Capstone Research in European Studies

Student Handbook

Spring 2019 Version

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1. Introduction: What is a Capstone study?

The Capstone study is an in-depth academic study (20-25 pages in length) that offers an opportunity to explore a particular issue in much greater depth than is feasible in a class or seminar paper, and to argue your own perspective on that issue.

Like any piece of academic writing, your study needs to be motivated. It should be more than a synthesis of work already done on a particular topic; from your reading, you need to “create a research space” (Swales, 1990) that justifies the particular inquiry you undertake.

This means that you are expected to:

a) look critically at how other thinkers have defined the issue/problem
b) decide from your critical assessment of their attempts how you can best define the issue/problem
c) evaluate the evidence other researchers may have already presented on the issue/problem to see whether a convincing analysis/answer has already been found.

You then need to:

d) define the further questions that need to be addressed and decide which of these questions you can feasibly address in a small-scale study
e) define how you can gather “data” (or undertake some kind of inquiry) that will allow you to address those questions, again bearing in mind your limitations (time, access). You will need to justify your approach as the most appropriate one in the circumstances
f) define how you are going to analyse your material/data in order to be able to address your research questions, and justify this approach to analysis
g) draw from your analysis the significant conclusions in answer to your research questions and relate your discussion of these back to your original “problem” or “question” (steps a to c above)
h) discuss the limitations of your study in order to define its validity and use your discussion of limitations to explore your original approach to the “problem” further (e.g. specifying further research which could be undertaken)
i) (optionally) use your conclusions to specify some kind of “output”, e.g. policy recommendations.

The key to a satisfactory study or research project is the logical progression from introduction to conclusion; from research questions to investigation and to the conclusions which address the research questions in some significant way. That logic needs to be made clear to your readers.

While you cannot undertake sustained empirical research at this stage, you should undertake some form of original analysis which enables you to explore the question you identify in a way you judge to be appropriate. The study, then, is an opportunity for you to make your contribution to European Studies. It requires commitment, self-discipline, stamina, and long hours spent in the library - but it is also a challenging, stimulating, and satisfying project!
2. The Details: What Do I Need to Do?

You must be approved to take EUS 375 before you are able to register for the course. That means you will need to do a little legwork early on (semester before.)

**Topic:**
The first step to the Capstone is your topic. The topic is intended to be interdisciplinary, reflect your overall interests, and be representative of your cumulative undergraduate experience as a European Studies major. Hence, a capstone project that examines a single writer, artist, or thinker must, for example, explore that single writer, artist, or thinker within a broader and distinctly European context. But remember, the paper is only 20-25 pages, so the topic should be narrow enough that your research can be covered in the allotted number of pages.

**Faculty Advisor**
On the basis of your initial idea, you will identify an advisor from the list of affiliated CES faculty who has some knowledge of the area you wish to work in. (Lecturers may be considered but you will need approval from CES before contacting a lecturer to be your advisor.) Bear in mind that your supervisor will not necessarily be an expert on the specific question you wish to investigate... that expert, in fact, will be you. Students should contact their potential supervisor during the previous semester.

Advisors should give students some guidance before the previous semester ends as to preliminary reading and research that needs to be undertaken during the break. The purpose of starting work on the Capstone project early is to read and study so as to arrive in the semester with a more focused idea and/or area for investigation.

It is very important that you keep in touch with your supervisor. **CES requires that you meet with your advisor one hour per week. However, this schedule may be altered upon agreement between you and your supervisor but we must have notice in writing from your advisor at the beginning of the semester.**

Be sure to have your advisor sign your **Faculty Record Form** each time you meet. More information about the Faculty Record Forms is below.

Advisors typically discuss issues such as the scope of the title, the academic suitability of your project, methodologies and resources to use, sources of information or assistance. In addition, they may comment on preliminary plans and drafts. So, if you encounter problems or are unsure about the way ahead, talk things over with your advisor.

In the end, however, you are the person who knows most about your project and, thus, the only person who can assume responsibility for what it contains. Your supervisor cannot offer any supervision which might be interpreted as substantially contributing to the project itself. For example, you should not expect your supervisor to revise a final draft of your study. Nor can she or he tell you in advance whether your draft dissertation will definitely pass or not.

