

PLS 292: Political Science Careers



Days and Times: Mondays 12:00-12:50pm
Location: LH 111

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Course Syllabus Online: <http://people.uncw.edu/tanp/PLS292Careers.html>

Introduction

This course was created in response to political science student feedback that they were receiving insufficient guidance regarding careers and that the guidance that was being received was coming too late to be useful. The course is also an attempt to address an aspect of political science as yet little considered in our current curriculum. We know what Political Science is, but what do political scientists actually do? This course will expose students to the work of political scientists in academia, government, law, campaigns/lobbying, and other fields.

PLS 292: Political Science Careers intends to serve students in multiple ways. The course will guide students through the process of job and graduate school search as well as required documents for those searches like resumes, cover letters, and personal statements. The course will help students to look into specific career tracks and to question which one might be the right one for them. Finally, the course aims to assist students in improving the degree to which they are able to produce professional materials similar to those political scientists produce in the work world.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Critical Thinking:** Students will develop their abilities to explain relevant issues, to investigate evidence, and to draw conclusions.
- **Information Literacy:** Students will improve their abilities to find and apply relevant information to the solution of real-world related problems.
- **Thoughtful Expression:** Students will develop their abilities to express meaningful ideas in an organized, reasoned, and convincing manner.

Required Course Materials

- Materials to assemble a portfolio of course-produced documents.
 - This may be a binder with plastic sheets, a leather portfolio, or a website.
- Computer to produce assignments.
- Computer paper to print out assignments.
- **Your brain and vision to imagine your life in the future.**

Course Requirements

The grade in this course will be determined as follows:

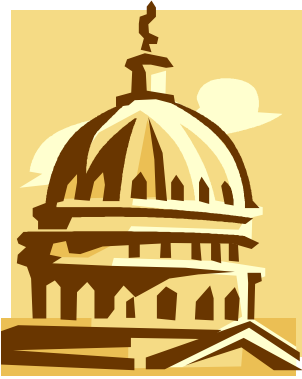
- Class participation: 20%
- Self introduction paper: 5%
- Jobs I want and how to get them paper: 5%
- Resume: 5%
- Cover letter or personal statement for graduate school: 5%
- Policy/administration memo: 25%
- Election volatility table and analysis: 10%
- InterviewStream interview: 5%
- Portfolio: 20%



Class participation: You are expected to be in class with a maximum of ONE absence for the semester. This class meets only 13 times, so you absolutely positively must be here to get something out of the course. Zero absences is advisable. You must also be an active and engaged participant when you're here, asking questions of Dr. Tan, Mr. Werbeach, and our guests.

Self-introduction paper: One-to-two pages. Topics should include what you hope to gain from this course, where you stand in your career search process, and how you would describe yourself to someone who does not know you. You may include formative experiences, major(s), minor(s), clubs/organizations, and extra-curricular activities.

Jobs I want and how to get them paper: Find five jobs you would like to have (complete with print-outs of the job descriptions) (or grad schools you would like to enter, if you are heading in that direction) and write a summary reflection of what knowledge, skills, and abilities you would need to manifest in order to get the jobs or be admitted to the schools. Consider interviewing people who work in that company or industry, talking to law school admissions offices, interviewing alumni and current students. At a minimum, check company/school websites in addition to other sources of information to learn more. If you want a job that stands out or admission to a graduate program that stands out, your work has to stand out. Do more.



Resume: The resume should be a concise statement of your knowledge, skills, and abilities. Follow the in-class instructions given by Mr. Werbeach in the creation or revision of your resume.

Cover letter or personal statement for graduate school: Following the in-class instructions given by Mr. Werbeach, create a cover letter (if you plan to look for a job after UNCW) or personal statement (if your ambition is graduate school).

Common issues with the cover letter:

- Dear Ms. Jobgiver: (colon)
- Create a personal letterhead with a striking font of your name, address, phone, and e-mail address (striking not freaky).
- Resumé (insert symbol, accent e)
- Under recipient's address, before salutation (Dear Ms. Jobgiver), use **Re: Legislative Intern Position**

Policy/administration memo: In this project, students will work in groups of two to three as a "specialist student task force." (Applications to work alone will be considered in exceptional circumstances. Please consult Dr. Tan.) Task forces will study an issue area and make recommendations to a relevant governmental, inter-governmental, or non-governmental organization (NGO) as to how it might approach the problem. Problems must be tightly focused, and recommendations must represent politically, administratively, and economically viable solutions. Reports should be focused on a (potential) real client's real problems.

