has shaped my values and interests today?" "what do I want from my life?" "what do I value?" "what are my talents?" or "at the end of my life, what do I want to have accomplished?" Statements should be approximately 150-300 words.

### **Personal Mission Student Examples\***

I intend to apply my environmental studies degree with a concentration in environmental education to the education of youth about the environment and the world around them. I aspire to become as environmentally literate as possible and in turn, by conducting outreach and outdoor education, inspire youth to do the same. I will strive to build valuable connections that will allow me to reach my goals.

Barry Lopez wrote in *On the Purpose of Writing* that what he noticed was that most writers are looking for the same thing which is a source of hope. I think that applies to writing and communicating in the environmental profession because whether you're an environmental researcher or teacher you're still doing your job with a sense of hope. The hope of finding the new invention that will clean the air faster or the hope that you'll teach your students effectively to the point where they'll want to go out and make a change. This all depends on being able to write and communicate properly. Lopez said that as a writer it is your responsibility to keep in mind what others already know and to have an awareness of the fate of the community we're writing about. I hope to one day be able to teach environmental education at the high school level but also do outreach to youth in Mexico since that is where my family is from. I know that I'll definitely need to keep in mind the communities my students will be from and what the communities are like in Mexico to effectively communicate environmental issues.

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I want to leave this world in a better condition for future generations. I don't want them to have to worry about clean water or never seeing coral reefs. Outside of my family and friends, the environment is the most important thing in my life. Growing up in unincorporated Monterey County, I would see people litter, burn garbage, and let oil spill on the ground. Seeing this angered me because they were harming our home. In high school, I decided that I wanted to fix

these problems. Every problem has two or more sides to it. Whenever I am faced with a problem, I like to listen to all the different perspectives. This allows me to make the best decision. With my degree in environmental studies, I not only want to educate the people around me about sustainable living, I also want to go out in the world and try to fix the mistakes we have made. I want to restore the environment so that organisms can have their habitats back and so that humans can enjoy them.

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I am a senior at the university of Monterey Bay, who is acquiring a degree in Environmental Studies with a concentration in education. My passion is to spread awareness and educate the future generations of the damages one does to the environment and how we can help prevent further damage.

I was born in Los Angeles. I always had a passion for animals and one day wished to be a zookeeper. I grew up in the city and didn't have a great connection to the environment. That all changed once I started college. I learned to love and value the beauty of the environment around me. Growing up in Los Angeles I was always used to the smog filled air, trash filled streets, and murky waters. When getting to Monterey Bay, seeing the clear waters and smelling the fresh air, I realized the importance of conserving our environment.

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## **References**

Eynon, B., & Gambino, L. (2017). *High-Impact ePortfolio Practice: A Catalyst for Student, Faculty, and Institutional Learning*. Stylus Publishing.