

Senior Capstone Experience for Studio Art and Art History Majors

Requirements and Procedures

(adopted unanimously by the full-time faculty members of the Department of Art and Art History, September 2008)

Introduction

Required of all graduating seniors, the Senior Capstone Experience is intended to strengthen the student's ability to think critically and conduct research independently. The philosophy behind the SCE is this: at the end of a course of study, a student should be able to engage in a project of active learning and integration of materials within the major. Depending on the discipline, Senior Capstone Experiences at Washington College can take on many forms. The SCE in Studio Art or Art History may be fulfilled either by passing a written comprehensive examination or (for those with a grade point average of 3.4 or higher in the major who submit a thesis proposal that is accepted by the Department's faculty) completing a visual or art history thesis. In exceptional circumstances, a student with an excellent record might either curate or be part of an exhibition in the College's Kohl Art Gallery, which, as of fall 2009, will be located in the Gibson Arts Center.

All SCEs (except comprehensive exams) will be filed in a digital repository at Miller Library. Students who earn honors on their SCE and a Dean's List average (currently a gpa of 3.4 or higher) in their major course work may be eligible for Departmental Honors as well as the two awards associated with the SCE in Art and Art History: the Lynette Nielson Award (awarded to a student or students at the Annual Student Art Show for the best body of work) and the Art History Award.

Here follows an explanation of each of the 3 forms of the SCE for majors in the Department of Art and Art History:

I. The Visual Thesis

Overview

The Senior Capstone Experience in Studio Art is designed to integrate the entire academic experience of the student, and provides the opportunity for an individually conceived, researched and produced body of artwork. The Capstone is an intensive, concept-driven and research-supported project, guided by a faculty advisor, on a topic of the student's choice. Pending the approval of the Department, the resulting work may incorporate or combine various visual and interdisciplinary elements. These include both more traditional media, such as drawing, painting, sculpture, ceramics, print making and photography, as well as newer forms of art, such as projected video, computer-generated art, digital imaging, performance, sound and installation art, or public art, to name but a few. Successful completion of the Capstone will demonstrate not only extensive

knowledge of the medium or media involved, but more importantly, the ability to think critically, conduct research, and produce independently a substantial body of work.

Faculty Advisors

All full-time tenured or tenure-track or visiting full-time faculty members may oversee individual Capstones, but all proposals need to be approved by the Departmental faculty as a whole. Students may request a particular faculty advisor, especially if the faculty advisor's expertise is particularly relevant to the student's Capstone. As the final outcome of the project will be on view in an exhibition curated by the Department, it is crucial early on to discuss technical aspects of the Capstone and its feasibility with those full-time professors in studio art who are involved in curatorial decisions.

Requirements

Requirements for the Capstone in Studio Art include: a cumulative gpa in the major of 3.4 or higher, a passing grade in Art 496 10 ("Contemporary Methods in Studio Art"), a Written Proposal, a Research Paper and an Artist's Statement, which must be approved by the advisor and the Department as a whole, the completion of the proposed project, and the public exhibition of said project, including its installation.

Grading

The Capstone is graded as Pass, Fail, or Honors.

Double Majors

Students pursuing double majors are encouraged to create an integrated capstone project, satisfying the requirements for both majors. This requires consultation and cooperation among College departments and faculty. Double majors earn four SCE credits. Examples of previous double majors that integrate Art include Art and International Studies, Art and Sociology, and Art and Biology, among others.

Public Presentation of the SCE

Those students completing a visual SCE will have their work displayed in the Annual Student Art Show.

Choice of Content and Form

Conceptual research is necessary to support the choice of content for the Written Proposal and Research Paper as well as the Artist Statement. Content should reflect the student's personal passion while it also needs to reflect relevance in relation to contemporary culture. It is important for the student to avoid too broad of a subject. Instead, the student needs to pursue a more specific, narrow area of research and production. To help this process, the student should adhere to the following guidelines:

choose 5 ideas or events that have or had a great impact on the way you perceive the world; choose 5 works by five known artists (designers, poets, architects, painters, etc.) that inspire your imagination. After writing a paragraph about each of these topics, as well as writing a Research Paper related to readings assigned by the advisor, the student will arrive at a closer conclusion regarding the content of her/his Capstone. Critical to selecting the content is to meet and discuss it with the appropriate professors. The student should include her or his postgraduate plans in the process of choosing the content. Formal solution for the content will depend on the concept/idea and the feasibility of the production, such as materials availability and costs for the student, as well as exhibition design, and should be discussed with faculty advisor prior to submitting the Proposal.

Format/Form Guidelines

Capstones need to showcase the student's most individual and coherent body of work, which can manifest itself either in the form of series of smaller works (particularly in case of a singular medium such as painting or printmaking) or large-scale, installation work. The latter may include many different media, including objects, drawings, paintings, video and sound elements, new media/computer-generated elements and performance/public art elements.