Potential Topics: Students are free, with the consent of the instructor, to explore a policy/administrative issue of their own choosing in the Policy/Administration project, and the issue under study must be a "live" issue awaiting a governmental or NGO response (your report must be embedded in the latest thinking on the problem). These projects can deal with policy/administrative challenges at the local, state, national, or international level and tackle topics either in the US or abroad. Since students sometimes like a list of project ideas rather than coming up with their own subject area, here is a selection of topics students might pursue. Be aware that these are general topic areas. Your topic must be narrowed to a specific, contemporary challenge in order to enable your group to write a strong, focused report.

- Administrative reform of the United Nations (The UN is derided as a fat and lazy organization. How can it be made leaner and hungrier? Make recommendations to new UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon)
- Aging population and the pension/medical care time bomb (in the US, Western Europe, or Japan)
- AIDS prevention (US, Africa, Asia)
- Anti-corruption strategies (foreign government/international non-governmental organizations would work here)
- Anti-drugs education programs for youth
- Civil service reform in developing nations
- Countries/states/localities confronting the challenges of globalization, changing patterns of trade/manufacturing
- Dealing with the problem of human trafficking (international)
- Delicate balance between environment and development (US/Third World)
- Energy policy
- Fostering creative economies (US cities and counties, India, Singapore)
- Higher education challenges (Universities in the US confront massive challenges from budget cuts to technology to internationalization)
- Affordable housing (abroad or the US)
- Libraries in the 21st century respond to the challenge of information technology
- Poverty reduction (US/Third World)

- Fostering development in a soon-to-be-independent South Sudan
- Public transport (in the US or abroad. Singapore has a novel electronic road pricing system lauded by many environmentalists)
- Reform of the European Union Commission (Europe)
- Refugees (international organizations or host/funding governments)
- Assuring future services for veterans of the war on terror/war in Iraq.
- Wilmington contemporary challenges. Students following this option should be prepared to interview elected and appointed local officials to get real primary-source material for their papers, if they pursue this topic.

The Policy/administration group paper MUST be modeled on the [sample memo](#) format the instructor will go over in class. The paper should be 15-20 double-spaced pages in length. It should be extensively sourced (with references drawn from both primary and secondary sources) and begin with a table of contents and an executive summary (single-spaced and, as a rough guideline, 10% the length of the overall report). Be sure to include plenty of concrete data to serve as evidence to support your points. Use tables, graphs, and charts to convey relevant information to your reader in an easily digestible format. Provide value added to your client and tell her something she has not heard before. Make sure your report does not just reiterate what is already "out there," but that it comes up with something new. Be practical and understand the costs of your proposed programs. The paper should have additional appendices in which each group member discusses in one-to-two paragraphs his or her contribution to the final product.

Increasingly, groups have taken over the workplace. It is important that you work professionally with classmates to produce a quality product. In the conduct of this assignment, group members should imagine the instructor as their boss. Group meltdowns reflect on the professionalism of ALL group members. What would your boss think of your comportment and final product? That is how the grade will be determined. For more guidelines on group work, please see <http://people.uncw.edu/tanp/GroupWork.html>.

Election volatility table and analysis: Students will choose a country with a multi-party political system and sufficiently meaningful elections and investigate the last five lower house of parliament/legislative election cycles in that country (suggestion: Don't pick a country with 25 political parties to make your job easier). Students will prepare a table in Excel which highlights for each set of elections the vote received by party (number of votes), vote share by party (percentage), number of seats by party, and seat share by party (percentage of total seats).

In addition to that, students will calculate electoral volatility from one election to the next. Electoral volatility is the sum total of changes in each party's share of the vote from one election to the next divided by two.

