Capstone Project Proposal Guide
Communication Department

The Capstone course is mandatory for all graduating Communication majors. Your project proposal must articulate an original research project that is of a length and scope that is possible to complete in a single semester. Please explain in straightforward language what you plan to study, your approach to research, and what form your final project will take. Respond to each item below in a paragraph or two. If you are proposing a media project, please refer to the next page for details on what constitutes such a project.

Proposal Sections:

I.   Topic
        All projects (including creative media projects) begin with a research question: What do you want to know? Please state your question or hypothesis.

II.   Communicative significance
        What contribution does your project make to the field of communication?

III.   Social significance
        How will your project benefit society? Will it engage with issues of social justice?

IV.   Method of inquiry
        How will you carry out your research? Will it be Qualitative (ethnographic, cultural, sociological), Quantitative (survey, experimental), or Textual Analysis (literary, historical, visual, rhetorical)? Or will it be a Creative Production (video, design, or other media-based project)?

V.   Data collection/organization
        What procedures will you use to collect and organize your data or research material (e.g., survey, interviews)? For media projects, see "pre-production phase" and "production phase" descriptions on the next page for guidance.

        NOTE: If you plan to do research that involves "human subjects," you must receive IRB approval. This can be done in one of two ways:

        A. If your Capstone advisor has attended an IRB Certified Research Personnel workshop, then they will be your in-class IRB and will provide you with more details about how to get your project approved for in-class data collection and dissemination. You may not publicly share the data that are collected in this manner.

B. You may speak with your Capstone advisor and ask them to be your IRB principal investigator. You will then submit a formal application to the IRB for approval. Once approved, you may collect your data and then are free to disseminate the data via conference, public presentation, or journal publication.

No matter which path you choose, you MUST have IRB approval before collecting data involving human subjects. NO EXCEPTIONS, as this is FEDERAL LAW.

VI. Presentational format
How will you present your project? Will it be a Journal Article, Long Essay, Video or Audio Documentary, Rhetorical/Persuasive Campaign, a Screenplay, or some other artifact of research?

VII. Theoretical Framework
What theories and ideas will help you in answering your research question or exploring your hypothesis?

VIII. Think of "Capstone" as the culmination of your work in the Communication Department: How does your prior coursework inform your project? Discuss Communication Theory, Qualitative and Quantitative Methods, and your upper division electives as preparation for your research and writing.

If you are proposing a media project…

Media projects are not exempt from writing. In fact, there is a significant writing component to media projects. This will include research into what types of similar projects have already been produced, background research into specifics of your project theme, write-up of a story pitch, development of a storyboard, transcription of interviews, voice-over scripting, etc.

Media projects are broken down into three phases: (1) pre-production; (2) production; and (3) post-production.

1. The post-production phase includes all aspects of the project that need to be completed prior to actual production, including the aforementioned storyboard, scripts, interview questions, location scouting, equipment lists, above-the-line and below-the-line crew, collecting of photographs, etc.

2. The production phrase includes the actual generation of content, including recording of audio and/or video, creation of visual designs, etc.

3. The post-production phase includes editing of the final content and preparation for distribution through a communication channel (e.g., website, CD, DVD, blog, hosted streaming service, etc.)

Finally, each student is expected to submit a work portfolio in addition to the completed media project. This may include: (1) a project treatment, including research question; (2) notes relating to the three phases of production (interviews, transcripts, budgets, equipment logs, etc.); (3) a running journal of production activities detailing obstacles and solutions; (4) the final creative media project (on a CD, DVD, or flash drive, or as a web link or URL); and (5) a short final paper describing the various stages of the project and reflecting upon the extent to which you were successful in answering your research question within the context of the field of Communication.