CommStudies Capstone Research Seminar

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Communication Studies

Southwestern University

COM 75-964-01

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CONTACT INFORMATION: phone: 512-863-1440   e-mail: bednarb@southwestern.edu
OFFICE HOURS: 11:30am - 1:00pm TTh; by appointment using shared Google doc
CLASS MEETINGS: 2:30-3:45pm T-Th, Olin 323
                →Plus additional extended meeting times indicated in the Syllabus schedule below.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
        This course requires students to integrate and extend work done throughout the Communication Studies major by producing and presenting a significant research project. The Capstone Research Project represents a culminating experience in terms of both process and product—where you not only undertake a project more challenging and stimulating than anything else you have done in college, but also take personal responsibility for dedicating yourself to doing your best work and to helping me support and challenge your colleagues in the class as they also strive to do their best work. Put simply, if this Project is not the most challenging and stimulating work you have done in college, you are not approaching it properly.
        Your Capstone Project will be modeled on scholarship produced by professional academics in Communication Studies or directly related (inter)disciplines, and will display, analyze, and interpret a particular communicative research object using a carefully defined methodology and located within an elaborated theoretical framework. As such, the project focuses on developing a specific analytical approach to a particular site of inquiry: a culturally and historically situated body of texts, performances, spaces, and/or objects. Implicit in these criteria is the need for an extensive literature review that critically engages a significant body of published scholarship pertaining to both your phenomena and the theories/methodologies you will mobilize in your project.
        Prerequisites: COM 75-134; 75-204; 75-604; and 75-804

REQUIRED TEXTS:
PDF Readings determined by the professor and/or the class, which will be located at the course web resource page:
        http://people.southwestern.edu/~bednarb/capstone

Please note that I use this Course Webpage instead of Moodle, so look there for readings, resources, and any agreed-upon changes to the schedule.

RECOMMENDED TEXT:
Gerald Graff & Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in*
        Academic Writing, 2nd or 3rd Edition

GRADING:
        I design my classes with a number of different kinds of low stakes and high stakes assignments focusing on different communicative forms and assignment formats to make sure that each student has maximum potential to demonstrate and extend existing skills and knowledge while developing new ones. I go into every class, every assignment, and every student encounter with a growth mindset--the belief that every student is capable of both succeeding and improving--and see that my responsibility is to give you the tools you need to succeed and improve while also being clear about my expectations and evaluations.

Grades are given a lot of power in dominant culture, but it is important to remember that grades are not a reflection of your worth as a person but a reflection of your performance under a certain set of defined constraints. To level the playing field and fight against a scarcity model of grading, which reinforces unearned advantages and inherited cultural power, I do not grade on a bell curve to place your graded assignments or final grade into a pre-determined grade distribution, where only a certain number of students can get an A, B, C, D, or F. The grades I assign reflect my evaluation of your performance within the constraints outlined in the syllabus and in assignment handout rubrics. Grades for particular assignments thus measure your performance on that assignment relative to the requirements of the assignment, not relative to other students, and final course grades measure your performance in the class overall.

Based on my goal to both minimize grade focus/anxiety while also teaching you to be independent thinkers and self-advocates, I do not post grades that are calculated in real-time throughout the semester. Increasingly, students are being trained to expect real-time grades computed as courses unfold, which creates an unbalanced extrapolation of a snapshot of your performance, treating your current performance as a predictor of your final grade. I myself do not compute your grades until the very end of the semester unless I see a major concern emerge or a student requests it. Because the work we do continues to build to higher and higher stakes over the course of the semester, I see grades on smaller assignments along the way as signals about what to do in the future, not an accurate prediction of what your final grade will be. The only way they become predictive is if you ignore the feedback you are getting along the way or do not take it as a stimulus for growth.

If you ever want to compute your emerging overall grade average yourself at any point during the semester, here is what you need to know to compute grades yourself in this class. Final course grades are assigned a final letter grade based on a range of averages for individual assignments based on a 100-point scale. For example, a final average of 88-89% would be recorded as a B+; a final average of 83-87% would be recorded as a B; and 80-82% would be recorded as a B- (extrapolate from there if it is higher or lower than a B). For the purposes of averaging individual project letter grades into a final grade, I use the following system to assign a numerical grade based on a letter grade on an assignment: B+=88%; B=85%, and B-=82% (and so on). For example, if you got a B- on an assignment that was weighted 25% of the final grade, you would receive 20.5 points for that assignment (or *lose the possibility of getting* 4.5 points overall). The only exception for that is if you achieve an A+ on an individual assignment, where it will score as a 100% of the available points, where in this example you would receive the full 25 points.

At any point along the way, if you are curious, you can see how your grade is tracking: multiply the score of an individual assignment grade by the percentage it is weighted and that will reveal the total points you have earned for that assignment grade; add it to other determined grades; and then divide it by the highest potential scores for all the completed assignments combined. For grades that are composite, such as graded Classwork, you can calculate it the same way to track your ongoing composite score. If Classwork is determined by completion grades instead of through scoring, you can average that score based on the number of assignments you have completed divided by the ones you have not. Please note that I do not compute cumulative class participation grades until the very end of the semester, so if you want to get a sense of where this score is tracking before that, you will need to discuss it with me. Finally, if you have absences in excess of the stated policy or a pattern of late submissions, you will need to factor them in as well. If you have questions about this grading system at any time, please consult me.

Here is how each assignment is weighted in this class:

Context/Description Paper	10%
Prospectus	10%
Analysis Paper	10%
Daily Class Participation	10%
Peer Seminar Leadership	5%
Peer Critique Workshop Participation	5%
Final Self-Reflection Paper	5%
Final Project:	
Final Revised Paper	25%
Final Presentation	10%
Workshop Draft	10%

COURSE STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The CommStudies Research Seminar is designed to build on and implement the foundational training provided by courses throughout the major, which have widened and deepened your reflexive understanding of CommStudies theories, methodologies and practices. In short, all of your other coursework has prepared you for this course; this course prepares you to cap off the major with a significant research work that will propel you into a life after college, where the skills you sharpen here are essential tools for success in a number of professional fields as well as lifelong learning and active citizenship. There is

little new shared content to master here; thus the course outcomes emphasizes the research, writing, and revision process for individual projects in a collaborative community of scholars. The Learning Outcomes for this course focus on developing proficiency with theory, methodology, analysis/interpretation, argumentation, research, collaboration, revision, grammar/mechanics, and presentation. (See separate Capstone Rubric for more details).

By the end of the course, students will demonstrate:

- Proficiency in understanding and mobilizing **theory** from rhetorical studies and critical media studies.
- Proficiency in a particular research and analytical **method**.
- Proficiency in designing research projects that **develop an analytical argument aligned to a well-defined methodology** (theory + method of analysis).
- Ability to critically engage theory and critical methodologies in framing arguments that **analyze and interpret** particular communicative texts, objects, performances, and spaces.
- Proficiency in **argumentative writing** that has a clear object of analysis and logically and coherently develops a clearly identifiable persuasive thesis.
- Proficiency in developing effective **research** strategies for identifying primary and secondary sources pertinent to the analysis and interpretation of communicative texts, objects, performances, and spaces.
- Proficiency in **collaborating** in a critique workshop environment, where peers critique your work and you critique their work in a community of scholars.
- Proficiency in negotiating feedback from the instructor and from peers in **revising** scholarly work for public communication.
- Proficiency in **grammar** usage, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and **mechanics**.
- Proficiency in translating the work you do in the written research paper to an effective **public presentation** geared towards a virtual audience.