Use your supervisor wisely. As far as possible, prepare for meetings by identifying beforehand what it is that you wish to discuss or feel you need help with. If you are
asking your supervisor to give her or his opinion on your progress, please give her or him enough time (preferably at least a week) to read your work.

**Proposal Form:** You must complete a Capstone Project Proposal Form which includes a 1-2 paragraph tentative thesis topic and the signature of your advisor. Once you have completed the form, make an appointment with our Program Coordinator, Matthew Rabatin. After he approves your form, you will then be cleared to register for the course. **Application forms must be received by the Center by 3:00 p.m. on the eighth class day or you may not register for the course for the semester. (See deadlines below)**

Proposal Form:  
[https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/european_studies/files/PDF/Capstone%20Proposal%20Form.pdf](https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/european_studies/files/PDF/Capstone%20Proposal%20Form.pdf)

**Faculty Record Forms:** The Faculty Record Forms are a way for you to keep track of every meeting with your advisor. They are divided into the first and second halves of the semester.

Begin with the Faculty Record Form #1. Each time you meet, have your advisor sign and date the form. Turn in the Faculty Record Form #1 to the Center by the due date found below.

Then begin using Faculty Record Form #2 and have your advisor sign each time you meet. Turn this form into the Center with a copy of your final paper by the deadline found below. Failure to turn in either completed form will mean a deduction from your final grade.  
FRFs can be downloaded from our website:  

**Second Reader:** The second reader is a second faculty member who will read your final draft near the end of the semester. The second reader does not need to be an affiliated member of EUS but must be a faculty member at UT. Lecturers may be considered but you will need approval from CES before contacting a lecturer.

Your second reader will give their notes to you and to your primary advisor. Your advisor may include this information when formulating your final grade. Your primary advisor is a good resource when looking for a second reader. Once you have secured the reader, send an e-mail to CES with the name. The deadline for securing a second reader can be found below.

**UWC:** The Undergraduate Writing Center, located in the UT Learning Commons at Perry-Castaneda Library, is a fantastic resource for Capstone students. The UWC offers one-on-one consultations and host workshops that can help you with your research and writing. [http://uwc.utexas.edu](http://uwc.utexas.edu)
## Deadlines

Deadlines for each part of the Capstone are listed below. Dates must be met by each student. **There will be no exceptions made on deadlines and all students must attend the workshops. Failure to do so will result in a lower grade or failure of the course.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester before</th>
<th>Student should be reading and taking notes for his or her Capstone topic; make initial contact with potential supervisor.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 31, 2019</td>
<td>No application forms will be accepted after 3:00 p.m. on September 10th, the 8th class day. Students who have not submitted a completed and approved Proposal Form to the Center will not be able to register for the Capstone that semester. <strong>Students MUST schedule an appointment to submit paperwork and attend a short orientation session.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>On or Before January 31, 2019</td>
<td>Planned schedule of meetings with advisor must be turned into the Center in writing by your advisor if different than default (one hour per week.).</td>
</tr>
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<td>All semester</td>
<td>The student is responsible for working independently and meeting with advisor according to the predetermined schedule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By March 1, 2019</td>
<td>Confirm name of the second reader and send information to CES.</td>
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<td>March 1, 2019</td>
<td>Faculty Record Form #1 must be submitted to the Center (MEZ 3.304) by this date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 4, 2019</td>
<td>Turn in a <strong>complete first draft</strong> to your advisor.</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 30, 2019</td>
<td>Turn in fully revised draft to both readers.</td>
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| **May 10, 2019** | **Turn in a copy of your final paper** to your advisor and a copy to your second reader.  
Also turn in one copy of your final paper along with your Faculty Record Form #2 to the Center. (Mezes 3.304)  
All papers must be turned in by 5:00 p.m. on this day.  
**NO EXCEPTIONS TO THIS DEADLINE WILL BE MADE.** |
| Last Week of Classes (May 6-10, 2019) | **European Studies Capstone Presentations.** Attendance is required and students must attend all presentations.  
Students present their research and conclusions to other European Studies students, CES faculty, and friends. |
4. How should the Capstone paper be organized?