So, here is a simple sample calculation. For each pair of elections, so 1999 and 2003, you add up the change in EACH party's vote share. So, Party A goes from 20 to 30, Party B goes from 30 to 25, Party C goes from 40 to 39, and Party D goes from 10 to 6. The changes there are A 10, B 5, C 1, and D 4. You add those together and get 20. Then, you divide by 2 to get the electoral volatility (EV) number from 1999 to 2003. Then you'll have another EV number for 2003 to 2005, 2005 to 2007, and so on. A higher EV number suggests greater levels of change/tumult in the system. Please see the following resource for an idea of what your table should look like: [Sample Volatility Table](#). Note that if a party is new, it's score in the previous election was zero, score in the new election was seven, change is seven. Follow the guidelines on Purdue's OWL as to proper table formatting. See <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/19/>. Note that the left column should be left aligned. All other columns should be center aligned.

Along with their table, students will submit a brief analysis of what the information in the table suggests regarding party competition in their country.

InterviewStream: Students will be given guidelines in class about interviewing. Students will then go online or to the Career Center to access InterviewStream to conduct a mock interview. See <http://www.uncw.edu/stuaff/career/InterviewStream.htm> for instructions as to how to access InterviewStream.

InterviewStream will give you a chance to send your interview to someone. You MUST send the interview to both Dr. Tan (tanp@uncw.edu) and Mr. Werbeach (werbeachm@uncw.edu) in order for the interview to be graded.

Good advice from Mark Werbeach for interviewing (now and for the future).

- Whatever you're asked, add "in relation to the position" to the question. So, the interviewer says "Tell me about yourself," and then you add "in relation to the position" to decide how to answer.
- Going in to the interview, be sure you can talk about your strengths (5-8 of them!) and be able to illustrate each with examples.
- Be able to address anything negative in your application.
- You'll be asked why do you want to work here. Have a good answer. Do research and be able to discuss in relation to your own personal/professional goals.
- A final question is "What questions do you have for us?" What questions you ask reveals something about your interests and priorities. You should have questions but ask some of substance, about advancement opportunities, potential training opportunities, not all about how much vacation time (that suggests you're thinking more about not being at work than being at work!).

Other standard types of questions (from InterviewStream):

- "Tell me about a time when you've persuaded others to adopt your ideas."
- "Give me an example of your ability to make decisions under pressure."
- "Tell me about your experience in dealing with a variety of different people."
- "Tell me about a time when your first solution didn't solve a problem. What did you do?"

Portfolio: The portfolio assignment is due the last day of class. It should have all of the written work prepared for this class revised and corrected in response to comments received from Dr. Tan and Mr. Werbeach. The portfolio should also include a final reflection paper. What have you learned about yourself in this class (assessments, experiences, etc.), and what have you learned about career fields (or grad school), and how are you using this information to plan your next steps? This will include reflection on specific topics as well as developing a detailed plan for the future (i.e. what do I need to do to make my career goals a reality?). In addition to all materials for the course and the final reflection paper, the portfolio should also have three further relevant content items that you would wish to present to potential employers/graduate schools.



Be mindful that the portfolio is a representation of yourself. Present yourself as you would to an employer. Choose a nice portfolio cover. Consider a table of contents and tabs. Place old assignments behind the revised ones.

****Important Notes and Policies:**

- The philosophy of this course is that all work produced in your professional context should be as close to perfect as you can make it. That means writing, re-writing, and checking over with a fine-tooth comb. It also means having a pride in yourself and how you present yourself as a graduate of the Department of Public and International Affairs and UNCW. **You are ENCOURAGED to have your mother, roommate, neighbor, or favorite professor help you proofread every assignment that comes in for this course** (This is as it should be in the real world; always get a second pair of eyes (or more) to help you improve your résumés, cover letters, and personal statements).
- This course also requires your active learning and participation. If we show you how to search for jobs online, you must use this skill and practice searching out jobs, exploring, and expanding your knowledge. This is the way you will improve your career savvy and knowledge base.

- All work for this course must be in class in hard copy and e-mailed to Dr. Tan (tanp@uncw.edu) and Mr. Werbeach (werbeachm@uncw.edu) by the start of class on the day it's due. **No late work accepted.** This is the work world, folks. You're late, and "you're fired."
- Laptop computers are allowed, but students with computers must sit toward the back to minimize the disruption to their classmates. Phones should be put away. Students using any electronic devices in a manner disruptive of the learning environment will be marked absent for the day.
- Religious Observance Policy. In accordance with NC SL 2010-211, you are entitled to two excused absences for religious observances **per academic year**. You must inform me in writing the first week of class if you will be missing any classes due to religious observance and using one of the two permissible absences for the academic year. In addition, please inform the Registrar the first week of class who will then confirm your intentions to miss class with the impacted course instructors. Any absence for religious purposes will be considered unexcused unless you submit the request in writing the first week to me and the Registrar.

