Report & Portfolio Development

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Entry TC-001 — YouTube: Dr. Alianna J. Maren

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Curator	Dr. Alianna J. Maren / Claude (Anthropic) — see Assessment below
Themesis Cross-Reference	Directly supports AI Portfolio Coach — Gate 1: Title Page Review

Curator's Assessment

This assessment was developed collaboratively by Dr. Alianna J. Maren and Claude (Anthropic) on February 22, 2026, in the context of building the Themesis Report & Portfolio Development repository. It represents an informed but not exhaustive reading of the transcript and should be updated as the repository evolves.

"Your Title Page is not a student submission — it is your first professional introduction to every future colleague, client, and employer who will ever read your work."

What This Video Gets Exactly Right

The core reframe of this video is the most important thing a student can internalize before they write a single word of their report: you are not submitting a class assignment. You are producing a professional document. That shift in orientation changes everything — from the title itself, to the contact information, to every word in the Abstract and Introduction.

The practical guidance on titles is excellent and concrete. Dr. Maren's use of her own published and in-progress work as examples is pedagogically effective — it grounds the advice in real professional experience and avoids the abstraction that makes title-writing guidance feel difficult to apply. The progression from a rejected title (too vague, too general) to a published title (specific, connected, hook-rich) gives students a clear mental model for what revision looks like in practice.

The contact information guidance is forward-looking and career-aware in a way that students may not immediately appreciate but will be grateful for later. The emphasis on using contact information that remains valid after graduation — personal email, LinkedIn URL, or a private domain — reflects a genuine understanding of how professional networks actually work over time. A Northwestern email address that expires two years after graduation is not contact information; it is a dead end.

The nuanced treatment of institutional affiliation is also precisely right. Northwestern may appear — as a secondary affiliation, or as an indication of where the work was conducted — but it must not dominate or define the document. The student's professional identity should be primary; the institutional context is supporting information, not the headline.

Where Additional Nuance Is Warranted

The video is concise by design — approximately seven minutes — and this means some topics are necessarily compressed. Students who are early in their professional development may benefit from additional scaffolding on what makes a title "hook-rich." The concept of giving a reader multiple entry points — each one a specific technical or conceptual anchor — is introduced but could be developed further through a brief exercise: ask a student to list three specific concepts in their own work, and then build a title that references all three precisely.

The video also does not address the challenge of students who are genuinely uncertain about their professional identity or affiliation at the time of writing — for example, those in career transition who neither want to claim their current employer nor leave the affiliation line blank. This is a common situation among MSDS students and is worth addressing directly in coaching conversations.

Relevance to the Report & Portfolio Development Repository

This video is the primary source for Gate 1 of the AI Portfolio Coach gated strategy session framework: the Title Page Review. Before a student's report can move to structural or content review, the Title Page must be assessed against the following criteria, all of which are grounded in the guidance provided in this video:

1. Title quality: Is the title meaningful, specific, and hook-rich? Does it convey the nature of the AI problem being addressed? Does it give a potential reader multiple specific entry points?

2. Professional framing: Does the Title Page present the student as an AI professional, not as a student submitting a class assignment? Is there any language that frames this as a course submission (course name, course number, assignment number, program name)?

3. Institutional affiliation: If Northwestern appears, is it as a secondary or contextual affiliation — not as the primary identifier? Is the student's own professional identity clearly primary?

4. Contact information: Is lasting contact information present — personal email, LinkedIn URL, or private domain? Is a Northwestern email address the only contact point provided (which would be insufficient)?

Recommended Use in the Repository

This video and its transcript are the primary reference for Gate 1 strategy sessions. Claude (as AI Portfolio Coach) should internalize the criteria above and apply them when reviewing a student's Title Page, whether from an uploaded draft or through a structured dialogue with a student who is building their Title Page from scratch.

For students who have not watched the video, Claude can deliver the essential guidance conversationally — the transcript provides sufficient detail to support a complete Title Page strategy session without requiring the student to watch first. The video remains available as an optional reference for students who want to hear Dr. Maren's own framing directly.

> *CURATOR'S NOTE — Update trigger: This entry should be reviewed if the report structure requirements or Title Page standards are updated. The core professional positioning guidance is durable and unlikely to require revision; the specific criteria checklist should be kept in sync with the current version of the AI Portfolio Coach Briefing Document.*

Full Transcript

Transcript captured from YouTube auto-captions. Timestamp markers preserved. Minor punctuation added for readability. Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zRLdsCLN3A

Opening — The Purpose of the Title Page [0:00]

Welcome in. This is for you if you're in one of my courses and you're finding that your first assignment of the quarter is to get the title page for your paper done. Now I also want you to frame up the structure so let's talk about title page and why it is important to you and why you want to get this right the first time.