Ask your advisor what style he/she prefers. For instance, some faculty prefer footnotes while others want references within the text. The following are suggestions for formatting – but they are only suggestions. Be sure to discuss it with your advisor.

1. A title page
2. Abstract
3. A contents page
4. Introduction
5. The body: 3-4 subheadings or sections
6. Conclusions and recommendations
7. Bibliography
8. Appendices (optional)

1 Title Page
Your title page should give the title of your study, your name, the words “Center for European Studies: Capstone Project”, the submission date, and the name of the Professor who has supervised your work.

2 Abstract
Your study is a contribution to thinking in your chosen field. For this purpose, a brief summary of your study is required (250 words max) which will allow other researchers to get an idea of your approach and your conclusions. The usual structure for an abstract is given below:

Aim
What the study sets out to do

Background
The context and rationale for the dissertation

Procedure
How the study is organised; what it covers

Method
The approach or methodology used in the study

Findings
The key findings of the study

Conclusions
The principle conclusions or recommendations.
3 **Contents Page**
The Contents Page provides your reader with a quick guide to what is in your study and how it is organized. It should contain the title of each of your sections or subheadings, along with appropriate page numbers. You should also present a list of figures, tables and appendices.

4 **Introduction**
Your Introduction is where you set out in detail what you intend to do in the rest of the study. It is also where you discuss your reasons for undertaking this particular inquiry. So, the Introduction defines the study. For that reason, it is sometimes the last thing you write; it needs to be written based on the knowledge of what you have discovered in your inquiry.

It needs to contain:

a) a description of what you are going to do
b) a justification and description of your methods - i.e. how you intend to proceed
b) a discussion of why it is important.

5 **Subheadings and Sections**
The subheadings or sections of your study are where you actually demonstrate what you have done in your inquiry and your findings. How you organize them is up to you.

Try to keep your overall title constantly in mind when you are starting and finishing a section. You need to help your reader see the relevance of each section to your overall question, summarized in your title.

6 **Conclusion**
Your Conclusion is where you draw together the results of your inquiry. What have you discovered in the process and why is it significant?

Try not to use your conclusion just as a space in which you repeat what you have already said; talk about the results, but also think about discussing their wider implications.

7 **Bibliography**
All sources cited in the paper must be dully referenced. Consult your advisor on the appropriate bibliographic format and make sure all web and media references are in the appropriate format (see Guides… below).

8 **Presentation**
A high level of care in presentation is essential.

a) Your paper must be word-processed or typed on 8.5” x 11” paper, and on one side of the page only.
b) Your paper must be double spaced throughout, except for quotations longer than three lines, which should be indented and single-spaced. Appendices should be single-spaced within entries, and 1.5 or
double-spaced between entries. You should use 12-point standard font, e.g. Times or Arial

c) Pages must be numbered in the lower center.
d) You should have margins of at least 1 inch all round your text.
e) Ask your advisor whether they prefer citations within your text or footnotes.
f) Citations must be accurate. A bibliographical reference must be provided for all citations.
g) Accuracy in your use of English is assumed, as is correct spelling. Please use a spell-checker and proof-read your work rigorously.
h) Please ensure clear presentation of any tables, figures or diagrams.
i) Finally, you must:
   • avoid language use that might be found to be deliberately offensive,
   • ensure confidentiality where appropriate when referring to informants or subjects of your research,
   • acknowledge any sources or other assistance meticulously.

5. Research prior to writing

Reading widely and tracking down the relevant literature is only the first step towards writing a good project. As a very rough guideline, you are likely to consult at least 30 books and articles in the course of your research. You are expected to have reviewed the relevant articles in the current journals and to have conducted a bibliographical search from either print-based and/or electronic abstracting data-bases. You should not rely on your supervisor to point you to the relevant recent literature on your question. You are probably best advised to get down to doing this work as soon as you can and certainly before the start of the semester. Even though we have great library resources at UT Austin that cover most areas of interest for European Studies students, some key texts may not be immediately available on campus, thus you will probably need to request a number of texts/books and journal articles from interlibrary loans. Do this early on since it takes time.

