University of Iowa: School of Journalism and Mass Communication

MA-Strat Comm Capstone Project
19:299:015  EXA/EXW (1-3 semester hours)

Spring 2014 Syllabus

Wednesdays
5:30-8 p.m., John and Mary Pappajohn Education Center, Room 218 (and online)

Professor: Don McLeese

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Office hours: Wednesday 4:30-5:30 (office and online); Monday—Friday 9-10 a.m. (online)

Or by appointment (email is generally the most efficient way to reach me).

The above office hour information reflects my classroom teaching assignment in Des Moines. I’m also available plenty of other times—just make an appointment. And I’m obsessive about monitoring email.

I’ll send those students in Iowa City an APB any time my schedule has me on campus, and I’ll be happy to meet with students then. (I’ll have to be there at least once a month for faculty meetings and will likely be there more often for other commitments.)

I’ll also be happy to meet with any of you who happen to be in Des Moines, for whatever reason, at whatever time and day (other than when I’m teaching).
COURSE OVERVIEW

Congratulations! We have walked a long post-graduate path together, and you can consider this course the gateway to your final destination—your completed capstone project and your master’s degree. Some of you plan to finish your project and graduate this semester; others of you want to get started and plan to complete your program in a subsequent semester. This course will accommodate both camps, as students in each will help all others. (My main hope is that no one who starts this course in the former camp finishes it in the latter.)

Students have registered to earn anywhere from one to three credits for this course, with those graduating this semester registering for three credits and those planning on finishing later registering for whatever they prefer. You can only apply three credits from this course and project toward your graduation. If you have registered for less than three, you can use remaining credits to finish your project as an independent study or to take this course again to complete your project.

Grading will be on the basis of S/U. I don’t expect anyone to receive a U, which would only be given if you don’t show up and contribute, and don’t do the work. Anyone in danger of receiving a U would have ample time to drop the course and take it a year from now. (I only see this happening if you have a major disruption in your life or career—unless you harbor something of an academic death wish.)

The grading reflects the pass/fail nature of post-graduate projects and theses in general. These are never graded; they are just drafted, revised and approved (or not). Those graduating this spring will finish the course with a completed project. Those not will likely have at least an approved proposal and may be well under way toward drafting the actual project.

As de facto advisor for all of these projects (though those who want to work with a different tenure-track faculty member have that option), I give you my usual latitude in submitting a proposal and writing a project that has significance for you, that can help you in your career or your career aspirations. I will work with each of you, individually and collectively, to ensure that the project is sufficient in scope, scale and execution to merit a full semester’s worth of academic credit, receive approval and earn your degree.

Some of you have asked for more specific guidelines—a word count or page length or some such. Because each project is unique (like snowflakes!), I can’t really give you that. So what constitutes an approval-worthy project? It’s like Supreme Court Justice Potter Palmer once said about pornography—I know it when I see it. And if I don’t see it, I’ll let you know it, early and often.

We will not meet every week, since you’ll require some intervals to make progress between workshopping sessions. I am always available to meet with any of you individually during intervals between our collective meetings and plan to work closely
with each of you.

Course sessions will generally allow students to brainstorm and workshop, generating feedback among each other and with the professor, letting students gauge progress toward completion in comparison with that of other students, drawing from the experience of others in facing challenges and resolving issues that arise over the course of conceiving, proposing, drafting and completing the project.

Before executing the project, a student must secure advisor's approval of his or her project proposal. The proposal typically will be five to ten pages in length (not that is needs to be on paper—word documents are preferable). The proposal should be organized according to the following elements:

1. A clear indication of the nature and focus of the project. It is here that the student identifies the central purpose and goal of the project.
2. A description of the form the project will take. For example, the project could be a website, a campaign, a business proposal, or a research-heavy initiative.
3. A discussion of how the project is to be accomplished. This section should also include a timeline of when different steps of the project will be accomplished and when the project will likely be presented and defended. Those intending to graduate this term will adhere to the semester calendar, while others will have more leeway.
4. An indication of the areas that will likely be covered in the project's annotated bibliography. Students are not expected to have completed the review of literature at the time the proposal is submitted, but they should have some idea of works (and websites, etc.) that might serve as touchstones for the project. Because of their varying natures, some proposals will have more resources listed than others. Each citation should be followed by a brief (one sentence to one paragraph) explanation of how this work relates to the project.

In preparing the project proposal, the student should work closely with his or her advisor, who will meet with each student (personally, by phone or online) to discuss the proposal before approving it. You have all worked with me before and therefore know that there might well be revision involved.

