

Carleton University
Fall 2026 Preliminary Course Outline
Department of English

ENGL 3910A: FROM DEGREE TO CAREER

Prerequisite(s): Third-year standing or permission of the department

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***** This is a preliminary syllabus only—texts and assignments are subject to change. A complete version will be available closer to the start of the term. *****

In its February 2018 report, the Conference Board of Canada states that most holders of social-sciences and humanities degrees “go on to a wide range of rewarding careers.” Still, in the short term these same graduates face challenging career transitions because they have trouble “articulating the value of skills” developed during their degrees. This course is designed to provide English majors with career clarity and a sense of collective possibility when it comes to navigating the transition from degree to career. Like other courses that convene under the rubric of “experiential learning,” the course will enable students to explore different career-related experiences while learning how they can leverage their degrees for paid work.

The aim of this course is not to help students find a *job*. Rather, it is a course designed to help students embark upon a meaningful and rewarding *career* that harmonizes with their temperaments, inclinations, and ambitions. Students will participate in activities that will help them identify their strengths and weaknesses, fears and aspirations, and group their findings into a constellation of careers they imagine being happy pursuing in the future.

The course will also prepare students to apply for jobs that will lead to their desired careers. The two culminating projects for the course, the Career Portfolio and the Video Presentation, will enable students to “hit the ground running” as soon as they are ready to enter the job market. Working in close conjunction with specialists from Carleton’s Career Services Office, students will produce a “forward facing” Portfolio that is not only public and portable, but it will also articulate with confidence and authority the employability skills that they acquired during their degrees. Other assignments will include establishing contact with people in a field of interest and arranging with them a “job shadowing” day or two “information interviews.”

Although fieldwork and the sharing of “trade secrets” will be a key component of the course, the course will also contain a series of classes that teach “best practices” for applying to graduate programs (such as Master’s in English or Library Science and Creative Book Publishing) and professional schools (such as Law School or Teachers’ College). We will also hear from guest speakers who have successfully parlayed their

English degrees into unexpected careers or who have found a working balance between a “pragmatic” career and an artistic one.

Though this is an in-person course that will be held on campus, some guest lectures might take place on Zoom. Guest lectures that will take place on Zoom will be announced in advance and students will be able to log in from home during these sessions. Zoom attendance will be mandatory in the same way as classroom attendance is mandatory.

Students are not required to purchase textbooks or other learning materials for this course.

When logging into Zoom or Brightspace, please make sure you use one of the following three browsers *and* that your browser is up to date: Chrome, Firefox, or Microsoft Edge.

Learning Outcomes

This course is designed with the following learning outcomes in mind. By the time students complete the course, they will be expected to have achieved the following:

Personal and professional transitions

1. Be comfortable with personal and professional transitions.
2. Be familiar with the psychology of transitions and navigate them with confidence.

Self-knowledge

1. Develop a holistic understanding of the self by applying learned skills in self-reflection.
2. Articulate skills related to self-reflection, communication, and problem-solving.
3. Match this self-knowledge onto existing careers to gain career clarity and purpose.

Workplace Skills and Tools

1. Be ready to put to effective use language and documentation that highlights the workplace skills gained during the English degree.
2. Be ready to apply for jobs with a suite of documents that articulate clearly and eloquently skills and competencies (a résumé, a portfolio, a letter of intent, a video presentation).
3. Be familiar with codes of conduct relating to correspondence, interviews, on-the-job etiquette, and resignation protocols.

Career Management

1. Take the long view when envisioning one’s career over a lifetime.
2. Learn about parallel careers and double lives that connect professions to aspirations in a harmonious, mutually satisfying way.

Terms of Evaluation: There are no essays or exams in this course. The assignments are

designed, first, to assist students in determining which careers are best suited for their temperaments and aspirations, and, second, to manage their careers over a lifetime. The use of AI software is a liability in producing the course assignments. Such use produces robotic prose that is easily detectable as produced by AI software. Students are strongly encouraged to cultivate a unique “voice” that will assure an employer or admissions committee that the student in question has mastered the host of skills associated with an English degree.

Assignment 1: Navigating transitions	5%
Assignment 2: Who am I and what are my career goals ten years from now?	10%
Assignment 3: Describing competencies through storytelling	15%
Assignment 4: Career Portfolio (must include résumé/cv and cover letter)	20%
Assignment 5: Job shadowing or information interviews	15%
Assignment 6: Setting up a LinkedIn profile	5%
Assignment 7: Recruitment of alumni testimonials or updating existing ones	10%
Assignment 8: Video biography OR mock interview	20%