Internet Resources

Careers in National Defense <http://www.go-defense.com/>
 Careers in Political Science from the American Political Science Association http://www.apsanet.org/content_6457.cfm
 Careers in Political Science from the UNCW Career Center <http://uncw.edu/stuaff/career/Majors/political.html>
 Consulting Firms, see Chemonics <http://www.chemonics.com/career/default.aspx>
 City of Wilmington, NC http://www.ci.wilmington.nc.us/human_resources/employment.aspx
 Democracy promotion organizations, see Carter Center <http://www.cartercenter.org>, International Foundation for Election Systems <http://www.ifes.org>, and International Republican Institute <http://www.iri.org>, and National Democratic Institute <http://www.ndi.org>
 Development organizations, see Care at <http://www.care.org/>, Devex <http://www.devex.com/en/>, DevNetJobs <http://www.devnetjobs.org/>, and World Vision <http://www.worldvision.org>.
 Eldis <http://www.eldis.org/>
 Federal government jobs <http://www.fedworld.gov>, <http://www.usajobs.gov>
 Global Policy Forum (NYC, internships) <http://www.globalpolicy.org/about-gpf-mm/internships-mm.html>
 Idealist.org <http://www.idealist.org>
 Informational interview why and how http://www.quintcareers.com/informational_interviewing.html
 Informational interview questions <http://hrweb.mit.edu/system/files/Sample+Informational+Interview+Questions.pdf>
 Intelligence Jobs <http://www.intelligencecareers.com/>, <http://www.cia.gov>, <http://www.dia.mil>
 Internationally focused jobs from the Foreign Policy Association <http://www.fpa.org/jobs/>
 Job search writing resources from OWL/Purdue <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/6/>
 Law School Admission Council (for recommendation letters) <http://www.lsac.org/>
 Military, civilian positions at <http://www.cpol.army.mil/>
 North Carolina state jobs <http://www.osp.state.nc.us/jobs/>
 NYTimes Jobs (resources and news) <http://jobmarket.nytimes.com/pages/jobs/>
 OWL from Purdue <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>
 Peace Corps <http://www.peacecorps.gov/>
 Philanthropy Jobs <http://philanthropy.com/section/Jobs/224/>
 Public Service Careers <http://www.publicservicecareers.org/>
 Reuters Alert.net <http://www.alertnet.org/thepeople/jobs/index.htm>
 SeaWork <https://www.myinterfase.com/uncw/student/>
 State Department <http://www.state.gov/careers/>
 Think tanks, see Center for Strategic and International Studies, DC http://www.csis.org/about/jobs_interns/, Brookings <http://www.brookings.edu/about/employment.aspx>, Heritage Foundation <http://www.heritage.org>, American Enterprise Institute <http://www.aei.org>, Rand Corporation <http://www.rand.org>
 UN Jobs <http://careers.un.org/lbw/Home.aspx> or <https://jobs.un.org/Galaxy/Release3/Vacancy/Vacancy.aspx>

World Bank

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTHRJOBS/0,,contentMDK:20522507~menuPK:64262360~pagePK:64262408~piPK:64262191~theSitePK:1058433,00.html>



Schedule

1 August 29 COURSE INTRODUCTION

- Purposes of the course (career options and professional development) (Tan).
- Overview of the syllabus and assignments (including portfolio and professional communication assignments) (Tan and Werbeach).
- More resources such as personal assessments at the Career Center (Werbeach).
- Jobs for Political Science majors (Tan). See <http://uncw.edu/stuaff/career/Majors/political.html>
- Resource: Writing Well handout: <http://people.uncw.edu/tanp/WritingWell.html> and OWL from Purdue <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/> (Tan).

Assignment for next time: Write a one-page statement introducing yourself (the self-introduction paper). Topics should include what you want out of this course and where you stand in your career search process. Introduce yourself to someone who does not know you. Include formative experiences, major(s), minor(s), clubs/organizations, and extra-curricular activities.

