

# Wesleyan University Graduate Liberal Studies



## Graduate Certificate in Writing Capstone Guidelines 2023-2024

**NOTE: Students pursuing the Certificate as part of a degree (MALS or MPhil) must adhere to the guidelines for capstones/theses specific to those degrees.**

**Subject to change without notice. Updated Summer 2023**

## Overview

The capstone is the final course in the Graduate Certificate in Writing program. It is an advanced program of independent study within the Graduate Certificate in Writing, in which the student produces either a critical essay based on academic research (approximately 30 pages) or a creative piece (length determined by advisor).

The capstone is an opportunity to pursue, in depth, a topic of the student's choosing, under the guidance of a faculty member. The capstone provides evidence of the student's ability to independently produce, organize, and complete a graduate-level scholarly or creative work for academic credit.

**NOTE: Students pursuing the Certificate as part of a degree (MALS or MPhil) must adhere to the guidelines for capstones/theses specific to those degrees.**

### Academic Essay

An academic essay is a written work of approximately 30 pages in length, to allow the student to fully introduce and develop the topic, to incorporate the relevant literature (as applicable), and to summarize the conclusions. The essay must be completed under the supervision of a qualified faculty advisor.

### Creative Piece

A creative piece could include a collection of poems, short stories, a short novel, a screenplay, or other creative writing. The length and scope of a creative work produced for the capstone will be set by the advisor.

### **Overview of the Proposal Process** ***Step-by-step Timeline on pp. 7-9***

After doing some initial research on your proposed topic, you will arrange a meeting with the Assistant Director for Continuing Studies (AD, Continuing Studies). From this meeting, you will end up with a more concrete subject. Please note: **it is the student's responsibility to identify an advisor for your Capstone.** The AD, Continuing Studies will discuss your choice for advisor when you meet. Following this meeting, you will prepare a brief abstract, preliminary bibliography, and brief outline (which will be reviewed by the AD, Continuing Studies). You will then meet with the GLS Writing Consultant. During your appointment with the GLS Writing Consultant, you will review the work you have prepared. This is the appropriate time for you to receive objective feedback on the writing and the construction of the proposal. The Writing Consultant may subsequently choose to meet with your advisor to ensure that your project proposal meets the advisor's expectations.

After you have integrated feedback from the AD, Continuing Studies and the Writing Consultant, you will be ready to present the documents a potential advisor. If the advisor agrees to advise you, you will contact the AD, Continuing Studies, who will reach out to the advisor to finalize his or her participation. Once a faculty member has agreed to serve as your advisor, you will both set up a timetable for meetings and submission of drafts. This timetable is a required component of the proposal. It is your responsibility to keep your advisor apprised of your progress. In most cases, students and advisors need to meet two to four times in the proposal stage: initially, to finalize a topic, then to review drafts. Keep in mind that your advisor must have enough time to read and evaluate your work before

returning it to you with comments, and that you will need time to incorporate those comments. You should also be prepared for the possibility that your advisor will request significant changes to every draft, including your proposed final version.

### **Choosing a Topic**

You will be spending a lot of time with your chosen topic, so reflect carefully, and choose a topic of compelling, sustainable interest to you.

#### **Requirements:**

- The topic must be compatible with Wesleyan's liberal arts curriculum
- There must be an appropriate advisor for the topic who is available and willing to be an advisor
- The topic must be approved by the GLS director

#### **Where to begin:**

The most successful capstones arise from ideas developed in previous coursework. You should think back through your GLS courses for ideas and topics. Choosing a topic in which you have already done some research will make the capstone much more manageable, because you already have a base of knowledge and research from which to draw. You may also choose to consult with faculty members about ideas.

Many liberal arts topics in your concentration area may be chosen for the capstone. However, professional projects such as business plans, instruction manuals, or purely technical descriptions are not consistent with Wesleyan's curriculum and may not be approved for the essay or project. Areas of inquiry not taught at Wesleyan may not be approved.