PROCEDURES AND POLICIES:
We will discuss more specific guidelines for the class assignments as the course progresses, but here is a short outline to help orient you at the outset:

• **FINAL PROJECT**: To ensure that you are approaching the Final Project rigorously, it will unfold in a series of staged assignments, with an **Initial Proposal**, a **Research Object Context/Description Paper**, a **Prospectus**, an **Analysis Paper**, and a full-scale **Workshop Draft** of your Final Paper submitted, evaluated and workshopped before you turn in your **Final Paper**, and **Practice Presentations** before your **Final Public Presentation**. These important steps along the way will demand not only effective writing, analysis, and argumentation, but also diligent adherence to agreed-upon deadlines and a commitment to the recursive and collaborative process of research, writing, critique, and revision. These steps will of course also provide you with the rigorous evaluative feedback you will need to effectively deepen, revise, and refocus your work.

• **FINAL PAPER:** The main focus of the Capstone Research Project is a rigorously produced and effectively revised 30-page (+/-5 pages) persuasive, analytical academic research Final Paper that explicitly critically engages at least thirty scholarly sources, carries out a clearly defined methodology, performs explicit analysis of your communicative research object, builds and sustains an effective persuasive argument, situates your work within one or both of the two Core Areas of the Communication Studies major at Southwestern (rhetorical studies and/or critical media studies), and situates your project within Communication Studies as a discipline. If you want to propose an alternate project form for the written text, your approach must be explicitly approved in the Proposal process.

• **FINAL PUBLIC PRESENTATION:** The course culminates in the Capstone Research Project Public Presentations event the last week of the semester, where each of you will perform a tightly constructed and engaging 10-minute professional scholarly Final Presentation for a public audience of faculty and students in a panel-style format. If you want to propose an alternate project form for the presentation, your approach must be explicitly approved in the Proposal process. We will do a number of practice sessions in advance of the live event to prepare you for presenting in this format; given the size of the group and the need to give everyone experience and feedback, these practice sessions are scheduled in advance to go beyond our regular class period (see schedule). There is a handout about this assignment attached to this syllabus.

• **CONTEXT/DESCRIPTION PAPER:** While your Prospectus will introduce your overall research design and articulate your methodology and lit review, and your Analysis Paper will focus on the detailed analysis of your research object, the Context/Description Paper focuses on building a context for understanding your research object by establishing what it is and

the general cultural significance of it (describing it in detail in terms of Who, What, When, Why, How, So What and showing where it is located culturally, historically, politically, etc.). There is a handout about this assignment attached to this syllabus.

• **PROSPECTUS:** In addition to an Initial Project Proposal, which briefly identifies your topic and approach you are taking, you will also produce a detailed Prospectus, which is similar in format to what you produced as the final project if you took my Media & Culture course. The Capstone Prospectus is an extended proposal for the Capstone Final Project that includes a draft of your introductory framing of your paper, a full-scale literature review (which critically engages the scholarly work and theory central for your participation in the academic conversation around the object(s) you are studying as well as your methodology), an explicit description of your methodology, and an extensive (and pertinent!) works cited. There is a handout about this assignment attached to this syllabus.

• **ANALYSIS PAPER:** The key to successful scholarship in CommStudies is an argument built from the detailed direct analysis of a well-defined research object within a well-articulated theoretical framework. While your Prospectus will introduce your project and articulate your methodology and lit review, the Analysis paper focuses on the close analysis of your particular research object—words, picture(s), object(s), film(s)/video(s), space(s), app(s)/network(s), discourse(s), or communicative practice(s)--using your methodology. We will do a Peer Critique Workshop to collaboratively evaluate and suggest revisions for each student's Analysis Paper; given the size of the group and the need to give everyone substantial feedback, these critique sessions are scheduled in advance to go beyond our regular class period (see schedule).   There is a handout about this assignment attached to this syllabus.

• **WORKSHOP DRAFT:** To ensure that you not only produce a complete draft early enough to think through your own revision strategies but also receive detailed constructive feedback from me and your colleagues in the class, you will turn in a complete Workshop Draft for Peer Critique and for a grade. When I say that the Draft needs to be a <u>complete</u> draft, I mean that you should think of it as the best draft you can produce on your own in the time constraints and without our close critical response to it. In short, it is not a "rough draft," but your best individual effort. The Peer Critique Process will strengthen your paper by either confirming your individual decisions or challenging you to produce a better text by forcing you to think through your assumptions and omissions in productive ways. Given the size of the group and the need to give everyone substantial feedback, these critique sessions are scheduled in advance to go beyond our regular class period (see schedule).   Ther is not a separate handout for this assignment.

• **WORKGROUPS AND PEER SEMINAR LEADERSHIP ASSIGNMENTS:** During the first few weeks of class, after a set of due dates assignments shared by the whole class, students will be assigned to one of four WorkGroups that will place you on different tracks for due dates and assignments most of the rest of the semester. Tracking in WorkGroups all semester will help you establish a stronger collaborative bond with a smaller number of colleagues in your WorkGroup while still connecting you to the larger class; it also will give us good practice for managing our time in ways that respect our colleagues' time, which will be critical in the public presentations at the end of the semester. I will determine the personnel of the WorkGroups based on a number of factors, primarily according to similarity of topic, object, or methodology, but also similarity of progress in developing & conceptualizing the projects. Once we form the WorkGroups, the schedule will get very complicated, so we all will need to stay vigilant to keep up with the differential schedules so that we handle the logistics very precisely. WorkGroups will do critique workshops separately, but all presentations will involve the whole class, including a rolling schedule early on where individuals in each WorkGroup will lead the whole class in a 15-minute discussion of their research object on their assigned Peer Seminar Leadership day. These Seminar Leadership assignments will provide you with a short but effective introduction into discussing your work with us as your colleagues. To help us prepare for these experiences, each student will assign the class to encounter a sample of the research object they are studying and one central journal article or scholarly book chapter that analyzes that object.   The WorkGroups likely will not track all the way to the end to presenting together at the Public Presentations, but the likelihood of presenting on a panel at least some of your WorkGroup members will be high.

• **PEER CRITIQUE WORKSHOPS:** I do peer critiques in a live, collaborative format, where we meet in smaller WorkGroups and discuss each paper in that group in detail and work towards a collaborative evaluation of it. The critique workshops therefore demand a significant amount of preparation as well as a constructive, cooperative attitude and a commitment to actively working through multiple critiques of your writing and the writing of your colleagues in the compressed time-frame of the workshop format. There is no way to "make-up" this kind of work, so I expect every student to be present and prepared for each one. When everyone takes the critique workshops seriously, everyone benefits significantly from them. Note that given the size of the group and the need to give everyone substantial feedback, these critique sessions are scheduled in advance to go beyond our regular class period (see schedule).

