SOC 437 Changing China: Culture, Community, and Citizenship

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Office Hour: Thursdays 1pm-2pm

Course Description

The goal of this course is to help students gain a global perspective on culture, community, and citizenship through intensive reading, writing about, and traveling in China—one of the oldest civilizations with the fastest economic growth rate in the world. This course will serve as a window through which the students can experience and understand multifaceted nature of change and continuity in Chinese society today. We will explore Chinese society and politics at the local level where individuals and groups define and remake their communities in the face of rapid change.

This course is an upper-division elective course. Students who participate in the program consisting of three components—pre-departure seminars, field trips, and post-trip seminars, and successfully complete the program will receive 15 western credits in Sociology, Chinese Language and Culture, or East Asian Studies.

Course Schedules

Pre-Departure Seminars: April 2-April 17
Field Trip in China: April 22-May 23
Post-Trip Seminars: June 2-June 11

Prerequisite Courses

Students have the choice to take this course as a capstone (with 3 WP credits) or regular elective course (with no WP credit). For those who wish to take it as a capstone course, you have to have successfully completed the three core courses in sociology major—SOC 306 Research Methods in Sociology, SOC 304 Social Statistics, and SOC 302 Classical Sociological Theory. No prerequisite is needed for those who wish to take it as a non-capstone course.

Sociology Departmental Learning Outcomes:

- **Cultural Awareness:** Students will be able to articulate to others and demonstrate a sensitivity to how cultural background affects one’s values, behaviors, relationships, institutional forms and life prospects.

- **Global Awareness:** Students will be able to articulate and demonstrate a sensitivity to global issues and processes of globalization.

- **Communication:** Students will be able to articulate ideas effectively through written, oral and visual modes of communication.

Readings:


Dychtwarl, Zak. 2018. *Young China: How the Restless Generation Will Change Their Country and the World*

Other reading materials and video materials will be provided through links listed on the schedule.

**Part One: Pre-Departure Seminars**

Location: AH518  
Dates: April 2 – April 18  
10:00am-12:00pm (Seminar)  
2:00 pm-5:00 pm (Film and Discussion)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic One</th>
<th>Introduction and Background (Luo)</th>
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<tr>
<td>April 2 Tuesday</td>
<td>Overview of the Course, Syllabus</td>
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<td>Trip Preparation</td>
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<td>Film: TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 3 Wednesday</td>
<td>Geographic and Historical Legacies</td>
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<td>Film</td>
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<td>April 5 Friday</td>
<td>Present and Future</td>
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<td>Film</td>
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<td>• TBA</td>
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**Topic Two**  
**The Party-State System (Parris)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>April 8 Monday</th>
<th>What is the nature and role of the Chinese Communist Party? How can we understand the relationship between state, society and citizen? What is changing and what is not?</th>
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</table>
| Readings:                          | • Eric Li: A Tale of Two Political Systems  
|                                    | [https://www.ted.com/talks/eric_x_li_a_tale_of_two_political_systems](https://www.ted.com/talks/eric_x_li_a_tale_of_two_political_systems) |
| Film:                              | • TBA                                                                     |

**Topic Three**  
**Civil Society/Community**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>April 10 Wednesday</th>
<th>What is Civil Society/Community? What’s the history and condition of civil society in the US context?</th>
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<td>Readings:</td>
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**Film:**
- TBA

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<tr>
<th>April 12 Friday</th>
<th>Civil Society/Community in China</th>
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<td><strong>Film:</strong></td>
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<th><strong>Topic Four</strong></th>
<th><strong>What is Sustainable Development—Socially and Economically?</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>April 15 Monday</td>
<td>Social Sustainability as a framework of thinking (tradition, social trust/moral landscape, social reproduction/care, wellbeing, social conflict)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Readings:</strong></td>
<td>Caradonna, Jeremy. “Sustainability: A History”</td>
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<td><strong>Film:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<th>April 17 Wednesday</th>
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<td>Bridget Collins Family Support Center:</td>
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<td>Whatcom Council on Aging:</td>
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<td>Bellingham Food Bank</td>
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<td>ReSource</td>
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<td>The Opportunity Council</td>
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<th>April 18 Friday</th>
<th>Pre-Departure Gathering</th>
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<td><strong>Film:</strong></td>
<td>TBA</td>
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| 4/22 Monday | Depart for Shanghai from Vancouver or Seattle |