The project itself should contain the following parts:

1. Professional project, in its final form. This could include printed pages, a CD or other Disc formats, audio or video tapes, links, or other graphic or printed materials.
2. Annotated bibliography, including a reference list formatted according to a recognized style guide (APA, Chicago, etc.). In this section, try to focus on the ideas you have gleaned from the readings, with appropriate citations included.
3. Reflective essay. In this mandatory part of the project, reflect on the process of
accomplishing the project, what you learned along the way, how you might approach it
differently if you did it again, and any other challenges, opportunities and learning
experiences you might have encountered. This section helps you consider the big picture
of your development over the course of your program and what you might apply to your
career.

The project will thus serve as a bridge between the student's academic program
and professional career or aspirations.

**Administrative Home**

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and
governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other
related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed
to 120 Schaeffer Hall, or see the CLAS Academic Policies Handbook
at [http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook](http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook).

**Electronic Communication**

University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondences sent
to their University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu). Faculty and students should use
this account for correspondences ([Operations Manual, III.15.2, k.11](http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook)).

**Accommodations for Disabilities**

A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability
Services and then meet privately with the course instructor to make particular arrangements.
See [www.uiowa.edu/~sds/](http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook) for more information.

**Academic Honesty**

All CLAS students or students taking classes offered by CLAS have, in essence, agreed to
the College's [Code of Academic Honesty](http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook): "I pledge to do my own academic work and to
excel to the best of my abilities, upholding the IOWA Challenge. I promise not to lie about my
academic work, to cheat, or to steal the words or ideas of others; nor will I help fellow
students to violate the Code of Academic Honesty." Any student committing academic
misconduct is reported to the College and placed on disciplinary probation or may be
suspended or expelled ([CLAS Academic Policies Handbook](http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook)).

**CLAS Final Examination Policies**

The final examination schedule for each class is announced by the Registrar generally by the
fifth week of classes. Final exams are offered only during the official final examination
period. **No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes. All students**
should plan on being at the UI through the final examination period. Once the Registrar has announced the date, time, and location of each final exam, the complete schedule will be published on the Registrar's web site and will be shared with instructors and students. It is the student's responsibility to know the date, time, and place of a final exam.

**Making a Suggestion or a Complaint**

Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit with the instructor (and the course supervisor), and then with the departmental DEO. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

**Understanding Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community have a responsibility to uphold this mission and to contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment should be reported immediately. See the UI Comprehensive Guide on Sexual Harassment for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy.

**Reacting Safely to Severe Weather**

In severe weather, class members should seek appropriate shelter immediately, leaving the classroom if necessary. The class will continue if possible when the event is over. For more information on Hawk Alert and the siren warning system, visit the Department of Public Safety website.

**CALENDAR (subject to change, as we assess progress and need)**

Week one
1/22: Introductory class session, start brainstorming discussions on project proposals

Week two
1/29: Workshop proposals

Weeks three and four:
2/5 and 2/12: No class. During this time those graduating this semester should have proposals submitted, revised and approved and be ready to work on the actual projects.

Week five:
2/19: Discuss/share approved proposals and workshop projects

Weeks six and seven:
2/26 and 3/5: No class. Those who are graduating this semester should be making significant progress on the projects, while those who are not can continue working on the proposals or on your actual projects. Consult with your advisor as needed.

Week eight:
3/12: Workshop projects and share working drafts. By this point you should have your foundation, your structure, even your dry walling done. We should be getting down to the details—picking out paint, hanging pictures, rearranging the furniture.

Week nine:
3/19: SPRING BREAK

Week ten:
3/26: Work hard and feverishly. I’d anticipate that I’ll be reading some drafts and providing feedback for revision before this class session, and that we’ll be workshopping for fine tuning.

Week eleven:
4/2: Workshop and troubleshooting. Because if you haven’t made significant progress heading into the last month, and you expect to graduate this term, you’ll know you’re in trouble.

Week twelve:
4/9: No class. Likely send drafts to adviser for edits and then final revision.

Week thirteen:
4/16: Our last anticipated workshopping session. Share projects that you consider pretty much done and ready to defend.

Weeks fourteen and fifteen:
4/23 and 4/30: The rubber meets the road. Present projects for sharing with class and approval by advisor. Complete any final revisions requested. (By this point the project should include all components—the annotated bibliography and reflective essay.)

Week sixteen:
5/7: That’s all folks. Final session together. Some of you will be done; others will see where you need to be in order to be done.

HAVE A GREAT SUMMER, A GREAT CAREER, A GREAT LIFE!