• **CLASS PARTICIPATION**: In taking this class, you have joined a group that will also have smaller WorkGroups within it, where your peers and I will all have well-defined expectations about your participation. Those expectations are heightened

even further because this is Capstone. This class is a seminar, where we all will be working together closely in daily class discussions and workshops to share our ideas and engage the readings and examples in front of us, together. Because this course revolves around group discussion, good daily Class Participation is vital. All students should make every effort to attend every synchronous class meeting, whether it is with the whole class or their specific WorkGroup. We all need to be able to expect that each of you will do your part to make the seminar work not only for you but the whole group. You will no doubt have other commitments this semester, but you should make every effort short of skipping your other classes and putting yourself in economic or physical peril to make Capstone a priority every day, especially when we have heavy reading loads for critiques, Seminar Leadership days, extended meeting times, and the public presentations. I expect that you will do whatever you can to meet us all in the middle to make this work for all of us. Good Class Participation means more than merely attending class, which is a given; it means actively contributing to the class discussions by critically engaging the course materials and engaging your colleagues in the class as well as me. The bottom line is that I expect you to be accountable not only to me but to each other. Class Participation will be evaluated on a 10-point scale.

• **FINAL SELF-REFLECTION**: All students will produce a Final Self-Reflection that demonstrates how your Capstone project and your experiences in the collaborative Capstone Research Seminar as a whole have helped you integrate, extend, and even challenge your learning in the major as well as your other Southwestern classes and experiences to serve as a culminating experience for your undergraduate career. This short 2-3 page essay serves as the departmental Paideia "Making Connections" assignment, so it will help the Department evaluate how the major works to help students make connections in the spirit of Paideia. Once the essay is written, it will also form the basis for the short contextualizing remarks every CommStudies Capstone student makes as they introduce their public presentation. There is a handout for this assignment in the syllabus.

• **ATTENDANCE**: Because each seminar member is essential to both understanding the course materials and to the group dynamic, it is imperative that you be in class and prepared every day you are scheduled to be there. I will not take off any points simply for an absence on top of other penalties that will be assessed for class participation. I will still expect you to complete any assigned work on time and make up the work you miss, if applicable.

• **READING ASSIGNMENTS**: All reading assignments must be completed before class on the day scheduled for discussion of the readings.

• **LATE PAPERS:** Given the way that the assignments in this class are staged and often involve group critique, I do not accept late papers for this class. We are working with a highly structured interlocking sequence of deadlines, where you all will be counting on each other to produce and evaluate each other's work according to a strict turn-around schedule, so deadlines must be treated very seriously. Notice that papers submitted electronically are due by noon on due days so I can confirm that I have received them before we have class. If you do not meet the deadline for a graded assignment, you will receive a zero for the assignment. For missing papers tied to a critique workshop (Analysis Paper and Workshop Draft), there will be other "natural consequences" as well: If I do not receive these submissions by the deadline, I will neither grade them myself nor post them on the workshop website for the class to read. Missing this kind of deadline is thus a serious disadvantage because it means that even though you will be required to read and do detailed critiques of the work submitted by the other members of the class, your work will not be critiqued alongside theirs in workshop, so your first submitted draft will be your final draft. Due dates in the middle of the semester are complicated, when each of you will be on a slightly different schedule because of WorkGroup assignments, but it is still your responsibility to keep up with the schedule. Given the interlocking multi-track schedule of due dates in the class, I rarely change the syllabus schedule in Capstone, so if you cannot keep up with the due dates for medical reasons for an extended period of time, we will most likely need to arrange for a medical Incomplete for the class overall.

• **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**: All in-class and out-of-class assignments are subject to the Honor Code. All collaborative work must be accompanied by an explicit delineation of specific acknowledgements of any assistance you received in the production of your work. Field research and interviews involving human subjects must be reviewed by the Institutional Research Board at Southwestern. Additionally, for verification purposes, all pledge statements must also contain contact information for any people you have directly interviewed, observed, and represented in your work. Students who violate University policies on Academic Dishonesty by representing another's work as their own are subject to review by the Honor Code Council, which includes the possibility of disciplinary penalties.

• **INCLUSIVITY**: I work hard to create a classroom space that is dynamic, engaging, and inclusive for all students, where we work together from diverse perspectives and diverse ways of doing within fair and clearly-defined expectations for student engagement and performance. If at any time you sense a dynamic emerging in our class that makes you feel unsafe or unwilling to participate fully, please reach out to me by email or after class so that I can address your concerns. I value direct

communication and want your feedback about how things are working for you. Also, as part of my commitment to inclusivity, I make regular accommodations for students with documented learning differences that challenge their ability to have equal access to engage and perform in the course. To arrange documentation for these accommodations, contact the Assistant Director of Academic Success within the Center for Academic Success (Prothro Center room 120; phone 512-863-1286; e-mail success@southwestern.edu). Students seeking accommodations should notify their office at least two weeks before any services are needed. It is your responsibility to discuss any necessary accommodations with me as well.

PLANNED SCHEDULE

Jan 16: Mapping the Course; Committing to a Project Concept
Jan 18: Discussion: Designing Critical/Cultural Research Projects
    Read: rose5.pdf

Jan 23: Informal Proposal Presentations
    Due: Initial Project Proposal [electronic submission, by noon]
    Due: Schedule a Research Consultation with Bob for 1/24-1/31
Jan 25: Discussion: Researching/Writing in CommStudies with Dr. Moriera and Dr. Bahrainwala
    Read: moriera.pdf; bahrainwala.pdf

Jan 30: Discussion: Researching/Writing in CommStudies with Dr. Renegar and
        Dr. Bednar
    Read: renegar.pdf; bednar.pdf
Feb 1: Discussion: Working in WorkGroups to Stage Out your Project
    Due: Context/Description Paper [electronic submission, by noon]

START Separate WorkGroup Tracks—
Pay close attention to differential due dates and attendance requirements

Feb 6: {Research Consultations}
    Due (WorkGroup 1 only): Each person in WorkGroup 1's **Prospectus**;
        Research Object sample(s); and scholarly article sample to distribute [electronic, by
        noon]. Also: Schedule Research Consultation for 2/9-2/14
Feb 8: Peer Seminar Leadership by WorkGroup 1: Research Object Sample(s) and
        Scholarship Sample for WorkGroup 1
    Read (everyone): Materials selected and distributed by WorkGroup 1,
        including each WorkGroup 1 student's Prospectus, Research Object sample(s), and
        scholarly article sample
    Due (WorkGroup 2 only): Each person in WorkGroup 2's **Prospectus**;
        Research Object sample(s); and scholarly article sample to distribute [electronic, by
        noon]. Also: Schedule Research Consultation for 2/14-2/19

Feb 13: Peer Seminar Leadership by WorkGroup 2: Research Object Sample(s) and
        Scholarship Sample for WorkGroup 2
    Read (everyone): Materials selected and distributed by WorkGroup 2,
        including each WorkGroup 2 student's Prospectus, Research Object sample(s), and
        scholarly article sample
    Due (WorkGroup 3 only): Each person in WorkGroup 3's **Prospectus**;
        Research Object sample(s); and scholarly article sample to distribute [electronic, by
        noon]. Also: Schedule Research Consultation for 2/16-2/21
Feb 15: Peer Seminar Leadership by WorkGroup 3: Research Object Sample(s) and
        Scholarship Sample for WorkGroup 3
    Read (everyone): Materials selected and distributed by WorkGroup 3,
        including each WorkGroup 3 student's Prospectus, Research Object sample(s), and
        scholarly article sample
    Due (WorkGroup 4 only): Each person in WorkGroup 4's **Prospectus**;
        Research Object sample(s); and scholarly article sample to distribute [electronic, by
        noon]. Also: Schedule Research Consultation for 2/21-2/26