**COMPONENTS OF EVALUATION**
Engaged Participation 5%
Reading Memos 5%
Bellingham NGO Case Study Report 10%
Bellingham NGO Case Study Presentation 5%

25%

1. Engaged Participation. Because this is a small upper division class, it will be conducted as a seminar with some informal lectures. Students will have considerable responsibility for each class period, responding to the reading, videos, their classmates, and instructor. Thus it is especially important that you keep up with the daily reading and come to class prepared. You are meant to read critically and not necessarily to agree with the authors, the experts, the instructor or your classmates. You may and are encouraged to actively agree or disagree with any claims, reasoning, use of evidence, etc. It is your task to identify the primary argument and central concepts, summarize the most important evidence, and explain why you find it persuasive or not. You are expected to contribute in a way that is respectful to others and to the integrity of the educational process. In a small class we have more opportunity to learn by sharing our ideas with one another and we depend on each other to develop and sharpen our understanding and own ideas. There is no place for free riding on or hiding behind others. If you are shy, come by and talk after class or during office hours (or make an appointment) and we will find a way to help you take the step toward being a more active seminar participant. Of course, it is not the quantity of your comments, but the quality, clarity and thoughtfulness. The goal is for you to learn to respond to the work and ideas of others, develop and share your own well-considered views in a conversation with the class and in this way also build a community together.

- Evaluation: So that grades for participation are not seen as mystically derived, I offer general guidelines below, but this should not be seen as a guarantee of any particular grade. If you have questions about your performance at any time please ask.
  - A – to A (excellent, 9, 9.5, or 10): For students who regularly extend particular ideas from the reading to grapple with broader issues in China’s political, economic, and social changes, making connections between readings and discussions in class.
  - B+ (very good, 8 or 8.5): For Students who participation is characterized by regular engaged attendance, regular questions/comments in class and journal entries that are more analytical in that they lead to clarification of concepts and arguments presented by the authors that engage the concepts and readings.
  - C to B range (adequate to good, 7, 7.5): For students whose work is characterized by engaged and regular attendance, regular reading journals and occasional questions/comments in class that are descriptive (accurately summarize apparent facts) rather than analytical.
  - D and below (inadequate, below 7): Those students, who miss class, do not participation in class discussion, do not submit reading memos in a timely fashion, or whose comments and questions are not engaged academically will receive a D or below, depending on the specific circumstances.

2. Reading Memos. The evaluation criteria of the memos and discussion leading are similar to that for participation.

- Reading Memos: To encourage careful reading and engaged participation, each student should submit a “reading memo” at the start of each class meeting. Each entry should focus on at least 2 readings for the next day’s class (you may be assigned a particular reading on the previous day of class) and state a central argument, identify a related concept and include
at least one analytical question or comment responding to the argument or concept (or both). Be prepared to share your memo with the class. These memos cannot be handed in late (or early). You must be in class to turn them in.

3. Bellingham NGO Case Study Reports. Each student will work with a partner to research a local NGO and produce case study report to share with the class and with our hosts in China. Together your cases studies will be part of our cultural exchange, providing a snapshot of some important elements of Bellingham’s civil society for the staff of the Chinese NGOs that we visit. You will be assigned one of the following five NGOs:

- Skookum Kids
- Whatcom Council on Aging
- Bellingham Food Bank
- ReSources
- The Opportunity Council

Each NGO seeks to address a local social issue and foster positive changes in the community. You will need to learn about the organization’s mission, history, financing, operation, resources and challenges, including how they work with other entities—state agencies, businesses, and other community organizations. Besides information gained from the agency website documentary, you will need to undertake a site visit and interview.

Site Visit and Interview: You and your partner will be responsible to contact and set up a visit/interview with the NGO that is the focus for your work. Find contact information on line and make the phone call in the first week of class so that you are able to arrange a time that works for all of you in plenty of time for your pre-departure presentation.

