Master of Arts in Liberal Studies
Capstone Guidelines
Fall 2017
Spring 2018
Summer 2018
Overview

The MALS capstone may be chosen the final course of the degree. It is an advanced program of independent study within the student’s area of concentration, in which the student produces a 30-page critical essay based on academic research or a creative, scientific, or mathematical project accompanied by a 20-page analytic essay.

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

Essay

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

Project

The MALS capstone project may take many forms: creative writing; performance; theatre, film, or video production; experimentation/investigation; artistic exhibition, etc. It may be an original body of art, a creative performance, a mathematical project, or a laboratory science study. The MALS project may be used to demonstrate artistic or creative ability. Examples of MALS projects in this area could include an art portfolio of new pieces, a music or dance performance, a play production, or a film. The MALS project in the area of writing could include a collection of poems, short stories, a short novel, a screenplay, or other creative writing.

Analytic Paper to Accompany Project

An analytic paper of approximately 20 pages must accompany the master's project. This written analytical component explains the nature of the project, incorporates the relevant literature in the field, and analyzes the work in its artistic and academic context. The academic analysis is meant to present what the work does/argues and why; it is not meant to answer questions about personal inspiration, how your feelings have changed over time, or other such non-academic topics. Personal narratives may be appropriate in the creative component. In the academic component, however, your responsibility is to explore the academic relevance, critical success, and intellectual significance of the creative work. For example, the paper for a painting project might include research on and references to artists or styles that influence the student's technique, or a subject or theme on which the work is based. The paper accompanying a choreography project might include research on a particular dance style,
choreographer, or an event in dance history.

**Project Documentation**

Students who complete a master's project must submit audio or video recordings, photographs, slides, charts, programs, gallery lists, and/or other appropriate forms of documentation. Field projects might include a research-style manuscript and/or videos, photographs, charts, computer files, or other appropriate forms of documentation. The faculty advisor must view the performance or studio work, preferably in person. Whenever possible, the GLS director or designee should also attend a show or performance.

**The Proposal Process**

*Step-by-step Timeline on pp. 9-10*

After doing some initial research on your proposed topic, you will arrange a meeting with the GLS Writing Consultant, Elizabeth Bobrick, and Associate Director for Student Services, Sarah-Jane Ripa. From this meeting, you will end up with a more concrete subject with which you can approach a potential advisor, and you will also have identified at least one potential advisor in an appropriate field. If Sarah-Jane and Elizabeth are not able, in this meeting, to identify a potential advisor for you, a second meeting with Sarah-Jane may be required. Following this meeting, you will prepare a brief abstract, preliminary bibliography, and brief outline before approaching a possible advisor. These will help you to convince the faculty member of the value of your project as well as your ability to accomplish your goals. If the advisor agrees to advise you, you will contact Sarah-Jane, who will reach out to the advisor to finalize his or her participation. Once he or she has agreed to advise you, you will meet one-on-one with the GLS Writing Consultant in order to fully prepare your formal proposal as outlined in the following pages.

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.

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 within your area of concentration
- The topic must be compatible with Wesleyan's liberal arts curriculum
- There must be an appropriate faculty member who is available and willing to be an advisor. Advisors can be 1) members of the Wesleyan University faculty, 2) visiting faculty who taught at Wesleyan with the past year, or 3) GLS visiting lecturers within the two years
- The topic must be approved by the GLS director

Where to begin:

The most successful MALS capstones usually arise from ideas developed in previous coursework. You should think back through your GLS courses for ideas and topics that can be developed into a graduate level master's essay or project. Choosing a topic in which you have already done some research will make the essay or project 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. In addition, you are welcome to examine previous master's essays/projects in the Olin Library archives (in closed stacks; advance request required).

Many liberal arts topics in your concentration area may be chosen for the MALS capstone. However, professional projects such as lesson plans, 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 MALS 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 two years prior to starting work on the proposal
- 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 assistant director for academic and administrative services, 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, notify Sarah-Jane at sripa@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 used for the particular essay or project (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

**Structure**

The proposal is the foundation on which the essay or project is developed. You should view the proposal not as just a description of what you intend to accomplish in the master's capstone, 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 master's essay or project, 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 (i.e., 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 14 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 Wesleyan R. J. Julia Books, 413 Main Street, Middletown, CT 06459; (860) 685-3939. The below list of references follows the APA publication style manual.


**Proposal Requirements**

**Title page** (1 page)

The title page must include a working title, formatted exactly as the sample (found on page 14).

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

1. **Abstract** (3 or 4 sentences)
   
   In one paragraph, state the central question, theme, or problem your essay or project 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 MALS capstone 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 MALS capstone as early as during their tenth or eleventh GLS course, but no later than 6 weeks prior to the start of the term in which the work will be done.

Students are expected to complete the essay or project in one term; this should be the final course toward the degree. If a student is unable to complete the essay or project 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. Students who do not complete the final work may register for a final course inside their area of concentration, as long as this is still within the maximum six-year period of eligibility (up to eight years by petition) and also within three terms of finishing the eleventh course.