Crafting a Meaningful Title [0:21]

First of all, your title — the title itself — it's got to be meaningful. Your title is not "Assignment 1." Write for your professional audience. Write so that the paper that you produce is something that you can share with a colleague, a potential client, a potential new employer — and if someone whom you'd like to impress with your ability to solve AI problems. So your title should convey the nature of the AI problem that you're solving.

Three Title Examples [0:50]

Let's illustrate this notion of crafting a good title with three specific examples. The first one is an example of a poor title — one that I wrote over a year ago and submitted to reviewers who didn't like it. That title was: "The 2D Cluster Variation Method: Initial Findings and Topography Illustrations." That was a poor title because even though "2D Cluster Variation Method" is fairly specific, the notion of "initial findings" was too vague, too general — and "topography illustrations" again too vague, too broad. It wasn't succinct enough to give the reader a sense of what was going on. So the reviewers expressed their displeasure, as reviewers will, and I wrote a different draft. The final resubmitted version — the one that actually got published — was: "The 2D Cluster Variation Method: Topography Illustrations and Their Enthalpy Parameter Correlations." That made a whole lot more sense because I wasn't just broad-scale hand-waving on topographies — I was connecting them to something very specific: the enthalpy parameters. Currently I'm working on a different paper, and a provisional title I've got is: "A Variational Approach to Parameter Estimation for Characterizing 2D Cluster Variation Method Topographies." This gives the potential reader all sorts of very specific hooks — if they're interested in variational methods, that's a hook; if they're interested in the 2D cluster variation method, that's another hook; if they're interested in topographies for the 2D CVM, another one; and most importantly, that whole business of parameter estimation — which is an important deep dive into how to work with the CVMs. So there are various hooks, all very specific, within that one title. That's the kind of thing you're shooting for — you want to give your reader motivation to read and a very specific context or preliminary classification of the value of your paper for their understanding.

Your Name and Professional Affiliation [3:07]

Your name — obvious enough. You want to, if you have a professional affiliation that you are willing to share with the world at large as your home residence, you can put it on. But a lot of you might be thinking about a career transition, so you may not want to put your corporate name down. At the same time, don't put Northwestern — absolutely do not put down "Northwestern Master of Science" or "Capstone Class" or whatever class you're in — because you're not trying to do a student report. You're not going out to the world saying, "Oh, this is my collection of class assignments." You're trying to present yourself as: "I'm an AI professional. This is some work that I've independently done, and it's because I'm interested in the problem, and here's how I approached it, and here's how I solved it." Not a class assignment. So you don't want anything that mentions Northwestern, the program, the class, the assignment — at all whatsoever.

Contact Information [4:03]

So then what do you put down? Again, you're using this thing for portfolio and for positioning, so you hope that somebody will look at this — it'll take a little while before they look at it, we're going to have hopefully other things that will catch your intended audience's attention — but suppose that they finally work their way toward your paper. You want to have contact information. It's the most important thing that you're going to have. So you don't use your Northwestern email address, because by the time you've graduated from the program and you're actively trying to connect with people and create your next career step, your Northwestern address is not where people will find you. You probably don't really want your work address unless you're just trying to do an internal development. So: personal email address, your LinkedIn profile URL so that people can find you via that and message you via LinkedIn — or create your own private domain, get your own private domain associated email address and use

that (of course you've got to remember to check that every now and then). Figure out what you want. The important thing is that you're setting yourself up to be found by the people whom you want to find you, and you're trying to make it easy for them to find you well after your Northwestern experience is done.

Closing Example [5:26]

Folks, let's just close with a tiny little example. I'm again using my own paper that's still in draft formation — we're using this because I don't have to use somebody else's copyrighted material. So here we go. I've got two addresses being shown: one is for Themesis Incorporated — that's my company — and the other is for Northwestern. I can use Northwestern as a secondary address because I'm not directing people to go there. If you'll observe, I've got that little dagger sign up above my name that directs people down to the "This is the contact information that you should use" section below — and that's where I tell people, "Oh, go use the Themesis email address." So this is the kind of thing you want to set up. It's okay to use your school if that's the place where you're writing from — and even if you won't be there for a while, it's okay to give that as an indication of where you've done your work — provided that you give as a primary source someplace where you can be found. And that's the primary objective of your work right now: to make yourself findable by those who want to know what you're doing. Folks, if you'd like to get some more videos on the whole subject of how to write your research paper, please check out the YouTube channel under my name, Alianna J. Maren, and find the playlist on Writing Your Research Paper. If you'd like to learn more about energy-based neural networks, please go to the Themesis — that's T-H-E-M-E-S-I-S — Incorporated YouTube channel. We've got all sorts of goodies and more being added frequently. This is Alianna Maren from Themesis — we hope that you found these YouTubes useful. Thanks for joining me. We'll see you soon.