

A GUIDE TO THE SENIOR CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE

I. The Basics:

So, how should you go about writing the Capstone paper?

The Capstone paper, a graduation requirement included in Senior Studio, is a researched essay in which you'll reflect on your own work in the context of contemporary and historical artistic and cultural movements. You'll discover and analyze the artists and works that have influenced you, and consider how you fit with or depart from these influences. Think about your aesthetics, artistic objectives, and studio methods. How are you part of a broader artistic evolution in a particular medium, time period, or movement?

Just as you would do for any other paper, you will come up with a thesis, support it with evidence, and analyze and synthesize your ideas. There are many people available to help with this process. The librarians can help you with research and citation; the Writing Studio can help with the overall process; and both studio and liberal arts faculty may serve as resources, suggesting artists and cultural elements you may wish to explore.

The Capstone paper is *not* intended as an autobiography, so any autobiographical elements must be tied tightly to your thesis and your exploration of art historical touch points. Original thought and insight count. Readers should be able to understand your artistic philosophy, its sources and formation, and its impact on your artwork.

II. The Mentor

It is strongly recommended that you seek out a mentor to help with the Capstone process. Though choosing a mentor is optional, it can be quite beneficial. Select a mentor who:

- can provide insight about your artistic journey, influences, and work;
- is familiar with historical and contemporary artistic and cultural movements; or
- has influenced you via his/her work or instruction;
- is an NHIA liberal or studio arts faculty member, or an artists and thinker outside the NHIA community.

Ask your mentor if s/he would be willing to meet with you a few times during the semester, to discuss your ideas and provide feedback on their expression in your paper.

Explain why you are asking this particular person to be your mentor. For example:

- “I need help figuring out how I fit with larger artistic movements, and you're an art historian”;
- “You really know my work and have watched my artistic growth, and I value your ideas”;
- “You know so much about the history of photography. I'm having trouble figuring out who my influences might have been”;

- “I think your work has influenced me, so I want to find out more about the chain of influences”.

III. Requirements

Length: The body of the final paper must be 3,000 to 3,500 words, in 12pt Times New Roman font—approximately 10-12 double spaced pages with one-inch margins. It should be accompanied by supporting images and complete documentation in the form of an annotated bibliography (proper MLA formatting and page numbers required). Images can be in the document proper or in an appendix at the paper’s conclusion. Three copies should be submitted.

Due Dates: The first draft of your paper will be due _____ 2009. The final draft will be due _____, 2010. Expect that you will continue to revise your paper in between the first and final drafts.

Workshops: Your Senior Studio faculty will arrange a writing workshop to give you a chance to get feedback from your peers. You will be expected to read and provide constructive criticism for each other’s work.

Writing Studio: Visits to the Writing Studio are strongly recommended. Some Senior Studio faculty may require them.

Annotated Bibliography: An annotated bibliography is a works cited page that includes, below each entry, a summary or evaluation of the book/image/article/etc. Writing your annotated bibliography can take place at any time in the Capstone process, but it’s good to begin early, because researching influences will help you think about your thesis and ideas. The NHIA librarians and Writing Studio faculty will be happy to help you. A useful Web page about annotated bibliographies can be found on the Purdue Online Writing Lab site: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/01/>

Noodlebib (<http://www.noodletools.com/noodlebib>) is an online tool, free to all NHIA students, that provides an easy way to create your annotated bibliography in MLA format. Here is a sample Noodlebib entry, created by Jennifer Whitten:

Rule, Rebecca, and Susan Wheeler. Creating the Story: Guides for Writers.

Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1993. This book contains advice, insight, and exercises related to writing fiction. Its authors are my first fiction writing teachers, so I used it to discover how many of my current writing and teaching practices were established when I was in college. I found that a lot of my approach to writing, including how I deal with writers' block, did come from my college instructors and classes. Since the book I am writing is designed to help college students learn to be better writers, re-reading Creating the Story was important. It returned me to my 19-year-old mindset and helped me remember how new, college-age writers learn about and experience the writing process. Though my book is

considerably different in style and substance, the direct, friendly voice of Creating the Story affirmed my decision to write in an accessible way.

Evaluation Criteria:

- Timely completion of titled, 10-12 page paper;
- depth and breadth of academic research;
- evidence of ability to think critically about your work;
- examination of past and present efforts and influences of artists and works of art;
- evidence of original thought and insight.

Also:

- Clear, engaging prose and effective use of language;
- organization of ideas, including effective introduction and conclusion;
- mechanics (grammar, syntax, spelling);
- documentation of text and images using correct MLA in-text citation (including annotated bibliography).

IV: Benefits of the Capstone Paper

The Capstone paper, required for graduation, offers you a chance to think about your work as it evolves during senior year. Talking about the paper means talking about your work, which can help you refine/define your direction for the senior show. Artist statements and new ideas may start to take shape as you work on the Capstone. Simultaneously, you'll increase your understanding of the historical background of artists, cultures, and movements. Senior Studio faculty and/or chairs will evaluate your paper and incorporate the Capstone grade into your Senior Studio grade. Outside readers will select a winning paper from among those deemed strongest by the department, and at commencement, the winner will be awarded a cash prize.

CAPSTONE EVALUATION FORM

Please score as indicated below:

5=Excellent; 4= Superior; 3=Satisfactory; 2=Marginal; 1=Failure

- 1) Thesis # of points _____ x 1 = _____
- 2) Introduction # of points _____ x 1 = _____
- 3) Depth/Breadth of Academic Research # of points _____ x 3 = _____
- 4) Insightful Discussion of the Student's Work and Evolution as an Artist:
of points _____ x 3 = _____
- 5) Body of the Paper # of points _____ x 3 = _____
- 6) Conclusion # of points _____ x 2 = _____
- 7) Approach and Execution # of points _____ x 1 = _____
- 8) Annotated Bibliography # of points _____ x 2 = _____
- 9) Writing Mechanics/Language Use # of points _____ x 2 = _____
- 10) Voice, Originality, and Overall Quality of the Capstone
of points _____ x 3 = _____

This is the rubric Senior Studio faculty will use to evaluate your Capstone papers.