2 September 12 GETTING THE BALL ROLLING

- Become a skill seeker handout (Tan).
<http://uncw.edu/stuaff/career/documents/TopSkillsSoughtByEmployers.pdf> (Tan).
- Visit from students who've done internship, study abroad, and volunteering.
- Looking ahead: Introduce memo assignment. Group/topic requests by Friday (Tan).
- Looking ahead: Professionals panel next time. Come armed with questions for these events.

Due: Self-introduction paper

Tip from several UNCW grads: Get an internship in the field you are interested in. This will help you to gain real world experience and to network in your field. From another UNCW grad: Think about a hard science or math major or minor to complement political science. Consider working with a professor on developing a paper to present at the North Carolina Political Science Association annual conference. Set yourself apart!

Idea: Volunteer in India with <http://www.crossculturalsolutions.org>. Volunteer here in Wilmington through Centro Hispano to teach migrants English.

To get abroad, study strategic languages, world regions: See <http://www.borenawards.org/>.

3 September 19 PROFESSIONALS PANEL: Government

- Guest speaker from the FBI.
- Memo assignment groups announced (Tan).
- Introduce Election Volatility Table and Analysis (Tan).

Further resources: More about how to conduct an informational interview on your own:

http://www.quintcareers.com/informational_interviewing.html

Informational interview questions: <http://hrweb.mit.edu/system/files/Sample+Informational+Interview+Questions.pdf>

Tip from a UNCW alum now with the FBI: Make good decisions when you're in college. If you want to work for the government in defense or law enforcement, you need to be drug-free and able to pass a tough security clearance/background check. Live right now, so you can get the job you want in future.

4 September 26 PROFESSIONALS PANEL: Campaigns/Congress/Lobbying

- Guest speakers: Brad Ballou (lobbying for UNC system), Amanda Kornegay (MacSata & Kornegay), Kaitlin Helms (Congressman Mike McIntyre's office)
- Discuss: What is networking? (Tan, Werbeach)

Tip: Consider starting now reading the *Economist* magazine weekly or another broadly focused news periodical, so that you can come across as an interesting, well-read candidate in oral interviews. Know what's going on in world and national politics, economics, sci/tech, and the arts. Begin to draw links between what you're learning in class and what's going on in the world. Broad generalist knowledge is also necessary to pass the State Department foreign service examination.

5 October 3 JOB AND GRAD SCHOOL SEARCHING

- Special visitor: County Commissioner Jonathan Barfield (New Hanover County).
- How to find job descriptions and grad school requirements (Werbeach).
- Talk about *New York Times* jobs site <http://jobmarket.nytimes.com/pages/jobs/> (Tan).

Assignment: Find five jobs you would like to have (complete with print-outs of the job descriptions) (or grad schools you would like to enter, if you are heading in that direction) and write a summary reflection of what knowledge, skills, and abilities you would need to manifest in order to get the jobs or be admitted to the schools. The jobs I want and how to get them paper is due next class.

Tip from a UNCW grad: Meet with your professors and other "adults," so you can learn how to have adult conversations and relate to adults. This is expected of you in the work place.

October 10: Class Cancelled for Fall Break

6 October 17 WRITING A RESUME

- What should be on your resume? (Werbeach).
- In-class proofreading exercise (Tan).

More information on resumes can be found on the Career Center website:

<http://uncwmedia1.dcs.uncw.edu/stuaff/career/resume/>.

Tip from a UNCW grad: Long term, if you're interested in a job that requires a security clearance, sometimes you need to take a less-than-ideal job to get the security clearance and then move into a more ideal job later. It's hard to get organizations to invest in getting a clearance for someone just out of school and untested.

Assignment for next time: Resume.

Due: Jobs I want and how to get them paper.

7 October 24 COVER LETTERS, PERSONAL STATEMENTS, AND THANK YOU NOTES

- Special Visitor: NC State Representative Susi Hamilton.
- Job search correspondence and personal statements for graduate school (Werbeach).

Assignment: Cover letter/personal statement due next time. This should relate directly to the jobs/schools you dealt with in the earlier "Jobs I want" paper.