### **Choosing a Faculty Advisor**

The capstone must be completed under the guidance of a faculty advisor with expertise in the student's chosen topic. The faculty advisor serves as the expert on the academic subject and discipline-specific style.

#### **Requirements:**

- The advisor must be
  - A member of the Wesleyan faculty
  - A visiting faculty member who has taught at Wesleyan within the previous calendar year
  - A GLS visiting lecturer who has offered a course in the program within the previous calendar year
- The advisor's area of expertise must be within the student's area of concentration
- The advisor must be available to serve as an advisor throughout the entire process
- The advisor must be approved by the GLS director

#### **Where to begin:**

The best place to begin is with your previous GLS instructors. During your initial meeting with the GLS Writing Consultant and AD, Continuing Studies, you will brainstorm possible advisors. Choosing a

faculty advisor with whom you have previously studied is strongly encouraged because the faculty member is already familiar with your academic work, and you are already familiar with his or her expectations and critical methods.

If it is not possible to work with a previous GLS instructor, you will need to find a faculty member or recent GLS instructor who has expertise in the area of your master's essay or project.

Once someone has provisionally agreed to serve as your advisor, please notify [AD](#), Continuing Studies at [masters@wesleyan.edu](mailto:masters@wesleyan.edu), so that crucial administrative information can be sent to your advisor.

### **Student-Advisor Relationship and Responsibilities**

The student and faculty advisor will work together from the development of the initial proposal through to the completion of the final revisions. It is important for both the student and the advisor to understand their responsibilities to ensure that the student-advisor relationship is successful.

#### **The faculty advisor should:**

- Ensure that the student's proposal is sufficiently detailed so that it communicates the intent and viability of the proposed topic
- Ensure that the student is meeting the goals of the proposal during the development of the official draft
- Serve as an academic subject expert to the student, helping to identify source materials, etc.
- Assist the student in meeting the requirements of the style manual appropriate to the capstone topic (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago, Turabian), unless other arrangements are made with the student. Please note that students should always use the latest edition of any publication style manual

#### **The student should:**

- Ask the advisor for help when necessary.
- Implement changes suggested by the advisor.
- Keep in contact with the advisor on a regular basis, as agreed upon, in your timetable.

### **Proposal Structure**

The proposal is the foundation on which the capstone is developed. You should view the proposal not as just a description of what you intend to accomplish, but as the first step in the development of the work. The proposal should be a detailed document that incorporates research, coursework, and timeframes for completion. In addition to serving as a guide to the student throughout the development of the capstone, a thoroughly-developed proposal also demonstrates to the GLS director that you have a clear vision and plan for accomplishing your goals.

### **Publication Style Manual Guidelines**

Students should select the style manual appropriate to their discipline (ie., APA, MLA, Chicago Style, or Turabian) and should follow the style manual for the proposal as well as the final work. Students should pay particular attention to and adhere to the style manual requirements in the following areas (this list is not intended to be all encompassing):

- Title page (see page 10 of this handbook)
- Copyright page (optional)
- Preface or acknowledgements
- Margins
- Table of contents
- Chapters (headers)
- Footnotes or endnotes
- Use and placement of quotes and punctuation
- References, bibliography, list of works cited/consulted
- Citations
- Figures (charts, graphs, maps, photos, drawings) and tables
- Appendices

Copies of the style manuals below can typically be found in libraries or can be purchased at a bookstore such as the Wesleyan R. J. Julia Bookstore, 413 Main Street, Middletown, CT 06459; (860) 685-3939. The below list of references follows the APA publication style manual.

American Psychological Association. (2001). Publication manual of the American psychological association (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York, NY: American Psychological Association.

Gibaldi, J. (1998). MLA style manual and guide to scholarly publishing. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: The Modern Language Assistant of America.

Grossman, J. (1993) (Ed.). The Chicago manual of style: The essential guide for writers, editors, and publishers. (14<sup>th</sup> ed.). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Turabian, K. L. (1996). A manual for writers of term papers, term papers, theses, and dissertations. (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

### **Proposal Requirements**

#### **Title page** (1 page)

The title page must include a working title, formatted exactly as the sample (found on page 10).