Timeline

Students are expected to begin their thinking and research about their SCE in studio art as early as possible. During the junior year each student will meet with the studio program director to discuss possible capstone topics, formal solutions and research plans. Students are also encouraged to meet with any other faculty members during their junior year to brainstorm about their respective capstones.

By the beginning of the senior year each Art major must submit a well-researched proposal to the studio program director.

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| Spring, Jr. year | Discuss Capstone with Departmental faculty, request specific advisor, and meet with the program director to declare capstone topics. |
| Mid-April, Jr. year | Submit a one-page topic proposal for SCE. |
| Early Oct., Sr. year | Project Proposal due to Chair of the Department of Art and Studio program director/full time faculty in studio. |
| Early Nov., Sr. year | Artist Statement draft (one-page) due |
| Early Dec., Sr. year | Installation: mock-up due
Video: first 5 min. due
Research Paper due [The 10-12 page-long paper must be clearly written and related to selected readings as recommended by the |

advisor; the student must employ proper citations, following the format of the Chicago Manual of Style.]

Early March, Sr. year Work finished/or about to be finished

Mid-April, Sr. year Installation of the exhibition

End of April, Sr. year Exhibition (participation and presence during the Opening as well on other days of the Show is required)

ii. The Art History Thesis

Qualifying for the Thesis

All students who plan to write an art history thesis must enroll in the senior seminar class for art history, ART 495-10 ("Methods and Theories of Art History"), which is offered every year in the fall semester. It is recommended that students enroll in the senior seminar in the fall of their senior year, although in certain cases a student may be permitted to enroll in the fall semester of her or his junior year, with the instructor's permission.

In order to qualify to write a senior thesis in art history, a student must satisfy all four of the following requirements:

The student must have a cumulative grade point average in the major of 3.4 or higher.
The student must submit an SCE Topic Statement (3-5 pages) by April 15 in the spring of the junior year, and the topic must be approved by the faculty of the Department.
The student must submit a formal SCE thesis proposal (8-10 pp.) by October 1 in the fall of the senior year, and the proposal must be approved by the faculty of the Department.
The student must have taken and passed the senior seminar class, ART 495-10.

If any of the above four conditions are not met (if the student's GPA in the major is below 3.4; or if the Thesis Topic is not accepted by the faculty; or if the Thesis Proposal is not accepted by the faculty; or if the student does not pass the senior seminar class), the student will not qualify to write a senior thesis in art history. In that case, the student will instead be required to take and pass the Comprehensive Examination in order to fulfill the SCE requirement (see below).

Requirements for the Written Thesis

The art history thesis is a research paper that involves much more sustained thought and extensive work--identifying and locating sources, reading, visual investigation, methodological consideration, writing, editing, etc.--than an ordinary term paper.

The length of the art history thesis can vary from about 50 to 75 pages. The student will develop a sense of a suitable length for her or his thesis in consultation with her or his advisor. This length will depend on the particular nature of a given thesis topic.

The thesis must be clearly written and must employ proper citations, following the format of the Chicago Manual of Style (currently in its 14th edition).

It is essential that all students abide by the Washington College Honor Code while researching and writing the thesis. Plagiarism in the thesis will result in failing the SCE; consequently, the student will not be permitted to graduate since the SCE is a requirement for graduation.

Grading

Pass, Fail, or Honors.

Double majors

With permission from both Departments, a student may undertake an SCE in two Departments. The understanding is that such a project is to be considerably larger than that undertaken for any individual department and that it satisfy all requirements for each of the majors concerned. The student must have at least one advisor from each respective department.

Public Presentation of the SCE

Those completing art history theses are required to present their work either in a seminar setting with Art majors and faculty or in another context, to be determined in conjunction with the advisor.

III. The Comprehensive Examination

Those students with a cumulative gpa in the major of lower than 3.4 are required to take Comprehensive Examinations, which are composed of two parts. Both are scheduled by the Registrar in the spring and fall of each academic year, customarily on the two days following the last day of classes. The first day consists of a three-hour, written slide examination, testing the student's knowledge of the entire history of art. The second day's exam is written in essay form without the aid of slides, and covers two fields in the history of art (e.g., American art and 20th-century art), to be selected by the candidate in consultation with the advisor. These fields should be tied to the student's coursework in the Department.

In the senior year, students taking comps must meet with their advisor by November 15 to map out a schedule of review sessions and agree on topics.

During the semester in which one is taking comps, the student must enroll in 4 credit-hours worth of SCE.

Comprehensive Examination Dates

Slide Exam: Friday, following the last day of the classes, 9:00 am-12:00 p.m.

Field Exams: Saturday, following the last day of classes, 9:00-12:00p.m.