



COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA STUDIES

THE SENIOR CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE

Washington College's Senior Capstone Experience (SCE) represents the culmination of previous academic work and intellectual thought. As such, it requires initiative, significant preparatory work, and active inquiry. The CMS SCE requires students to integrate the knowledge and skills acquired through the major in their original project, demonstrating mastery of a body of knowledge. Students will engage in a long-term, substantive project that combines research, writing, and presentation of original ideas.

Upon successful completion of their SCE, students will receive a grade of Pass, Fail, or Honors. Passing and Honors SCE projects earn four academic credits that count toward the total number of credits needed to graduate from the College. To graduate as a CMS major, students must pass their SCE.

While SCE projects are customizable across concentrations, there are universal requirements for all projects. All submitted written work must follow the major's style guidelines: Times New Roman font, font size 12, 1-inch margins on all sides, and double spaced. These universal requirements and applicable deadlines are as follows:

Advisor Meetings: Regular meetings between the student and the advisor will be set by the advisor. Keeping all meetings with the advisor is a requirement of the SCE project. In the Capstone Semester (the last semester you are enrolled in Washington College), students working on capstones will meet with their SCE advisor twice a month. A meeting schedule, along with phased deadlines, will be provided to you ahead of time.

Project Proposal: The SCE project proposal is a 1 to 2-page document outlining the concept of the project, an explanation of the problem or problems to be investigated, research questions, a discussion of methods and theory, and the impact of the work. It should be free of spelling errors and grammatical mistakes. Project proposals are submitted in the spring semester of junior year.

Reading List: The project reading list is a document of 40-60 sources compiled by the student with the input of the SCE advisor. The reading list makes up the bulk of primary and secondary sources that will inform the intellectual, theoretical, and methodological scope of the project. Based on the project, the reading list can—and in some cases should—include film, video, television, digital content, and/or other visual content.

Annotated Bibliography: An annotated bibliography of the reading list will address the ways various sources will be used in the SCE. Each annotation should be 1-2 paragraphs long and

include an assessment of the source's relevance to one or more of the project's research questions.

Method and Theory Statements: The method and theory statements are 5 to 7-page documents describing, in detail, the methodological and theoretical approach to the project. If the project includes experimental protocols an IRB application should be included with the outline.

Full Project Outline: An outline of the SCE project details the student's plan to complete the project.

Project Draft: A draft of the project should be submitted to the SCE advisor at least 3 weeks prior to the final deadline. The student and the advisor will work together to determine updates needed for the final draft.

Final Draft: This is the final edited version of the SCE project, following all formatting guidelines and with all components complete.

SCE Presentation: Each student is required to give a presentation of the SCE work, summarizing their project for a public audience. The presentation takes place during SCE week(s) - late April/early May.

Specific deadlines for each component will be circulated during the CMS Senior Seminar. Completed projects are due in early April.

SCE GRADES

Pass

In order for a SCE to receive a grade of 'Pass' the following conditions must be met:

- All deadlines for universal requirements were met
- Research questions are clearly articulated
- SCE clearly demonstrates the student's understanding of the field and places them within a specific intellectual tradition by using primary and secondary sources
- The SCE should show evidence of interpretive skills: ability to make generalizations from specific examples, draw conclusions, integrate the topic into a broader field-specific context
- All written components must be properly organized and well-written. The writing is grammatically correct, clear and coherent. Organization of ideas must flow rationally and smoothly.
- Use of quotations, footnotes, and bibliographical listings should all be in correct format—either APA or Chicago.

Honors

Only students with a major GPA of 3.5 or above by the spring semester of their junior year can attempt an Honors SCE. Additionally, student who attempt an Honors SCE must maintain their GPA of 3.5 or above through graduation. In order for a SCE to receive a grade of 'Honors' the following conditions must be met:

- All of the requirements for passing were met.
- The project advances one or more of the goals of CMS in a liberal arts perspective: critical analytical thought, aesthetic insight, ethical sensitivity, and civic responsibility
- SCE design is unique, complex, or unusually elegant
- The project adds the student's voice to the field in an original and impactful way.
- The project goes beyond simply collecting and summarizing information. Honors work involves substantial analysis, especially demonstrating the significance of the subject
- The project has a high overall quality: logical argumentation; excellent organizational structure; clean, clear grammar; meticulous in footnote, bibliography and quotation mechanics; and carefully proofread

Fail

SCE projects will receive a failing grade for any one or more of the following reasons:

- Majority or no universal requirements deadlines were met
- Student has not sufficiently participated in the *process* of working with his/her advisor, regardless of the overall result
- Plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty
- The project does not demonstrate the student's ability to think through the sources or solve problems of comprehension or presentation
- The project has poor organization, logic, writing, or is missing key components.
- The project ignores relevant available sources or addresses only part of the agreed-upon topic
- The project shows insufficient understanding of the subject, broader context, and/or evidence
- Quotations, footnotes, and bibliographical listings are incorrectly formatted

CONCENTRATION-SPECIFIC PROJECTS

The scope and specific requirements of each SCE will be set by the Program Director and advisor for the project.