#### **Proposal** (2-1/2 to 4 pages)

##### **1. Abstract** (3 or 4 sentences)

In one paragraph, state the central question, theme, or problem your capstone will address. Do not use generalizations—state your issue in the form of a developed thesis statement.

##### **2. Development of topic**

Provide a detailed description of the topic and the academic context (i.e., the problems or issues in the field that the essay/project will address). This discussion may include a description of a hypothesis, anticipated results, process, product, artistic direction planned, or expected findings.

##### **3. Methodology**

Have a discussion with your advisor about the structure and format of the methodology you'll be expected to use. Address the academic disciplines from which you will draw and

explain which of these disciplines will inform the methodology you use. Provide a detailed description of the methods of inquiry and analysis.

#### **4. Literature review: analysis of scholarly context**

Review the available literature on the topic: what is already known about the topic? What is not known? How does this information relate to the proposed work?

#### **5. Wesleyan Resources**

Meet with a reference librarian who can discuss your topic with you and direct you to the library resources available at Wesleyan that will support your project. Please also list any faculty you hope to use as a resource.

### **Appendices** (in addition to the above)

#### **1. Timetable**

Document the key milestones required to complete the master's essay or project in a specified timeframe and provide a description of how you will interact with your faculty advisor: schedule of meetings, timeframe for response and feedback, key dates to deliver information for review, review for publication style compliance, etc.

#### **2. Bibliography** (2 to 4 pages)

Preliminary list of the source materials to be used (libraries, readings, references, labs, field area, etc.), documented using one of the publication styles (i.e., APA, MLA, Chicago, or Turabian).

#### **3. All documents required for IRB approval** (required only if student plans to use human subjects as data)

### **Timeline: Capstone Submission and Review**

Students may submit the proposal for the Graduate Certificate in Writing capstone as early as during their fourth or fifth GLS course, but no later than 8 weeks prior to the start of the term in which the work will be done.

Students are expected to complete the capstone in one term; this should be the final course toward the Certificate. If a student is unable to complete the capstone during that one term, the student may petition to continue into the following term. No extensions will be granted beyond the two-term maximum. If the student does not complete the final work by the end of the first term, the student will be given an incomplete grade with a provisional grade. If the work is not completed by the end of the second term, the provisional grade will become the final grade.

### **Pre-Work:**

1. Develop a preliminary Capstone idea.
2. Select a Capstone faculty advisor .
3. Work with AD, Continuing Studies, to develop draft proposal.

## Proposal Deadlines:

### 1 Submit draft proposal to GLS

#### Timing: Roughly 8 weeks prior to the final proposal deadline

*To begin work on Capstone in the Fall: submit your draft by Wednesday, May 10, 2023*

*To begin work on Capstone in the Spring: submit your draft by Monday, October 02, 2023*

*To begin work on Capstone in the Summer: submit by Monday February 19, 2024*

Submit a draft proposal by email to GLS at [masters@wesleyan.edu](mailto:masters@wesleyan.edu) for review by your advisor and the writing consultant. We forward your draft to your advisor and to the writing consultant for review. You will receive comments within 3 weeks, for incorporating into the final Capstone proposal.

### 2 Submit final proposal to GLS by 5 PM on the [Tutorial, Capstone or Thesis Proposal Deadline](#)

#### Timing: All materials, including advisor sign-off must be submitted to Continuing Studies by the following deadlines.

*To begin work on Capstone in the Fall: Wednesday, July 5, 2023*

*To begin work on Capstone in the Spring: Monday, November 27, 2023*

*To begin work on Capstone in the Summer: Monday, February 19, 2024*

The GLS director will approve or deny the Capstone based on the proposal submitted in light of the previous comments from the advisor and writing consultant.

**Registration:** Students will be enrolled and billed within 1 week of approval of the proposal.

Please note: all meetings with the Writing Consultant and the Assistant Director of Graduate Liberal Studies (and most likely your advisor, as well) may be held via phone or online meeting (Zoom, Skype, etc.).

