

GSVS 4991

Capstone Seminar: Global Environments + Sustainability



University of Virginia / Spring 2016 / 3 credits / Prof. Phoebe Crisman / T+Th 12:30–1:45 / Campbell 325 / crisman@virginia.edu

Course Description + Method: The capstone seminar is the culmination of the Global Environments + Sustainability track for all students in their final year. Students will meet twice each week for a lively group discussion of readings and project critiques. Each student will lead the class in a discussion of a few article- or chapter-length readings central to that student's research. In this way, the entire class will learn something about a variety of research topics and real-world issues, and each student will take a turn as the "expert" and will lead the seminar discussion.

The primary deliverable for the course is the capstone project—a single original project of your choice that is subject to the instructor's approval and under the additional supervision of a faculty mentor. The most common way of completing the capstone project is to write a 25-page research paper, however, alternate projects of diverse types may be explored in consultation with the seminar instructor and the Director of the GSVS track. The capstone project requires work in multiple stages of creation, presentation, feedback, and revision.

Course Objective: By the end of the semester each student will be able to facilitate in-class discussions drawn from their experiences and research, and to clearly articulate their research argument in a well-executed and orally presented capstone project.

Learning Goals:

- improve skills in research, writing, and oral presentation
- understand and juxtapose academic arguments within the context of your own research
- evaluate competing positions in academic debates
- use evidence-based arguments to develop and defend your own position
- conduct and respond to criticism through peer-review

Assignments and Grading:

Research paper 75%
Lead one class discussion 10%
Participation and attendance 15%

Readings: All readings will be made available on the course Collab site.

Number of Students Authorized to Enroll: 25, limited to GSVS majors in the spring of their 4th year.

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Capstone Seminar: Schedule

Week 1

1/21 Th Introductions, Seminar and Research Project Overview

Week 2

1/26 Tu 5-minute student research topic presentations + discussion (12)

1/28 Th 5-minute student research topic presentations + discussion (11)

Week 3

2/2 Tu Seminar 1:

2/4 Th Seminar 2:

Week 4

2/9 Tu Seminar 3:

2/11 Th Seminar 4:

Week 5

2/16 Tu Seminar 5:

2/18 Th Seminar 6:

Week 6

2/23 Tu Seminar 7:

2/25 Th Seminar 8:

Week 7

3/1 Tu Seminar 9:

3/3 Th Seminar 10:

Week 8 SPRING BREAK

Week 9

3/15 Tu Seminar 11:

3/17 Th Workday (PC at ACSA Conference 3/17-19)

Week 10

3/22 Tu Seminar 12:

3/24 Th Seminar 13:

Week 11

3/29 Tu Seminar 14:

3/31 Th Seminar 15:

Week 12

4/5 Tu Seminar 16:

4/7 Th Seminar 17:

Week 13

4/12 Tu Seminar 18:

4/14 Th Seminar 19:

Week 14

4/19 Tu Seminar 20:

4/21 Th Seminar 21:

Week 15

4/26 Tu Seminar 22:

4/28 Th Seminar 23:

Week 16 (UVA classes end 5/3)

5/3 Tu Concluding Discussion / Lessons Learned / Reflections / Next Steps

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Project Assignments

1: Preliminary Proposal (250-500 words)

Prepare a draft abstract(s) of your proposed capstone project for the first class meeting.

2: Preliminary Bibliography

You will need to research relevant sources in order to focus your proposed research topic. Please compile a preliminary bibliography with 20-30 sources that includes major scholarly books and articles in the field. Include an annotation for the five sources (marked with asterisks *) that are most relevant to your research question. Format your bibliography in accordance with MLA (humanities), APA (social sciences/business), or Chicago/Turabian (social science) referencing styles. This choice depends on the norm in the most relevant discipline(s) for your research. For instance, what style is most common in your sources?

3: Expanded Research Statement (750-1000 words)

This assignment should introduce the reader to the main aspects of your capstone and formulate your research questions. Choose a provisional title, state what the project is about, what you hope to demonstrate, the significance of the project, and how did this idea come about (optional). Explain what kind of sources and theoretical framework you will use. Include a preliminary outline if possible.

4: Literature Review (1500-2000 words)

This assignment expands your initial proposal based on feedback from the instructor, mentors and peers. Now that you've compiled and read the bibliographic sources, you will be able to provide broad and more focused background for your topic. Consider these questions when compiling your literature review:

1. What has been done thus far in the field?
2. Do you see any trends or shifts in the study of your topic?
3. What methodologies and approaches were applied?

5: Methodology (750-1000 words)

Each of you is implicitly using some type of methodology. This assignment asks 'how' you will explore your topic. You may use a variety of approaches, ranging from textual analysis to statistical analysis, from lived experience and interviews to theoretical evaluations. Demonstrate that you know what methods you will employ and describe the strengths and weaknesses of these methods. Research your specific methodology and provide relevant references.

6: Case Study/Analysis of your data (2000-2500 words)

Analyze and discuss your data in relation to the main question you proposed in the Expanded Research Statement and the sources you discussed in your Literature Review. Contrast the results of your analysis to the methodology you have proposed. This part focuses on the region or situation you are interested in and discusses its relevance to broader questions. This assignment will vary somewhat between individual research projects.

7: Complete Rough Draft with Conclusions + Executive Summary

Develop the rough draft as if it were the final product. Structure your paper with titled sections integrating previous work that is expanded and altered as needed. In your conclusion, summarize the major points, reflect upon relevant parts from the literature review, and indicate recommendations for further theoretical or applied inquiry. We will discuss and adopt a common paper format during the seminar.

8: Final Paper

Revise your rough draft several times before submitting the final version. The final paper should be professional and ready for publication. You may look at previous GSD capstone papers as models for your work.