

## SENIOR CAPSTONE FOR LITERATURE

Capstone Coordinator for Literature: Prof. Carolyn Vellenga Berman  
([bermanc@newschool.edu](mailto:bermanc@newschool.edu))

Office: Lang annex, 64 W. 11th St., Rm 113, 212-229-5100 x 2994

To complete the Senior Capstone requirement, Literature students have two options. They can **either** (1) take the Senior Seminar and write a senior paper in a class environment; **or** (2) complete an independent Senior Thesis under the advisement of a full-time faculty member of the department.

**For your senior capstone experience, choose one of the following two options:**

### **OPTION 1: Senior Seminar (ONLY OFFERED IN THE SPRING) (4 credits)**

The senior seminar is a 4000-level class in which students research and write a paper, consisting of approximately 30 pages, in a setting that encourages discussion and sharing of ideas.

*PLEASE NOTE: The Senior Seminar IS ONLY OFFERED IN THE SPRING SEMESTER. (In Spring 2019, the senior seminar will be taught by Professor Berman. It will be an open-topic seminar. You will be able to work on a topic of your choice.)*

### **OPTION 2: Senior Thesis (Fall or Spring) (4 credits)**

The senior thesis is an independent research paper of at least 40 pages written in consultation with a full-time faculty member of the Literature Program. It should ideally deal with a topic with which the student is familiar.

IMPORTANT DATES IF YOU CHOOSE TO DO AN INDEPENDENT SENIOR THESIS:

1. **Deadlines for senior capstone proposal:** 11/3/18 (for Spring 2019); 4/3/19 (for Fall 2019)
2. **Deadlines for handing in senior thesis:** 12/7/18 (Fall 2018 projects); 5/3/19 (Spring 2019 projects)

Preparation for independent senior work should start in the second semester of the junior year. These are the required steps:

#### **Step 1:**

a. Consider your topic (ideally, within an area of literary study with which you already have some familiarity). The key to success is to find a topic that is appropriate for the time available, and for which both library resources and faculty advising are available.

Therefore, do research in the library and make a careful list of resources you can use before finalizing your choice.

b. Identify and consult with possible advisors who are knowledgeable in the area you wish to pursue. Advisors are full-time faculty members in the concentration. Find someone who is willing to work with you. You MUST consult with your advisor when developing your senior work project. You should do this early. Failure to do so WILL result in your proposal being rejected. (The capstone coordinator will make the final decision confirming your advisor.)

### **Step 2:**

Start developing your proposal in the summer (if you plan to submit it in the fall and do the Senior Work in the spring), or during the Winter Break (if you plan to submit in the spring and complete it the following fall). Proposals should be 6-8 pages long (double-spaced) and contain the following:

- a. Working title of proposed research paper.
- b. Names of proposed advisors in order of preference.
- c. A description of the key idea being explored.
- d. A description of the methods of investigation to be employed.
- e. An argument about the relevance of the project to the field of Literature.
- f. A section describing the likely conclusions you hope to draw.
- g. Account of work already accomplished, such as initial research completed.
- h. An annotated Bibliography, in MLA format, listing and briefly describing relevant sources you will consult (both primary and secondary).

Think of the proposal as a first draft of an Introduction to your project.

### **Step 3:**

Proposals must be submitted no later than six weeks after the start of the semester prior to the intended project. In other words, your proposal is due the semester BEFORE you write your thesis project. Project proposals are due April 3rd for Fall projects, and Nov. 3rd for Spring projects.

Submit your proposal by email to Professor Berman, Capstone Coordinator for Literature, (BermanC@newschool.edu), copying the department at LangLiteraryStudies@newschool.edu .

You may be asked to revise the proposal, in which case all final proposal revisions are due no later than twenty days after the initial deadline. (Students whose proposals are not accepted will have the option to complete the Senior Seminar as their Capstone.) If you have any questions about your project, contact Professor Berman.

**Step 4:**

Read widely in your chosen area, make careful notes towards the project, come up with a chapter/argument structure, and then work on the substance of the project, allowing sufficient time to do drafts for your advisor's comments, before making your final revisions.

Your advisor will help you keep the project to the right scope and length, design a structure that is most suitable, discover resources you may not find on your own, and act as editor, guide, and deadline setter.

If you choose to do a Senior Thesis, you are obligated to meet regularly with your advisor. Missing meetings will be seen in exactly the same way as missing class. It can mean failure. A written thesis should be 40-60 pages in length, including scholarly notes and a full bibliography, following MLA style.

ALL COMPLETED THESES/PROJECTS MUST BE SUBMITTED in hard copy and by email to your advisor two weeks before the end of the semester: i.e., on or before May 3rd for spring projects, and Dec. 7th for fall projects. A second copy in paper and electronic form must be submitted at the same time to the Capstone Coordinator for Literature, Professor Berman ([BermanC@newschool.edu](mailto:BermanC@newschool.edu)). Her mailbox is in the Lang faculty room, 3rd floor, 65 W. 11th St. The Senior Thesis will be evaluated and graded by your advisor and by a second Literature professor.

*Please note that all Literature seniors, including thesis writers and senior seminar participants, will read excerpts of their work in progress at a Senior Capstone Reading toward the end of the semester.*