During note taking, do take care to note down the detailed references of your sources (usual convention: Author/Date of publication/page number with the full title and publisher appearing in your bibliography). This will help when it comes to citing references in your text and drawing up your bibliography. It will also help you to avoid the risk of unacknowledged citation; please remember that plagiarism carries very serious penalties.

6. Drafting

As you get more and more familiar with your topic, you will start to formulate your own assessments of the evidence currently available and develop your own arguments. A mere reporting of other scholars’ theories obviously does not make a good research paper, however well organized. A Capstone study must have an argument, that is, a logical progression from a question to a (tentative) answer.

Your aim, then, is evaluate ideas and evidence, raise new questions, examine these questions systematically and coherently, and draw out well justified conclusions on the
basis of what you have found. You are not required to put forward a revolutionary new theory on, say, European nationalism or provide conclusive evidence to support a particular position. Nevertheless, you are expected to a) undertake a carefully considered inquiry using appropriate research tools which will allow you to draw some non-trivial conclusions, and b) indicate the limitations of your inquiry and, where appropriate, how other scholars might research your question more fully than you have.

7. Revising and proof-reading

A Capstone study should have a tight, coherent structure, show in-depth knowledge of the topic and develop logical arguments leading to careful conclusions. You must also follow referencing conventions rigorously. These are set out below. You should be meticulous about clarity of expression and spelling, as well as the presentation of any data.

Most of us are not good at proof-reading our own work: why not get somebody else to help you proof-read your final version for you?

8. Guidelines for the use of references

Below are guidelines for a research paper. You should ask your advisor what reference style they he/she prefers for you to use. It is a good idea to keep a computer database or an index card system as you read (ENDNOTE is a useful software package that helps you to do this), and to record all the required information for each reference straight away (and also where you got the reference, e.g. “PCL library ref: HG314.65”, “book borrowed from friend” etc.) so that when you come to the writing task all the information you need is at hand and you do not waste time going back to find books again.

Referencing is essential:
• to show that you have researched your material and that the ideas you present have been considered in the light of documented material on the subject,
• to substantiate the knowledge, theories, and discussions that you present in your paper,
• to differentiate between your own opinions and the views of those who have greater knowledge of the given subject,
• to allow those who are interested to go back to the sources you have cited for further information.

You may refer to literature in order to:
• give factual information,
• illustrate a point,
• present a theoretical perspective,
• present an argument or counter argument,
• support an argument or counter argument of your own.
It is essential that you acknowledge the sources of your information, ideas and arguments. Never copy anything from another source without referencing that source. Never quote or paraphrase very large chunks without interpreting or discussing them. Plagiarism is never worth it. It could cost you your degree.

There are a variety of accepted scholarly systems for referencing your sources. These include the Chicago Manual of Style, the Modern Language Association (MLA), and the American Psychological Association (APA). Make sure you are consistent in your use of the referencing system and that your Capstone supervisor approves it. You can find detailed descriptions of each style system in these works:


For more information on the steps of researching and writing your paper, consult one or more of these books:


We also strongly encourage you to visit the Undergraduate Writing Center for further advice and guidance: [http://uwc.utexas.edu](http://uwc.utexas.edu)

9. Presentation

During the last week of classes, you will give a 12-15 minute presentation based on your study and you should be prepared to answer questions (for about 5 minutes). This will form part of your final grade.

**Students are required to attend the full session in which they present.** The precise length of the entire session will depend on the number of Capstone projects being presented. Advisors are expected to attend the presentation of their student. We hope the faculty supervisor will open the student’s Q&A.
Visual Presentations: if students wish to show video or use PowerPoint, these presentations must be carefully timed and rehearsed. Students may speak for no more than their allotted time (15 minutes) and will then be expected to answer questions for up to 5 minutes. No more than 2-3 minutes of video should be used. Paper handouts circulated before the entire session begins are also a good idea.

Video and PowerPoint presentations must be loaded on the console computer in advance of the session in which a student presents. These presentations should be “road tested” for readiness.

10. Grading Guidelines
Your final Capstone grade will be determined based on the following:

- 50% - Final Paper
- 20% - Meeting with faculty advisor according to pre-arranged schedule
- 15% - Final Presentation
- 10% - Submission of Second Reader by deadlines
- 5% - Submission of completed Faculty Record Forms by deadlines

As a general guideline, broad descriptors for grading of the paper are given below.