### Capstone work (deadlines to be reconfirmed with student, advisor and GLS office):

#### 1 Write Capstone

2 *For those completing a Capstone in summer or fall:* By last day of classes in term (or other date approved by advisor and GLS) hand in completed MALS Capstone to advisor.

3 *For graduating students completing a Capstone in spring:* By close of early grading period for graduating students, hand in completed MALS Capstone to advisor.

4 *Prior to Commencement:* Submit one digital copy by email to the GLS office at [masters@wesleyan.edu](mailto:masters@wesleyan.edu), to be kept in your file.

### Making Changes After Approval of Final Proposal

Some of the most powerful learning opportunities in a Capstone occur during the development and finalization of Capstone proposals. The proposal is not intended to be a restrictive or inflexible document. It should serve as a guide for both the creative Capstone and the research

Capstone. During the discovery and exploration of your topic, you may need to shift direction. In this case, the faculty advisor must be consulted, and you must explain in the final work the reasons for moving from the original premise or assumptions.

### Use of Human Research Subjects

If your topic involves the use of human subjects (i.e., if you will interview and/or photograph people, etc.), you will need to get approval from Wesleyan's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The need for IRB approval extends to any manner of research, including experiments, interviews, surveys, and other data collecting methods. This process is designed to protect the rights and welfare of human participants by ensuring that they are selected equitably, participating voluntarily, fully informed of the risks and benefits of the research, and that the research minimizes risks to humans and protects their privacy and confidentiality.

Most proposals will be granted an expedited IRB review. However, if the proposed research presents particular concerns, it will be subject to a full board review. The full process for submitting all projects to the IRB can be found online at [wesleyan.edu/acaf/support/reviewboard.html](http://wesleyan.edu/acaf/support/reviewboard.html). Your proposal to GLS should include all of the information you intend to submit to the IRB. After your proposal has been approved by GLS, you will submit the proposal to the IRB.

The IRB must be notified of any unanticipated problem involving risks to subjects or others, including physical or psychological injury to subjects, improper disclosure of private information, economic loss, or other potentially harmful occurrences.

## **Completing the Graduate Certificate in Writing Capstone**

### **Submission of the Capstone**

Once the capstone is completed and approved by the advisor, you must submit one digital copy to the GLS office to be kept in your file.

### **Sample Title Page**

A sample title page, formatted as your page should be formatted, appears on the last page of this handbook.

### **Completion**

Once the capstone is approved and graded, credit will be awarded. Provided that all other certificate requirements have been met, the student's program is considered completed. Students earning only the certificate, and not a degree (MALS or MPhil) do not participate in commencement, but are welcome to attend the ceremony in the general audience, as well as any GLS reception that is part of commencement. For students enrolled in the Graduate Certificate Writing **only**: You will receive your Certificate and transcript in the mail within 8 weeks of the end of the term in which you completed the Certificate. For letters of completion, students must submit a written request to the GLS director ([masters@wesleyan.edu](mailto:masters@wesleyan.edu)), allowing 2 to 4 weeks following grade submission for requests to be

processed. For additional official transcripts, students should submit transcript requests online at [wesleyan.edu/registrar/forms/transcript\\_request.html](https://wesleyan.edu/registrar/forms/transcript_request.html).

**Protecting Intellectual Property (optional)**

Students might want to copyright their capstone work. Students can provide some level of copyright protection by inserting a single page that contains only the copyright information in the front of the document. The copyright information should be centered in the middle of the page, detailed as follows:

Copyright 2022 Jane E. Smith

SAMPLE TITLE PAGE

*(The title page is not numbered. The font, type size, and style should be the same as in the manuscript (no bolding). Below is an example of the GLS format for the Capstone Proposal and Official Draft cover sheet. Please note: the font size should be 11 or 12 depending on your publication guide.)*

HUMANISM, MODERNISM, IDEALISM, AND THE DANCE ART OF DORIS HUMPHREY

by

Jane E. Smith

Submitted to Wesleyan University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Graduate Certificate in Writing

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