

# Crafting a Beer Brand

Getting to the heart of what makes a successful craft beer identity  
Professional Writing and Rhetoric capstone by Charles Ross Arrington

There is a certain sense of wonder found in every craft beer enthusiast that accompanies seeing a brewery create designs that pair well with their products. As someone who has felt that, I wanted to take the opportunity to use what I have learned at Elon to create my own designs for craft beer that would inspire that same sense in others. Many times, either while out shopping for craft brews or just walking past the beer section in a grocery store, a design and subsequent description on a beer label are the motivating factor for consumers to end up making a purchase. A reaction of, “Wow! That design is so well done, how could the beer be bad?” is all too common when a brewery puts the effort and creativity into their branding. Likewise, if the effort is not there, a consumer will be hard pressed to find reason to buy a beer over others with smarter and more interesting packaging. Brewing is considered an art form by many, and the associated branding should be treated no differently.

The project I completed for my independent capstone is a graphic design and marketing-oriented study of craft beer branding. The central focus here is on physical labeling which includes labels on cans and bottles. Central purposes here are on a firm understanding of how craft breweries cultivate their brands and how I have learned these skills to employ in future career efforts. My audience is those with an interest in the craft beer industry as well as students of graphic design. In terms of genre, this takes the form of digital design and printed material. Deliverables are composed of my own designs for a beer labels that reflect my design prowess and learned skills from professional writing and rhetoric. What I set out to accomplish with this project was to figure out the process behind bringing a beer to life with visuals and words.

This project demonstrates my proficiency with the digital design software (Adobe suite) that I have learned at Elon, shows off my knowledge of design principles, and shows my understanding of technical writing in terms of copy within the labeling. I am prepared to use multimedia rhetorical skills through a combination of skillful writing and designing in the professional world, and this is an excellent way of showcasing potential applications of my education to the industries of craft beer and marketing.

My interest in craft beer is well represented through this project. The design on craft beer labels as well as a brewery’s implementation of copy are two components that always are considered when I am personally buying a new brew. To be able to make my own mark on the industry would be a great opportunity. My time spent working with the Adobe suite at Elon has taught me considerable skills that will be utilized here in addition to my skills regarding attention to detail and communicating through various media.

The value of this project lies within being able to prove myself as a useful asset to the craft brewing industry and to showing other PWR students that the industry has room for us. When I began studying PWR I was not aware that there was such an application within the field, and I believe that this type of design and writing would interest future generations of PWR students. A broader societal audience would find interest in knowing more about how craft breweries devise their image.

# Statement of Professional Writing and Rhetoric

Professional Writing and Rhetoric is both a catch all field and one that has the ability to focus on the finest details within writing, designing, and speaking. It combines successful communicating, thoughtful and well-reasoned designing, and carefully crafting pieces of technical writing into a series of goals for any piece of content that you set out to create. Engaging this field of study and way of thinking ultimately will help you convey the most meaning to your audience in the best way possible.

PWR has given me the skills to be a critical user of technology in the realm of design software, fully capable of learning just about anything set in front of me, but has provided an underlying foundation of rhetorical theory dating back to the Ancient world. Rhetoric has been understood as finding and evaluating all possible means of persuading an audience, and modern studies in this field prepare students to do just that and more. More numerous and accessible than ever before in history, the means to produce multimodal content are set within reach after spending my educational career studying PWR.

With my writing and designing, I take into account strategies of audience evaluation to assess the situation first and foremost. Knowing what an audience is looking for or expecting out of what you produce is an excellent base before you begin writing. This context evaluation allows me to take a smarter approach and decide which appeals and concepts to implement in my final product. For example, in my two internships as a technical writer and designer for the field of real estate, I was able to assess my audience on pieces such as advertisements and materials for both buying and selling homes. With this in mind, I tailored my words to speak honestly and thoughtfully in a manner that would make potential clients want to work with each real estate agency I worked with. From representing agents as people that truly care about their clients and respect the cherished memories found within a home being sold, to showing off the possibilities that arise from purchasing a new home, I made sure that the audience felt heard and valued as clients. Additionally, I capitalized on Richmond, Virginia, being in a seller's market at the time of my employment to help my audience make the most of the opportunity in selling their homes through careful advertising on the web.

The principles of design are teachings that I constantly return to when working on projects, because knowing that you have incorporated ideas such as contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity into your design encourages a form of confidence insofar as you know your message will be much clearer in the end. Thirdly, the aspect of peer review and revision is something that has been deeply instilled with me from studying PWR. Being capable of reaching out to others (sometimes both within and outside of the field) for feedback and thoughts is an invaluable resource when it comes to getting ahead of how your finished work will be perceived. Seeking out feedback, evaluating, and revising your work is a strategy for success that applies in almost every field where it is possible. Professional Writing and Rhetoric is an excellent example of applied learning that helped me construct set of tools to communicate effectively in a multitude of professional and personal settings.

An example of the invaluable nature of feedback came in the form of my grant writing experience through PWR. Working for RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program) in Burlington, North Carolina, my team and I had to correspond with the leadership duo at the non-profit to make sure that what we produced for them was helpful and relevant to their everyday operations. Without this feedback and correspondence our work for them could have ended up being impractical or even useless.

Professional Writing and Rhetoric teaches theories and practical skills of writing and design, but it also has taught me how to become a better communicator, collaborator, and citizen. Being capable of truly listening to your audience and knowing exactly what to say are two fantastic skills, but they are ineffective without the ethical and personal considerations that Elon professors pair with all their lectures in the classroom. It was a two-fold education, and one that will be relevant years into the future.