Step One: 12 weeks prior to the start of the term in which the work will be done; Meet with GLS Assoc. Director, Sarah-Jane Ripa, and Writing Consultant Elizabeth Bobrick Come to this meeting prepared to present a specific topic that you would like to develop into a
capstone. For example, rather than proposing a project on women in British films, focus your area of interest on a specific topic, e.g., the roles of female servants in British films. At this meeting, Sarah-Jane and Elizabeth will help you to focus the scope of your topic as needed, and assist you in making your proposal as clear as possible. You will end up with a more concrete subject with which you can approach a potential advisor, and you will also have identified at least one potential advisor in an appropriate field. If Sarah-Jane and Elizabeth are not able, in this meeting, to identify a potential advisor for you, a second meeting with Sarah-Jane may be required.

Step Two: 9-10 weeks before the start of term
Advisor Approval
Once you approach a faculty member who provisionally agrees to advise your project, email Sarah-Jane at sripa@wesleyan.edu. Sarah-Jane will send him or her complete information regarding MALS Essay/Project advising. If he or she affirms to Sarah-Jane a commitment to advise you, Sarah-Jane will send you a notification. If the faculty member chooses not to proceed, Sarah-Jane will contact you to discuss an alternate advisor.

Step Three: 7-10 weeks before the start of term
One-on-One meeting with Writing Consultant
At this point your proposal should be in the form of a rough draft, with all of the components in at least outline form. Email this document to masters@wesleyan.edu; this will indicate that you are prepared to schedule your meeting with Elizabeth. The document will be forwarded to Elizabeth with the request for a meeting. She may contact your advisor between receiving your draft and meeting with you. This draft development meeting may last up to one hour. You may have other opportunities to work with her, as your work progresses.

Step Four:
7-10 weeks before the start of term
Advisor meets with writing consultant
Your advisor and Elizabeth may meet to review your proposal to ensure that both content and style guidelines are met.

Step Five: 6 weeks before the start of term
Draft Proposal Submission to GLS office
Submit a draft proposal to masters@wesleyan.edu; our office will forward it to your advisor and Elizabeth, with additional documentation. Do not send the proposal to them yourself.

Step Six: 4 weeks prior to start of term (10 business days after Draft Submission)
Comment incorporation
Your advisor and Elizabeth return comments to Sarah-Jane, who will forward them to you. Take the comments into account, as you make your final revisions to the proposal.

Step Seven: 3 weeks prior to start of term (2 weeks after comments have been returned to you)
Final Draft Submission to GLS Office
Email the final proposal, incorporating comments from your advisor and Elizabeth, to masters@wesleyan.edu for approval by the director.

Step Eight: 2 weeks prior to start of term (1 week after Final Draft Submission)
Approval/Denial
Jennifer Curran, the GLS director, will approve or deny the project based on the proposal submitted in light of the previous comments from the advisor and Elizabeth.

If your proposal is approved:
Congratulations! You will be instructed by the office on how to enroll in your capstone.

If your proposal is denied:
You may register for a course offered that term to complete the degree.

Please note: all meetings with Elizabeth and Sarah-Jane (and most likely your advisor, as well) may be held via phone or Skype if you are not able to come to campus.

Step Nine: Throughout the term
Work to complete capstone.

Step 10 (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.

Step 10 (for graduating students completing a capstone in spring):
By close of early grading period for graduating students
Hand in completed MALS capstone to advisor.

The master's essay or project is completed and approved by the advisor and a grade is submitted. Once the essay or project is approved and graded, three units of credit will be awarded. Provided that all other degree requirements have been met, the student’s program is considered completed.

Step 11:
Prior to Commencement
Submit one digital copy (preferably by email to masters@wesleyan.edu) to the GLS office to be kept in your file.

Making Changes After Approval of Final Proposal

The proposal is not intended to be a restrictive or inflexible document. It should serve as a guide for both the creative project and the research project. During the discovery and
exploration of the essay or project 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. A portion of the learning is a product of the journey from initial intention to final outcome.

Use of Human Research Subjects

If your topic involves the use of human subjects (i.e., if you will interview 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. 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 Capstone Essay or Project

Submission of the Essay or Project

Once the capstone is completed and approved by the advisor, you must submit one digital copy to the GLS office (preferably by email to masters@wesleyan.edu) to be kept in your file.

Sample Title Page

A sample title page, formatted as your page should be formatted, appears on page 14 of this handbook.

Completion

Once the essay or project is approved and graded, credit will be awarded. Provided that all other degree requirements have been met, the student's program is considered completed. Please note that students graduate and diplomas are issued only during the annual spring
commencement, held in late May. For letters of completion prior to commencement, students must submit a written request to the director via email to masters@wesleyan.edu, allowing 2 to 4 weeks following grade submission for requests to be processed. For an official transcript, students should submit a transcript request online at wesleyan.edu/registrar/forms/transcript_request.html. Language stating that the degree was awarded appears on transcripts printed only after commencement in May.

Protecting Intellectual Property (optional)

Students might want to copyright their master’s essay or project 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 2018 © 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 Final Essay/Project 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 degree of Master of Arts in Liberal Studies.

March 2017

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