Essential Report Components: Your report will take the form of a both a presentation to the class and a written report. For each of these you will need to have the following elements:

- **Background.** What is the focus of the organization's work and why is this seen as a critical issue locally? What social, political, economic factors locally, regionally, nationally, and globally propelled the birth of the organization? Conduct a scholarly analysis of the social problem being addressed. (2 page)
- **A Snapshot.** What are the mission, services provided, population served, financing sources, organizational structure, major programs/initiatives and other important information about the organization? (1-2 page)
- **Startup Story.** Who are the heroes? Who played important roles in the birth of the organization? What did they do to give birth to the organization? What were the main obstacles to getting set up (Are their any villains lurking in this story?) (1-2 page)
- **Successes.** What are some successes the organization has achieved? Use numbers and narratives. What made their successes possible? (1-2 pages)
- **Challenges.** What are some of the challenges they face right now? What strategies are they using to tackle these challenges? Use concrete examples. (1-2 pages)
- **Conclusion.** What are their short-term and long-term goals? What are their plans for the future? Based on the above sections, what are their relationships like with the state, businesses, other community organizations, and ordinary Bellingham citizens? (1-2page)
- **Photos/Graphics:** You will need to be sensitive and professional in taking and using photos (as you are in the text portion of your report).
The text portion of the report should be about 10 pages in length, including 3-5 photos and graphics. Each photo should have a subtitle and some brief explanations (you might also include other graphics such as map, timeline, bar charts or tables with critical data).

Other expectations of the report:

- Writing Reflection: Separate one page reflecting on your work putting together. Each partner should have their own independent report.
- Include a title, page numbers, and your names.

4. Bellingham NGO Case Study Presentation. You should begin to work with your partner on your case study project in the first week of class in order to be ready for your pre-departure presentations. Feel free to use whatever type of presentation format you are most comfortable with. Each presentation will last for about 15-20 minutes. Remember that you will also be presenting this report to our host NGOs in China.

- Please attach a group evaluation form in a separate cover. You must turn one in to get full credit on participation.
Part Two: Field Trip  
Dates: April 22-May 23  
China

General Itinerary

4/22  
Departure from the U.S. (Seattle or Vancouver B.C.)

4/24-5/1  
Internship programs with He Gongyi @Hangzhou, Zhejiang

5/2-5/7  
Fieldwork in Suichang villages @Lishui, Zhejiang

5/8-5/15  
Exchange with JUFE students @Nanchang, Jiangxi

5/16-5/22  
Field Research @ Ji’An, Jiangxi

5/23  
Head back to the U.S. or travel to other places in China

Components of Evaluations

Engaged Participation and Discussion  15%

5 Reflection Journals  20%

35%

1. Engaged Participation and Discussion (As announced throughout the trip):

While traveling in China, you are expected to fully engage in all activities as arranged by the instructors and our local coordinators. When we are on site visits (e.g. shequ), you should not only be on time, but also demonstrate a seriousness of purpose, including intellectual curiosity and analytical skills. You are expected to ask good, probing questions, generate thoughtful conversations and show your respect those around us and for our collective undertaking.

During the trip, we will hold seminars frequently and you will be expected to reflect on your experiences, make connections with your pre-departure readings and follow up with your own research and learning. You are required to participate in all seminars, but as with the pre-departure seminars, good grades require thoughtful contributions to the discussions.

In other words, you need to be present, physically, mentally, and intellectually.

2. Reflection Journals (Due dates: TBA during the trip)

During the one month in China, you will be required to write 5 journals reflecting analytically on your experience, including the field trips, seminars with Chinese students, interning at local community organizations, your own personal interactions with local people, etc. These reflection journals will also facilitate your participation in our regular group discussions. You should have a notebook handy and write down your thoughts during your trip before they slip away. Then you can synthesize your thoughts from your notebook and make it into a coherent analytical essay for your reflection journal.
• **What to include**: Events and people that provoked your thinking. Connect explicitly them to larger social forces, social systems, concepts and terms learned in class before departure. Ignite your sociological imagination. Through the consideration of specific events and people, grapple with broader issues in Chinese society regarding political, economic, cultural transformations and how citizens in Chinese survive and thrive as individuals and collectives. Undertake thoughtful comparisons with the situations in the U.S. (being careful to avoid false symmetries and various cognitive biases)

• **Format**: Each journal entry should be about 2 pages long. It is very likely that you may have to write this essay by hand as printers can be difficult to find while we are on the road in China. Please write legibly.

3. **Storytelling Project: Chinese Characters (interviews done in China, report due upon return)**

This project will be completed and presented when we return to WWU, but you must prepare for it during the trip. You will put together a portfolio of life stories of three Chinese people (respondents) that you meet and interview during the trip. You will need to step further out of your comfort zone to get to know Chinese individuals face to face through in-depth, unstructured interviews. You will work with a local partner will be your translator as you conduct at least 2 or 3 interviews with each respondent understand their life story. Multiple interviews with respondents will allow you to follow up on earlier lines of thought and observe how participants’ lives unfold.