Feb 20: Peer Seminar Leadership by WorkGroup 4: Research Object Sample(s) and
        Scholarship Sample for WorkGroup 4
    Read (everyone): Materials selected and distributed by WorkGroup 4,
        including each WorkGroup 4 student's Prospectus, Research Object sample(s), and
        scholarly article sample

Feb 22: Discussion **(everyone)**: Critiquing Analysis Papers (**last full-group meeting until April 9**)

Due (WorkGroup 1 only): Analysis Paper [electronic, by noon]
and Schedule Research Consultation for between 2/28-3/4

Feb   27:   Peer Critique Workshop for WorkGroup 1 only: Analysis Papers from WorkGroup 1
Special extended meeting time: 2:30-4:30pm
Due (WorkGroup 1 only): Prepare for Live Peer Critiques of each Analysis
Paper in WorkGroup 1
Due (WorkGroup 2 only): Analysis Paper [electronic, by noon]
and Schedule Research Consultation for between 3/1-3/7
29:   Peer Critique Workshop for WorkGroup 2 only: Analysis Papers from WorkGroup 2
Special extended meeting time: 2:30-4:30pm
Due (WorkGroup 2 only): Prepare for Live Peer Critiques of each Analysis
Paper in WorkGroup 2
Due (WorkGroup 3 only): Analysis Paper [electronic, by noon]
and Schedule Research Consultation for between 3/6-3/7

Mar   5:   Peer Critique Workshop for WorkGroup 3 only: Analysis Papers from WorkGroup 3
Special extended meeting time: 2:30-4:30pm
Due (WorkGroup 3 only): Prepare for Live Peer Critiques of each Analysis
Paper in WorkGroup 3
Due (WorkGroup 4 only): Analysis Paper [electronic, by noon]
and Schedule Research Consultation for between 3/18-3/22
Mar   7:   Peer Critique Workshop for WorkGroup 4 only: Analysis Papers from WorkGroup 4
Special extended meeting time: 2:30-4:30pm
Due (WorkGroup 4 only): Prepare for Live Peer Critiques of each Analysis
Paper in WorkGroup 4

Mar 12-14:   <<No Class—Spring Break>>

Mar   19:   {Research Consultations}
Mar   21:   {Research Consultations}
Due (WorkGroup 1 only): Full-Scale Workshop Draft
[electronic, by noon]

Mar   26:   Peer Critique Workshop for WorkGroup 1 only: Workshop Drafts from WorkGroup 1
Special extended meeting time: 2:30-4:30pm
Due (WorkGroup 1 only): Prepare for Live Peer Critiques of each First Full
Draft in WorkGroup 1
Due (WorkGroup 2 only): Full-Scale Workshop Draft
[electronic, by noon]
Mar   28:   Peer Critique Workshop for WorkGroup 2 only: Workshop Drafts from WorkGroup 2
Special extended meeting time: 2:30-4:30pm
Due (WorkGroup 2 only): Prepare for Live Peer Critiques of each First Full
Draft in WorkGroup 2
Due (WorkGroup 3 only): Full-Scale Workshop Draft [electronic, by
noon]

Apr   2:   Peer Critique Workshop for WorkGroup 3 only: Workshop Drafts from WorkGroup 3
Special extended meeting time: 2:30-4:30pm
Due (WorkGroup 3 only): Prepare for Live Peer Critiques of each First Full
Draft in WorkGroup 3
Due (WorkGroup 4 only): Full-Scale Workshop Draft [electronic, by
noon]
Apr   4:   Peer Critique Workshop for WorkGroup 4 only: Workshop Drafts from WorkGroup 4

Special extended meeting time: 2:30-4:30pm
> **Due (WorkGroup 3 only):** Prepare for Live Peer Critiques of each First Full
> Draft in WorkGroup 4

Apr   9:   Practice Presentations by WorkGroup 1 (**whole class in audience whole time**)
               Special extended meeting time: 2:30-4:30pm
> **Due (WorkGroup 1 only):** Presentation Script and Slides; Final Self-
> Reflection Essay; Draft of 200-word abstract, title, keywords [electronic, by noon]

Apr   11:   Practice Presentations by WorkGroup 2 (**whole class in audience whole time**)
               Special extended meeting time: 2:30-4:30pm
> **Due (WorkGroup 2 only):** Presentation Script and Slides; Final Self-
> Reflection Essay; Draft of 200-word abstract, title, keywords [electronic, by noon]

Apr   16:   <<No Class—SU Research & Creative Works Symposium>>

Apr   18:   Practice Presentations by WorkGroup 3 (**whole class in audience whole time**)
               Special extended meeting time: 2:30-4:30pm
> **Due (WorkGroup 3 only):** Presentation Script and Slides; Final Self-
> Reflection Essay; Draft of 200-word abstract, title, keywords [electronic,
> by noon]

Apr   23:   Practice Presentations by WorkGroup 4 (**whole class in audience whole time**)
               Special extended meeting time: 2:30-4:30pm
> **Due (WorkGroup 4 only):** Presentation Script and Slides; Final Self-
> Reflection Essay; Draft of 200-word abstract, title, keywords [electronic,
> by noon]

Apr   25:   Revised Practice Presentation Run-Throughs (**meet in Olin 105**)
                       (**everyone commits to be there at least 1.5 hours**)
               Special extended meeting time: 1:00-5:00pm
> **Due (Everyone):** Perform Revised Final Presentations in Olin 105

Apr   29:   (Mon) [no class, but:]
                       Methods Poster Session 4:00-5:00PM, Olin Lobby
                       Capstone Presentations 5:00-7:00PM, Olin 105
Apr   30:   (Tue)   Discussion **(everyone)**: Completing the class; course evaluations
                       Capstone Presentations 4:00-6:00 PM, Olin 105
                       CommStudies End-of-Year Awards Party, 6:00-7:00 PM, Olin Lobby

May   2:   (Th) **Due (Everyone): Final Capstone Paper**, electronic submission, by 5:00pm

May   3:   (Fr) **Capstone completion celebration**, Time/Place TBA

Bednar
Capstone Research Seminar

Preparing Your Initial Project Proposal

        The Communication Studies Capstone Research Project represents a culminating experience in terms of both process and product—where you not only undertake a project more challenging and demanding than anything else you have done in college, but also take personal responsibility for dedicating yourself to doing your best work and to helping me support and challenge your colleagues in the class as they also strive to do their best work.

        The Project will be modeled on scholarship produced by professional academics in CommStudies or directly related (inter)disciplines, and will display, analyze, interpret, and make a claim about a particular communicative research object using a well-defined methodology and located within a clearly identified broader topic and cultural context. As such, the project focuses on developing a specific analytical approach to a particular site of inquiry: a carefully defined and culturally and historically situated text, platform, performance, space, object, discourse, and/or audience. Implicit in these criteria is the need for an extensive literature review that critically engages a significant body of peer-reviewed scholarship pertaining to your research object and the methodology and contexts you will mobilize in your project.

        The default for a Capstone Research Project is a rigorously produced and effectively revised 30-page persuasive, analytical academic research essay that explicitly critically engages at least 30 scholarly sources, and a 10-minute professional scholarly public presentation. If you want to propose an alternate project format for either the written text or the presentation, your approach must be explicitly approved in the Proposal process.

