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 demonstrated student initiative, significant preparatory work, active inquiry, and creative integration of acquired knowledge and skills.

The SCE, mandated by the Communication and Media Studies program for all majors, requires students to integrate acquired knowledge and skills in their original project by demonstrating mastery of a body of knowledge and intellectual accomplishment that goes significantly beyond classroom learning. The SCE is an active experience and requires students to 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 needed to graduate from the College. To graduate as a CMS major, students must pass their SCE.

While SCE projects are customizable—to a certain extent—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, double spaced. Checklists and submission guidelines for each requirement can be found at https://www.washcoll.edu/departments/communication-and-media-studies/the-cms-major/sce-guidelines/. 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, specific guiding research questions, the methodological approach to the project, and the impact of the work. It should be free of spelling errors and grammatical mistakes. Project proposals are initiated in the spring semester of junior year.

Reading List: the project reading list is a document of 40-60 sources complied 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, geared toward the project's research questions. 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.

Methodological and/or Theoretical Outline: The methodological and/or theoretical outline is a 5 to 7-page document describing, in appropriate detail, the methodological and/or 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, as it stands, should be submitted to the SCE advisor. The student and the advisor will work together to determine the draft materials that will be submitted on the due date.

Project Draft: The final iteration of the SCE project.

SCE Presentation: Each student is required to give a 15-minute presentation of the SCE work, summarizing their project for a public audience. The presentation takes place during SCE week(s) – late April/early May. Requirements for the presentations will be circulated three weeks before the presentation date.

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All SCE projects are due in early April.
Specific deadlines will be circulated on the Fall semester of the Capstone Year.

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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
- All advisor meetings were kept
- Research questions are clearly articulated
- SCE clearly demonstrates the student's understanding of the field and places them within a specific intellectual tradition by utilizing 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. Prose should be 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 of 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 deadlines for universal requirements were met
- All advisor meetings were kept
- Research questions are clearly articulated
- SCE clearly demonstrates the student's understanding of the field and places them within a specific intellectual tradition by utilizing primary and secondary sources
- 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
- Voice: papers should add the student's voice to the field in an original and impactful way.

- Thoroughness of investigation and analysis: an Honors SCE must go beyond simply collecting and summarizing information. Honors work involves substantial analysis, especially demonstrating the significance of the subject.
- High standards of overall quality: logical argumentation; excellent organizational structure; clean, clear grammar; meticulous in footnote, bibliography and quotation mechanics; and carefully proofread.
- Use of quotations, footnotes, and bibliographical listings should all be in correct format—either APA or Chicago.

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
- If the project does not demonstrate the student's ability to think through the sources or solve problems of comprehension or presentation
- When the project is poor in organization, logic or writing, regardless of the quality of the research.
- When a student ignores relevant available sources or addresses only part of the agreed-upon topic.
- When the project is incomplete in documentation
- When the project shows insufficient understanding of the subject, broader context, and/or uses evidence indiscriminately
- Use of quotations, footnotes, and bibliographical listings are incorrectly formatted
- Students who have not turned in their completed project by April 10th
- Students whose projects do not meet the specific and agree-upon requirements

CONCENTRATION-SPECIFC PROJECTS
The scope and specific requirements of each SCE will be set by the advisor for the project. There are, however, some universal standards that must be adhered to:
- Written thesis must be 60-75 pages. This is inclusive of footnotes or endnotes, bibliography or reference pages, images, tables, figures, appendices, etc. If appropriate to the topic, students are encouraged to include imagery in their thesis. All imagery must be additive, not repetitive.
- Produced video, film, digital, or any production-based work must be accompanied by 30 pages of written text past the universal requirements. This is inclusive of footnotes or endnotes, bibliography or reference pages, images, tables, figures, appendices, etc. In the case of mediated visual arts work this should take the form of a production book. Any production-based work must be exhibited during SCE presentations.
- Campaign or portfolio-based work must be accompanying by 30 pages of written text past the universal requirements. This is inclusive of footnotes or endnotes, bibliography or reference page, image, table, figures, appendices, etc. Campaign or portfolio-based work must be exhibited during SCE presentations.