More on cover letters at the Career Center website: <http://uncw.edu/stuaff/career/vodcast.htm#coverletters>

Tip: The personal statement shouldn't explain why you want to do X. It should explain why you are the best candidate to be admitted for X. It should discuss how your background and interests prepare you to succeed in X and how you plan to use the training you receive in X to achieve your long-term goals.

Due: Resume

8 October 31 PROFESSIONALS PANEL: NGOs /International

- Guest speakers: Dr. Tan (re: State Department), Geneva Jones (Chemonics)
- Options: Peace Corps, World Teach, JET (Tan).

Tip: You don't have to load up on majors and minors; take an interesting major/minor combination. Define your own areas of concentration. Follow your passion, whatever it is. That will help you do your best.

Due: Cover Letter or personal statement.

9 November 7 PROFESSIONALS PANEL: Law



- Guest speakers: Rob Hoon, UNCW Counsel; Mike Haas, UNCW Pre-law Advisor and Public Law Professor.

Recommended reading on Blackboard: "A Less Gilded Future," *Economist*, May 7, 2011.

Tip: No matter what you study, you can benefit by studying abroad. Do one or more study abroad experiences: a summer, a semester, a trip traveling with a UNCW faculty member. Some programs even have internship opportunities, so you can get work experience overseas. How's that for distinguishing yourself from the pack? Interested in law? How about studying our British legal heritage in England or international law in The Hague, Netherlands?

Due: Election volatility table and analysis

10 November 14 GRAD SCHOOL IN POLITICAL SCIENCE OR PUBLIC/INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

- Invited: Paige Tan (UNCW associate professor), Alex Lysik (UNCW MPA), Mike Kowalick (Indiana University/Peace Corps)

Tip: Understanding of economics and foreign languages is vital. The act of learning a language expands your horizons and re-wires your brain. In many job areas, knowledge of Spanish is a plus. Think, too, of work with expanding powers like China and Brazil. UNCW's Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures offers both Chinese and Portuguese (for Brazil). Interested in intelligence work? Give yourself a leg up by speaking the languages the US' potential enemies speak. For many international affairs graduate programs, you are required to have exposure to macroeconomics for admission.

Due: Policy/administration memo

11 November 21 INTERVIEWING

- Do's and Don'ts of Job Interviews (Werbeach).

Assignment: Before next week, you must go online to InterviewStream and conduct a practice interview. Have the interview sent to both Dr. Tan (tanp@uncw.edu) and Mr. Werbeach (werbeachm@uncw.edu). See <http://www.uncw.edu/stuaff/career/InterviewStream.htm> for instructions to access InterviewStream. You may do this at home through your own computer/web cam or you'll have to set up an appointment at the Career Center.

Tips from a UNCW grad: Research careers and have a plan, "even if it's vague. Keep your resume looking excellent. Oh yeah - be able to shake hands firmly while looking someone in the eye, speak clearly without salad falling out of your mouth, basic typing and general hygiene should also be on the list."

12 November 28 BEING PROFESSIONAL IN THE WORKPLACE

- Business etiquette (Mark Werbeach, UNCW Career Center).
- Skills employers want you to have (Tan).

Tips: Always respond to your e-mail in a timely and polite fashion. Sloppy e-mailing creates a bad impression. Also, e-mail is FOREVER. Imagine every e-mail you send being read by your mother, your boss, and a police officer. Then decide if you're really going to click "send." Keep your work and personal e-mail as separate as possible. NEVER send an e-mail when you're angry. Store the e-mail in drafts for a while and think long and hard about whether to send.

Due: InterviewStream interview should be sent to both Dr. Tan and Mr. Werbeach by the start of class today.

13 December 5 CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

- Post-assessment: Students' career readiness.
- Course Feedback, Where to Go from Here (Tan and Werbeach).
- SPOTS.

Tips from a former UNCW student: "Your first job will never be the 'one' unless you are really lucky. Making connections is important, but it will only get you the interview. Most international development companies are looking for overseas experience, and the Peace Corps is a good option after school to get that experience. I am currently hiring associates, and if they do not have two years overseas in a developing country and a Master's degree we aren't even considering them. Tough market sadly and companies can be picky."

Due: Portfolio. Submit a hard copy or a nice business letter that you might hand to a prospective employer that features the URL of an online portfolio you have completed.