        Like your Capstone project itself, the Proposal process unfolds in stages. A few weeks into the semester, you will submit a full-scale Prospectus of your Project. But before we get there, you need to do an Initial Project Proposal, which is due the second week of class. Your Initial Project Proposal must address each part of the Proposal format below as specifically and concretely as possible. Please expect to be required to Revise & Re-submit multiple drafts of your Proposal.

        Each draft of your Proposal should be **at least 2 single-spaced pages typed**, and should be **divided into the separate sections outlined below**. Each time you submit a Proposal, you also need to **include a separate page listing the current** alphabetized **bibliography** of sources you are using, with full citations using a standard citation system, such as Chicago or MLA. Eventually your project will critically engage at least 30 scholarly sources. For your Proposal to be credible, **your Proposal bibliography must contain at least pertinent 10 scholarly sources.**

> **Research object (RO).** Which specific research object--communicative text, performance, platform, space, material object, discursive formation, practice, or audiencing context--are you focusing on? What are your preliminary research questions (RQs) about your research object (RO) and your larger topic?
>
> **Methodology.** Methodology = method of analysis + theoretical framework(s). What method of analysis are you imagining using to analyze your RO? Which communication, critical, and or cultural theories and theorists seem most pertinent to your project at the outset and how/why? These could include theories we study directly in this major, but can expand from there. In short: What will you *do* to analyze your research object that will add to the scholarly conversations about your topic and/or research object? *How* exactly will you do the analysis, and while engaging what specific theoretical framework(s)?
>
> **Preliminary Literature Review.** Which other scholars do you see doing similar and different but related work on your topic, your specific research object, or adjacent/antecedent research objects? How does your proposed methodology and set of research questions relate to theirs? Where are you looking to locate scholarly sources pertinent to your project?
>
> **Audience and Significance.** To serve as a Capstone for the major, your project must culminate your work in the major and interpellate a defined audience of scholars. How is this project connected to your previous work in the major? How does your project speak from and to Communication Studies as a discipline to function as a capstone to your work in the major? Within which Core Area of the major—rhetorical studies or critical media studies (or intersection of the two)—is your project most directly located and how?
>
> **Motivation.** This project should be something you are personally connected to in a meaningful way, maybe even something only you could do. Why do you, personally, want to do this project?

Bednar
Capstone Research Seminar

Preparing Your Context/Description Paper

Once you have submitted and discussed your Initial Project Proposal and have had your topic approved, the next step is to begin your disciplined practices of engaging your research object in detail.

While your Prospectus will introduce your overall research design and articulate your methodology and lit review, and your Analysis Paper will focus on the detailed analysis of your research object using your methodology, the Context/Description Paper focuses on describing the research object itself carefully and building a context for understanding your research object by establishing what it is and the general cultural significance of it (describing it in detail in terms of Who, What, When, Why, How, So What and showing where it is located culturally, historically, politically, etc.). If you do this paper well, it will be a first draft of writing that will find its way into either the first third or second third of your final paper.

Notice that the purpose with this particular stage of the paper is to show what the research object is for the purpose of providing context for your readers. Please avoid long, detailed descriptions of the internal workings of the object itself; that is something we will do in the Analysis Paper. For example, if your research object is a music video, do not describe everything that happens <u>in</u> the video in a shot-by-shot plot description; instead, describe everything *around* the video that will help us know what it is if we are unfamiliar with it. Similarly, you should aspire to be as neutral as possible in your description and contextualization of your research object. This staged paper does not perform an analytical interpretive argument yet; at most, it performs an argument about why studying the object is important (regardless of your ultimate perspective or conclusions).

As you work your way through this paper, you should cite ALL sources you use to document information, sources you analyze, and sources you critically engage to articulate your point. Cite the sources as full citations in a separate Works Cited section using a standard citation system, such as Chicago or MLA. Unlike your Prospectus and Final Paper, this paper is likely to have more popular media citations than scholarly citations. The Works Cited section is not included in the 8-10 page count.

The Research Object Context/Description paper will be 8-10 pages double-spaced, and divided into the following subsections:

1) **Introduction.** This section introduces this particular staged paper by making an initial claim for why this research object is a productive site of analysis for someone working with the discipline of communication studies, and outlines the overall structure of the rest of this staged paper.

2) **Description and Context.** This section describes and contextualizes your research object in detail, and will take up the majority of the paper. What is your object? What is it similar to and different from? How would you characterize it? Who is associated with its production, circulation/exhibition, and consumption? What is its history? When did it start? How long has it existed, and it what forms? If it is from the past, when did it stop? How was it originated, by whom, and why? How do people encounter it, particularly through which media? What if any conversation is there about this object in popular media forms such as journalism, social media, etc.? What is the scope of the critical conversation about it (including cultural critics and media critics as well as scholars), and what are some main ideas that keep coming up in other people's critical reflections on your object? In short: what is your object, why is it significant, and where is it "located" in terms of medium, platform, place, intersectional identities, etc.?

3) **Initial Conclusions.** This section concludes the Context/Description Paper by drawing out your initial observations about the research object itself and how it connects to other related (similar and/or different) communicative objects that are significant to communication studies scholars. Those conclusions can be in the form of questions you hope to answer later in the project when you dig into your analysis of the object more directly, but you at least should have some very specific observations to share here based on the research you did so far to be able to describe, characterize, and contextualize your research object.

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Capstone Research Seminar

Preparing for your Seminar Leadership Assignments

In the coming weeks, each WorkGroup will be taking turns one-at-a-time leading the whole class in a 15-minute discussion of each project in the WorkGroup. See schedule for details on when your WorkGroup is set up for this and stay on top of deadlines for submitting the necessary materials in advance and reading them when it is for a different WorkGroup.

These assignments have multiple benefits for everyone involved:

1) They give each of you embodied experience "owning" your project and running a discussion about your RO and topic, which is good training for the presentations
2) They introduce everyone in class to your project, so we all are thinking about it the rest of the semester with you
3) You get to learn from each other about how to approach your projects with curiosity and how to pay attention to details—right before you head into producing your Analysis
4) They solidify your connection to your WorkGroup right before you need to manage the interpersonal complexities involved in doing WorkGroup critiques of your Analysis and Draft

When it is your turn to submit materials, you will need to email me three things by your specific WorkGroup's deadline:

1) Your Prospectus
2) An example of a scholarly article directly related to your project that will give us a sense of the scholarly lit you are engaging
3) An example of the RO itself

The first two things (Prospectus and article) should be self-explanatory, but for the last thing, it will vary depending on each student's project. For many of you, it will be sharing a link to a short video or set of short videos so we can encounter your RO directly for ourselves. For others, it will be screenshot of a website, or video/photographs of a place, or clips from a longer movie, or the text of a sermon, etc. Our goal is to keep what we are asking people to encounter as the RO at under 5 minutes total. Notice that any delay in delivering these materials to me will matter not only for me, but for your colleagues in the class.

When it is your turn to lead the seminar, you should assume that we all have encountered your RO and at least skimmed your Prospectus and article, so we come in ready to talk with you about strategies for analyzing your RO using your chosen methodology. What you don't want to do is give us a lecture on the RO, the article, or your project overall assuming we know nothing about it. Use the time instead to get thinking with you about your project.