Because the goal of your interview is to gain understanding, it is essential to establish rapport with respondents. You must attempt to see the world from their viewpoint and to understand the complex behavior as members of society without imposing your own preconceptions on them. This requires empathy and trust. In order to gain trust and establish report with your respondents, you might share some glimpses of your own life with them.

(These suggestions are drawn from Andrea Fontana, and Anastasia H Prokos. *The Interview*, Taylor and Francis, 2007. For more tips refer to chapters 4 and 5 in this book, available as an Embook via Wilson Library catalog).

Besides names, age, and other basic personal information here are some more guidelines to help with your life story interviews. PLSC students should be sure to look for opportunities to ask about their political biographies (family political background/status, party membership, government service):

A. **A Life in Chapters.** Ask your respondents to think about their lives as a book with chapters. Ask them to describe the main chapters. Maybe even ask them to give each chapter a title, tell you a little bit about what each chapter is about, and say a word or two about how they got moved from one chapter to the next.

B. **Key Scenes in Life.** Ask your respondent to focus on a few key scenes that stand out in the story. A key scene can be an event or specific incident that took place at a particular time and place. Consider a key scene to be a moment in your life story that stands out for a particular reason—perhaps because it was especially good or bad, particularly vivid, important, or memorable. Ask them in details what happened, when and where it happened, who was involved, and what they were thinking and feeling in the event. Ask them why this particular scene is important or significant in their life? How does it shape his/her as a person? Political Science at least should also find ways to ask about their political biographies. Ask them about:
a. **High points.** Ask them to describe a moment in their life that stands out as an especially positive experience. What happened, when and where, who was involved, and what were you thinking and feeling, etc.

b. **Low points.** Ask them to describe a moment in their life that stands out as an especially negative experience. What happened, when and where, who was involved, and what were you thinking and feeling, etc.

c. **Turning points.** Ask them to identify a particular episode in life that he/she now sees as a turning point. What happened, when and where, who was involved, and what were you thinking and feeling, etc.

d. **Childhood/Youth memories.** Ask them about memories of childhood and youth that stand out as positive or negative. What happened, when and where, who was involved, what were you thinking and feeling, how they have impacted them?

e. **Adulthood memories.** Moving ahead to adult years, ask them to identify one scene that stands out as especially vivid or meaningful. An especially memorable, vivid, or important scene, positive or negative. What happened, when and where, who was involved, what were you thinking and feeling, how they have it impacted them?

C. **Challenges.** Ask your interviewees to consider the various challenges, struggles, and problems they have encountered in their lives. Political Science students should find opportunities to ask about political experiences.

a. **The greatest single challenge.** Ask them to identify and describe the greatest single challenges they have faced in life? What is or was the challenge or problem? How did the challenge or problem develop? How did you address or deal with this challenge or problem?

b. **Challenges in Health.** Ask them to identify and describe a scene or period including the present time where in he/she or a close family member confronted a major health problem, challenge, or crisis. Describe in detail what the health problems, challenges brought upon by the health problem, and how you coped with it. What impact this health crisis, problem, or challenge has had on you and your overall life story.

c. **Loss.** Here loss refers to loss of interpersonal relationships through death or separation. Ask them to describe their greatest interpersonal loss. How you coped with the loss? How has the loss impact you and your life story?

d. **Failure or regret.** Ask them to identify and describe the greatest failure or regret they have experienced. The failure or regret can occur in any area of life—work, family, friendships, etc. How have your coped with this failure or regret? What effect has this failure or regret have on you and your life story?

D. **Future.** Ask your interviewees to think about their future—how they see or imagine their future.

a. **The next chapter.** What you see to be the next chapter in your life? What is going to come next in your life story?

b. **Dreams, hopes, and plans for the future.** Describe your plans, dreams, or hopes for the future. What do you hope to accomplish in the future

c. **Life project.** Do you have a project in life? A life project is something that you have been working on and plan to work in the future chapters of your life story? The project might involve your family or your work life, or it might be a hobby, a vocation, or pastime. Ask them to describe the project in details—what the project is, how you got involved in the project or will get involved in the project, how the project might develop, who the project is important.