Grade A

A Capstone project awarded an “A” grade should:
- provide an independent perspective on knowledge and understanding.
- demonstrate in-depth and balanced discussion of the question addressed (this should be reflected in the bibliography).
- be consistent in argumentation and analysis, with all stages in the argument supported by carefully evaluated academic evidence.
- demonstrate a critical stance in relation to knowledge and understanding; in particular, the limitations of claims should be recognized, and there should be evidence that alternative views and approaches have been critically evaluated.
- show clearly how conclusions are reached; in particular there should be evidence of the route of the academic journey, with significant waymarks identified.
- demonstrate that the inquiry itself has been conducted rationally and systematically throughout.
- there should be an absolute minimum of technical errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation and referencing.

Grade B

- A question/questions for investigation is/are clearly stated and supported by a rationale.
- The exposition may be orthodox and derived from established academic sources, but a representative coverage of the literature will be provided (this should be reflected in the bibliography).
- The argumentation may lack detail but will provide a coherent basis for addressing the questions for inquiry and will lead to investigation using broadly appropriate methods.
• There should be evidence that research methods have been selected taking into consideration issues of reliability, validity and ethics.
• Despite some digressions and irrelevancies, the inquiry will shed some light on the questions addressed and discussion of findings should link back to the theoretical rationale.
• The limitations of the inquiry will be addressed, leading to specifications for further research and/or development. The study should thus demonstrate some understanding of how to undertake independent investigation.
• There may be some technical weaknesses, e.g. errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation and referencing, but these should not significantly impede the reader.

**Grade C**

• A question/questions for investigation is/are stated and largely relate to the rationale.
• The exposition is orthodox and mainly derived from established academic sources. The coverage of the literature is adequate but some key texts are missing.
• The argumentation lacks sufficient detail but there is a basis for addressing the questions for inquiry and the methods used are broadly appropriate.
• There is little evidence of an awareness of methodological issues concerning reliability, validity and ethics.
• Despite digressions and irrelevancies, the inquiry will shed some light on the questions addressed and discussion of findings should link back to the theoretical rationale.
• The limitations of the inquiry are only partially addressed. The study should thus demonstrate some understanding of how to undertake independent investigation.
• There are a number of weaknesses, e.g. technical errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation and referencing, but these should not significantly impede the reader.

**Grade D**

• The study may succeed in identifying the issues implied by the title, but will not explore them in any depth.
• The structure will be adequate to outline an argument, but there are likely to be fairly major discrepancies, digressions and irrelevancies in investigating the issues at stake; in particular, a coherent progression from the rationale to the research questions to the investigation and the conclusions is likely to be absent.
• Important sections of work may be missing or very limited (e.g. literature review, inquiry, discussion, conclusions).
• A critical perspective on the knowledge and ideas presented will be lacking.
• The level of debate is likely to be superficial and predictable, with little evidence of intellectual engagement with the question chosen.
• Much of the discussion is likely to be derivative, typically based on general textbooks.

**Grade F**

• Failure to comply with the advisor/student meeting schedule.
• Failure to do any of the following: provide drafts of paper to advisor or second reader by due dates; turn in final draft to advisor, second reader and Center by due dates; turn in Faculty Record Form to the Center by due date.
• The study neither succeeds in identifying the issues implied by the title, nor will it explore them in any depth.
• The structure is inadequate to outline an argument, and there are major discrepancies, digressions and irrelevancies in investigating the issues at stake; in particular, a coherent progression from the rationale to the research questions to the investigation and the conclusions is likely to be absent.
• Important sections of work may be missing entirely (e.g. literature review, inquiry, discussion, conclusions).
• A critical perspective on the knowledge and ideas presented will be lacking.
• The level of debate is likely to be superficial and predictable, with little evidence of intellectual engagement with the question chosen.
• Much of the discussion is likely to be derivative, typically based on anecdotes and non-academic sources.

Incomplete

Incompletes will only be considered for students who have special documented circumstances and will be decided by the Center on a case-by-case basis. Students who have emergencies during the semester, such as illness or family emergency, should notify their advisor and the Center immediately and not wait until the end of the semester.