When it is your turn to be in the audience, prepare for the day by encountering the RO and reviewing the article and Prospectus for everyone in the assigned WorkGroup, and be ready to be led in a discussion about the materials you reviewed.

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Capstone Research Seminar

Preparing Your Capstone Prospectus

        A Prospectus is an intermediate form of academic writing that seeks to gain institutional support for the scholarly work you are already doing. The form presumes that your project is underway—even, in some cases, nearing completion--but not yet finished and definitely not yet ready for public consumption. As such, your Capstone Prospectus focuses on three things: 1) defining the scope and scale of your project; 2) making a case for the value of your project by situating your research object within the existing scholarly discourses that impinge upon it and showing how your work contributes to those discourses; and 3) precisely describing your methodology. It will contain your central research questions (RQs) and may contain a hypothesis, but it will NOT contain your thesis, which will emerge only later, after you actually perform your analysis. If you do your Prospectus well, it will serve as a first draft of parts of the first third of your final paper.

        Your Prospectus will be 8-10 pages double-spaced, subdivided into the following three separate sections: Introduction, Literature Review, and Methodology. Although each project is different and each author may choose to engage their sources in different sections and in different ways, a good rule of thumb for the scale of each section would be: Intro 2-3 pages; Lit Review 5-7 pages; and Methodology 1 page. Your final project will critically engage at least 30 separate pertinent scholarly sources (peer-reviewed journal articles, edited book chapters, and/or books); I expect to see you already directly engaging and **citing at least 15 scholarly sources** somewhere in the Prospectus. The Works Cited section is not included in the 8-10 page count.

        Here is what each section should do:

1) **Introduction.** This section introduces your project by describing your overall research design and articulating the central research questions (RQs) that propel the project and give it its reason for being. Your introduction should thus not only give definition to the research object, but also establish the significance of project—by addressing the "so what?" and "who cares?" questions (See Graff & Birkenstein)--which may mean that you will do some of the preliminary work of introducing the other 2 sections (Lit Review and Methodology) here as well.

2) **Literature Review.** This section shows how you have organized the scholarly sources you are using to set up your analysis of your particular research object as well as your methodology. This is not an annotated bibliography that simply summarizes a bunch of scholarly work you have been reading; it is a powerful tool you use to show which scholarly conversations you are entering and contributing to as you will build your argument. Indeed, it is a part of the argument itself. The lit review is usually broken up into several sub-headed sections that collect a set of scholarly sources and show the patterns among them. In terms of our readings in this class, the Lit Review lays out in detail your fundamental claim for the significance of what you are doing by showing the basic They Say/I Say structure of your argument, where you present your extensive characterization of scholarship already published on your specific research object and your specific methodologies as well as any directly related work (including not only other work related to your specific topic, research object, and methods but also to the critical theorists and theoretical texts you are critically engaging), and specifically show where and how your work promises to add to those conversations. In the case of emergent topics where there is not much direct scholarly work done on the object, the Lit Review articulates your work's relationship to critical work done on adjacent and antecedent research objects and topics.

3) **Methodology.** This section presents a detailed description of your methodology—your central *way of doing* your analysis and interpretation with a particular *theoretical framework*, which will actually allow you to produce something new to add to the existing critical conversation(s) you are speaking to and from. Methodology = method of analysis + theoretical framework(s). What method of analysis are you using? Which communication, critical, and or cultural theories and theorists are most pertinent to your project and how/why? In short: What will you *do* to analyze your research object that will contribute to the scholarly conversations about your topic and/or research object? *How* exactly will you do the analysis, and while engaging what theoretical framework(s)? You may do your lit review of the methodology here instead of in the Lit Review section, but somewhere in the Prospectus, you must show which other scholars you see doing similar and different but related work on your research questions and how your methodology relates to theirs.

Bednar
Capstone Research Seminar

Preparing Your Analysis Paper

The key to successful scholarship in CommStudies is the production of a persuasive interpretive argument built from the detailed analysis of a well-defined research object that answer your research questions within a certain methodology. While your Context/Description Paper focuses on describing the research object itself carefully and building a context for understanding your research object, and your Prospectus introduces the overall research design and articulates your methodology and lit review, this paper focuses on the close reading and coding of your research object using your methodology and frame to analyze your research object (RO) so that you can answer your research questions (RQs). Thus, the Analysis Paper should be a coherent interpretive, argumentative essay that focuses on analyzing your particular research object within a particular methodology.

For this paper, it is likely you will cite sources as you establish your framework, but the focus should be predominantly on *your perspective* as you demonstrate your analysis of the RO. Therefore, you will also likely need to extensively refer directly to and cite your RO itself, to indicate exactly which parts of it you are analyzing at a given moment. As always, you should cite ALL sources you use to document information, sources you analyze, and sources you critically engage to articulate your point. Cite the sources as full citations in a separate Works Cited section using a standard citation system, such as Chicago or MLA. Unlike your Prospectus and final project, this paper is likely to have more popular media citations (especially direct references to your research object itself) than scholarly citations. The Works Cited section is not included in the 12-15 page count.

The focus here should be on your detailed analysis and interpretation of your research object. The analysis paper does not need to replicate the work you produced in your previous stages, but the analysis does need to provide enough background and context for your project so that it is clear how the analysis fits into the overall research design. In other words, this paper must include a brief introduction to the project overall, a preliminary thesis statement, and a brief explanation of object selection and methodology, but the vast majority of the paper will be your analysis itself.

The analysis is a critical place for your distinctive scholarly perspective on the things you have coded. The lit review is you summarizing and engaging other perspectives, but the analysis is YOUR perspective: your contribution to an ongoing scholarly conversation. In our vocabulary, while the earlier papers focus on "They Say," this staged paper focuses on "I Say." I encourage you to think of this as the first step you take in encountering, confronting, engaging your research object as directly as possible. What do YOU have to say about this research object? What strikes YOU as interesting, important, relevant? And how do YOU see it all holding together into something more than the sum of its parts? Only once you have a clear idea of what you are saying and contributing do you have anything to add to the conversation, which is why we focus on hammering out the analysis last before we put it all back together with the necessary scholarly backdrop in the final paper.

Ideally, in the next step, you will be able to take the Prospectus and merge it with the Context/Description paper and the Analysis paper to comprise the foundation for your first full draft of your final paper. You will of course have to go back and polish, integrate, revise, but the Prospectus, Context/Description, and Analysis should constitute the basic building blocks of your final paper.

Final Note: You may have learned different analytical processes (or different names for the same analytical processes) in your CommStudies Methods classes, Core Courses, or Electives, so I want to be as explicit as possible about our approach here. For me, excellent CommStudies analysis is built from five separate but overlapping processes:

1. Perceive: approach the object with openness, recursively immerse yourself in your research object, and describe what you see and feel in great detail
2. Code: note and/or generate patterns among the details you see and feel
3. Interpret: determine what you think the patterns mean at multiple scales
4. Argue: put it all together into a coherent analytical/interpretive argument
5. Interpellate: Craft the argument to address a certain audience/context

You certainly will build all 5 processes into your final paper. For this Analysis paper, strive at least to show evidence derived from performing processes 1-3, ideally 1-4 or 1-5. Please notice that these are analytical processes that you perform on your own behind the scenes, not a sequence for presenting the analysis to readers. That is, use the process to generate your analysis not to represent it.