E. **Personal values and beliefs.** Ask your interviewees about their fundamental beliefs and values concerning questions of meaning and morality. How do they see the ideal relationship between the self/individual and society? What is their overall philosophy of life or world view? And why?
Be aware that your respondents may not think of their lives in terms chapters or have a life project or even life goals they can name. Be considerate and creative (but not timid) in your interviews and work with your local partner to be sure your questions are sensitive social context.
Part Three: Post Trip Seminars (June 2-June 11)

Post-Trip Components of Evaluations

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<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>Engaged Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Chinese Community Organization Case Study Report</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Chinese Community Organization Case Study Presentation</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Storytelling and Sharing: Chinese Characters</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Portfolio</td>
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1. Engaged Participation

We will meet 2-3 times in seminar after our field trip in China. Students will present their Chinese community organization case study presentations and their “Chinese Characters” project—sharing stories of Chinese people we met during our trip. You are expected to fully participate in the discussions, including actively listening and responding to your classmates reports.

2. A Chinese Community Organization Case Study Report

You will hand in a 10 page report on the community organization for which you interned in Hangzhou. Required components include:

- **Background.** What critical social/community issue does the organization attempt to address? Essentially, what made the founders feel that it is absolutely necessary to tackle this issue locally? (It is probably not just a local issue; it is more than likely to be a national issue). What social, political, economic factors in place propelled the birth of the organization? (1-2 page)

- **A Snapshot.** What are the mission, service, population served, financing source, organizational structure, major programs/initiatives and other important information about the organization? (1-2 page)

- **Startup Story.** Who are the heroes? Who played important roles in the birth of the organization? What did they do to give birth to the organization? (1-2 page)

- **Successes.** What are some successes the organization has achieved? Use numbers and narratives. What made their successes possible? (2-3 pages)

- **Challenges.** What are some of the challenges they face right now? What strategies are they using to tackle these challenges? Use concrete examples. (1-2 pages)

- **Future.** What are their short-term and long-term goals? What are their plans for the future? Based on the above sections, what are their relationships like with the state, businesses, other community organizations, and ordinary Chinese citizens? (1-2 page)

- **Field Reflection.** What did you see and do at the organization? What services did you provide? How do your observation and participation shape the way you view Chinese people and society? (1-2 pages)

- **Conclusion.** Comparing to the Bellingham community organization report, what are the similarities and differences between community organization in China and in the U.S.? How do your observation and participation impact your view of culture, community, and citizenship? (1-2 pages)
The text portion of the report should be about 8-10 pages in length. You are also required to include 3-5 photos or other graphics (maps, charts etc.). Each photo/graphic shall have a subtitle and some brief explanations. The report is due as part of your final portfolio.

3. A Chinese Community Organization Case Study Presentation

You will deliver a presentation about the organization and your experience in the organization based on your report. Feel free to use whatever type of presentation format you are most comfortable with. Each presentation will last for about 10 minutes. Please use relevant pictures, videos and other graphics from your China trip.

4. Storytelling and Sharing: Chinese Characters

Using pictures, short videos, and narratives, you are will a portfolio of life stories of three Chinese people you met and conducted in-depth interviews with during the trip. Instructions for the interviews are included in the China trip section of the syllabus for basic components are repeated below. All students should consider the larger social and political institutions that affect these people's life trajectories. PLSC students (at least) should be sure to include references to explicitly and implicit reference to or role of politics (family political background/status, party membership, government service, ideas about prerogatives/rights/benefits and obligations/duties/responsibilities of citizens/members in society):

Write the narrative of each person’s life story in an essay format (without subtitles). Situate each aspect of their life stories in the larger context of social and political changes in China. Each narrative should be about 4-5 pages long. So in total, it will be about 12-15 pages. In addition, for each life story include 3-5 pictures with captions and some brief narratives. The report is due on Friday 9 as part of your final portfolio.

Please pick one person’s story to share with the class, using a PowerPoint, Prezi, or other forms of digital storytelling tools, such as Adobe Voice and others listed here: https://globaldigitalcitizen.org/64-sites-for-digital-storytelling-tools-and-information

5. Final Portfolio

The final portfolio should include:
(1) Table of Contents
(2) Chinese NGO Case Study Report
(3) Chinese Characters Project
(4) All Journal Entries from the trip, revised in response to comments and your own post trip thoughts. Include originals. This rewriting of the Journal entries is required for all and it fulfills the Universities "write and rewrite" requirement for Writing Proficiency courses.
(5) Evaluations
Each component should have page numbers and all pages of the portfolio should be stapled together (no loose pages) with a cover page that includes your name and a title (think of one that reflects your experience).