Bednar
Capstone Research Seminar

Peer Critique Workshop: Responding Constructively to Drafts

Once you have completed a first draft of a piece of writing, it is helpful to get direct feedback from thoughtful readers so you can see exactly how your writing is working. This is especially true when those readers are also writers working on the same writing problem, where your colleagues in the class can give you useful ideas about how to rethink and reshape your work for later revisions, and you can do the same for them.

In this class, we do what I call "live critiques"—where we work together in collaboration to respond to, analyze, and discuss each author's work within an open and dynamic dialogue that generates more diverse feedback than a peer-to-peer critique or a teacher-to-student critique. To make the critique workshop as constructive as possible, I have prepared the following list of guidelines to help you generate useful feedback for the writers in your WorkGroup. Please note that we will not follow this like a script; the questions are meant to prompt you to ask specific questions so that you have specific things to say to each writer. The goal is for each of you to prepare to have something specific and concrete to add to our dialogue. What does not work is vague, general feedback—either bland praise or global dismissiveness.

Finally, while the main focus here is on your role as a peer critic providing constructive criticism, you also need to prepare to *receive* peer criticism constructively as well. **The golden rule of the live critiques is**: *"Give the kind of critique you would like to receive and receive critique the way you would like to have your critiques of others received."* That means that you go into your role as a critic ready to give productive, creative, helpful, and concrete critiques, and you go into your role as author ready to be open to hearing feedback and ready to ask questions that clarify the feedback, not set up to defend yourself from criticism. If we stay specific and have an attitude of constant, continuous improvement, it all works.

SUMMARIZING: How do you interpret the paper as a whole? What do you think is the main idea or message of the piece? How and why did you reach that conclusion?

POINTING TO THE CENTER: Is there a central image, passage, or detailed description that seems to give special life or power to the essay that would not be there otherwise? Which words, phrases, or other features of the writing do you find most striking or memorable? Why? What do you think of the way the author handles these important aspects?

POINTING TO THE EDGES: What are some of the important messages left implicit? What do you think the writer is going to say but doesn't? What does this tell you about the kinds of assumptions the writer appears to be making about her or his audience? Are there important details left out that are necessary for context? What ideas and questions seem to hover around the edges of the essay? Do you think these implicit messages would be more effective if they were made explicit or would you like to see the writer keep them subtle? Why or why not?

EVALUATING THE ESSAY AS AN ASSIGNMENT: Does the essay satisfy the central requirements of this particular assignment?

ORGANIZATION AND COHERENCE: Do the writer's points seem to follow one another clearly? Are there significant gaps in the exploration of ideas that create transition problems? Is the essay coherent and unified? Are the author's voice and point of view consistent?

GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS: Are there any basic sentence errors? Are there a significant number of typos, misspellings, or other basic mechanical problems? If so, what do they do to your experience of the essay?

OFFERING SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS FOR REVISION: If you were to identify one or two specific things you think could be changed to significantly improve the essay as a whole, what would they be?

Bednar
Capstone Research Seminar

Capstone Presentation FAQs

➔**What's the basic set-up?**

We will do the presentations in the style of academic conference panel presentations, where each presenter is organized into a panel of 3 to 5 presenters bound together by a theme that I will generate. I will introduce each panel. Each presenter performs/reads their paper in turn and then we take about 15 minutes at the end of each panel of presentations for Q & A, which gives us the opportunity for questions and discussions that draw together ideas from the separate presentations in the panel.

➔**Do I need to memorize this or speak from note cards, like a speech?**

No. You will read your paper to the audience, as is the style in most Humanities and Social Studies academic conferences. However, the reading is best thought of as a *performed* reading of a *script*. You don't simply drone on from behind your paper but know the writing well enough to make frequent eye contact and seek to engage the audience even as you read to them. Write the presentation like a script to perform, not a paper to read. And pair it with strong visuals in PowerPoint or Google Slides.

➔**How long should my presentation be?**

Your presentation should be exactly 10 minutes long, including any use of tech to show images and/or information or to play video or sound clips, and including a very brief version of your Paideia self-reflection. We will need to be *very* strict on time to be fair for everyone. You will need to practice your presentation many, many times to know exactly how long it takes you to read it, and to adjust the length accordingly. A general rule of thumb for reading a paper aloud is that it takes most people about 2 minutes to read one double-spaced page (presuming 12-point Times as the default font, and standard margins). That means that you are targeting a script that is about 5 pages long.

➔**Did you say Five Pages Long?!? How the hell will I cut a 30-page paper down to 5 pages?**

Your best bet is to select one or two examples from your analysis and make them represent your larger project instead of trying to do a breathless superficial overview of your overall project. You will have to develop a very precise strategy for what to select and develop from your larger project. As you do, know that a public presentation usually works much better when you directly *demonstrate* the analysis, by focusing on *showing the audience a short but vivid representative example (or small set of examples) they can witness for themselves* in the space/time of the presentations so they can engage it for themselves and thus feel connected to your project. That leads not only to engaged listeners, but engaged questions later in the Q & A. You must still articulate your thesis/argument and frame the project in terms of your central theoretical sources and scholarly conversations, but not nearly at the level of detail we will see in the paper. Your authority will be much more embodied as you present, so there's less of a need to establish how widely you have read and thought for the project. Find ways to make sure that less is more.

➔**Do I have to use PowerPoint or some other presentational technology?**

Yes. In keeping with the advice above, it is very important that you *bring your project to the audience and bring the audience to the project*, so even if you don't do a lot of slides, you should have something visually appealing on the screen for the audience to look at besides you. When you design your slides, whether it is PowerPoint, Slides, Prezi, or whatever, NEVER build slides that simply repeat what you are reading aloud. And finally, you need to rehearse and rehearse and rehearse your slide sequence and timing *and* have a plan A, plan B, and a plan C, where you come prepared with the presentation loaded and ready to go, and come ready to improvise if something fails. To that end, I generally advise that you not use video clips or links out of the presentation slides. Keep it simple and reliable. Shit happens when you use tech, and it is always your responsibility to make it work.

➔**Do I need to produce a handout to share with the audience?**

No. I will produce and distribute a single collected document of "abstracts" of your projects. You have seen abstracts before in journal articles. Each of you will produce a 200-word abstract for your paper: a summary description of your thesis, theory base, main scholarly conversation, the scope of your analysis of your research object, and perhaps a statement about how the presentation fits into the larger arc of your project. You will submit these to me and I will edit them significantly for clarity, coherence, and consistency across the panel and that group as a whole before distributing them at the event.

➔**How will you evaluate the presentations?**

I will use the Capstone Rubric to evaluate your presentations (just as I will to evaluate your Final Papers). The department has agreed that an excellent Capstone presentation "confidently and creatively performs an authoritative, credible, and informative scholarly argument that engages the audience and effectively presents the specific analysis and interpretation within the defined formatting constraints." That is your target.

➔**What happens if I stumble over my words as I read? What if the tech fails? What if I totally freeze?**

You just keep moving. You will be nervous, but our job is to give you enough feedback in the Critique Workshops and practice presentations to prepare you to do well. Pressure is funny, though. You will know for yourself whether you are generally the kind of person who performs better under pressure or not. Personally, whether it is sports or academic presentations, I hate practicing and love performing, but I know many people who are the opposite. When it comes to the presentation, remember that the audience does not know your paper; all they have is you there in front of them, reading your script. You can presume that the audience shows up friendly. They are looking to you to show your ideas, so they would rather encourage you to continue than see you give up. Otherwise, they don't ever get to hear what you have to say. Just keep moving. If your tech fails catastrophically, I will step in to keep things moving while you fix it.

➔**What if I freeze in the Q & A?**

Just keep moving. We will ask you lots of questions in the practice presentations. We will also discuss common questions and work on strategies to re-phrase and/or re-direct questions to de-sensitize you.

➔**I have a busy life. Do I have to attend ALL of the Capstone presentations?**

Yes. This is a community of scholars. I expect each of you to attend ALL of the Capstone Presentations. This should be your highest priority event the last week of the semester, so if you have to make choices about your commitments, this one should always win. If you have a conflict, it is your responsibility to work it out so that you are there for your presentation and to support your group.

➔**Can I invite people to my presentation?**

Yes. The more the merrier. Please invite friends and family. CommStudies faculty who are not on sabbatical are expected to be there for the presentations. I encourage you also to invite staff who know you and faculty from other departments who have been influential for you or interested in your work. If you would like the invitation to come from me as well or instead, let me know.

Bednar
Capstone Research Seminar

Preparing Your Final Self-Reflection Paper

        Approaching the end of Capstone provides the ideal moment for you to intentionally reflect on how your final project and your experiences in the CommStudies Capstone Research Seminar serve as a culminating experience for your undergraduate career by helping you integrate, extend, and sometimes even challenge your learning in the major as well as your other Southwestern classes and experiences as a whole.

        The CommStudies Capstone Research Seminar is designed to build on and implement the foundational training provided by courses throughout the major, which have widened and deepened your reflexive understanding of CommStudies theories, methodologies and practices. It also provides the opportunity to draw from and build on experiences outside the major as well. In short, all of your other coursework at Southwestern has prepared you in one way or another for this experience, and this course prepares you to cap off the major with a significant original research project that will propel you into your life after college, where the skills you sharpen here—especially the ability to design and carry out a months-long project that you must produce independently but within in a collaborative work environment, where you balance working independently with working together—are essential tools for success in a number of professional communication fields as well as for lifelong learning and active citizenship.

        This short 2-3 page Final Self-reflection essay assignment thus serves two main purposes. First, it serves as the departmental Paideia "Making Connections" assignment, so it will help the Department evaluate whether and how the CommStudies major works to help students make connections in the spirit of Paideia, particularly once they reach Capstone. Second, once the essay is written, it also usually forms the basis for the short introductory remarks every CommStudies Capstone student makes as they contextualize their public Capstone presentation. Given that the essay is short and the part of this that will make it into your final presentation will be even shorter, you will need to think carefully about which overall point you want to make as well as the examples you choose to provide evidence for that overall point.

        You can structure your Self-Reflection however you want, but it must have a clear thesis and the evidence for your thesis must come from the clear and specific narration of examples from your direct personal experience within the major and within your time at Southwestern as a whole.

        An excellent Final Self-Reflection essay will:

1. identify, narrate, and discuss the specific ways your Capstone project relates to the rest of the work you have done in the major, with specific references to content, perspectives, and skills you encountered in particular classes and assignments in the CommStudies major

2. identify, narrate, and discuss connections to broader college previous experiences to show how your current project builds on specific content, perspectives, and/or skills you learned in other courses and even co-curricular and extra-curricular experiences outside the major

3. demonstrate how the Capstone is a culminating project by explicitly identifying, narrating, and discussing the through-lines that you see being integrated, extended and/or challenged in your Capstone project.

4. be well-written, like everything else your produce in the course, with strong grammar and mechanics as well as a strong sense of voice, purpose, and audience.

Pronouns and Possessives:

its = possessive pronoun
        e.g. the essay's point of view => its point of view
it's = contraction of it + is
        e.g. It is a fine day => It's a fine day
their = possessive pronoun
        e.g. Hondo and Jo Jo's dog roams the neighborhood => Their dog roams the neighborhood
there = adverb indicating place
        e.g. Their dog usually leaves its mark on that tree over there.
they're = contraction of they + are
        e.g. Hondo and Jo Jo are looking for their dog = > They're looking for their dog.

Punctuation/Sentence Structure Problems:

fragment (frag)
A fragment is an incomplete sentence that lacks a subject, a verb, or both.
        e.g. Washing the car. (no subject, incomplete verb, and incomplete thought)
comma splice (cs)
A comma cannot, on its own, join two independent clauses.
        e.g. Jo Jo likes barbecue, Hondo prefers tofu => Jo Jo likes barbecue; Hondo prefers tofu.
                                => Jo Jo likes barbecue, but Hondo prefers tofu.
                                => Jo Jo likes barbecue. Hondo prefers tofu.

fused sentence (fs)
A fused sentence lacks the punctuation necessary to separate two independent clauses.
        e.g. Jo Jo likes barbecue Hondo prefers tofu   => see comma splice corrections above
semicolon errors
A semicolon can only be used in an extensive series or to separate two independent clauses.
        e.g. Hondo stumbled; washing the car   => Hondo stumbled; he was washing the car.
                                => While he was washing the car, Hondo stumbled.
run-on
A run-on sentence proliferates verbs and subjects and objects without attention to grammatical structure.

awkward (AWK)
An awkward sentence stumbles over itself as it tries to communicate its point, rendering the writing confused/confusing. Often the fix is to "write to the point" more directly.

using the word "however"
The word "however" is not an interchangeable synonym for the word "but" or "although." It cannot be used to indicate contradiction unless you use punctuation to interrupt the flow of the sentence. If a sentence begins with the word, it must be followed by a comma; if a sentence ends with the word, it must be preceded with a comma.   If it is used in the middle of a sentence, it must be set apart either with a set of commas before and after it or with a semicolon and a comma (see also **fs**, **cs**, and **run-ons**).
        e.g. Jo Jo says she does not know how their dog gets out; however, I know that she does.
        e.g. Jo Jo says she does not know how their dog gets out. However, I know that she does.
        e.g. Jo Jo says she does not know how their dog gets out. I know, however, that she does.

Apostrophes:

A singular noun that does not end in "s" takes " 's " to indicate possession.
        e.g. the woman's dog   (the dog belongs to one woman)
A plural noun that already ends in "s" takes an " ' " only to indicate possession.
        e.g. the boys' dog   (the dog belongs to more than one boy)
        e.g. the ladies' house   (the house belongs to more than one lady)
A plural noun that does not end in "s" takes " 's " to indicate possession.
        e.g. the children's dog   (the dog belongs to all the children)
        e.g. the women's house   (the house belong to the women)
A singular noun that ends in "s" takes either " ' " or " 's " to indicate possession.
        e.g. Charles' spaniel <u>or</u> Charles's spaniel   (the spaniel belongs to Charles)

Punctuating quotes and citations:

I expect you to critically engage other writers as you develop your own arguments. Document all citations (including direct quotations, paraphrases, and "general indebtedness") using MLA, Harvard, Chicago, or some other standard in-text citation format within the essay and then list all of your cited sources in a Works Cited section at the end of the paper. Notice that the standard format for documenting a quote ends the quote, includes the citation, and only then provides the sentence's end punctuation, as in the following example: As Patrick Phillips argues, "There is a fine line between determining and overdetermining the meaning of a film text" (Phillips, 157).