

## CREATIVE CAPSTONE PROJECT FOR MASTERS STUDENTS

**Background:** The creative capstone project is an opportunity for students to research and execute an in-depth project in their final two semesters. A graduate student's creative capstone project should represent their mastery of the skills and knowledge covered in their program of studies.

The creative capstone project is not considered a thesis in the School of Communication. If you are considering pursuing a doctorate and are interested in creative work at the Masters level, please talk to your major professor.

### **Eligibility:**

After a student has completed their first semester of graduate course work in any major, they may begin pursuing a creative capstone project. For video projects, it is strongly recommended that students have completed 2 semesters of PIMC or Digital Video Certificate coursework before enrolling in Creative Capstone credits.

### **Sample Creative Capstone Projects:**

Some examples can include but aren't limited to:

- The student may choose to produce, direct and edit a documentary video.
- The student may choose to produce, write, and direct one or more episodes of a news or public affairs program.
- A student who has expertise in web design, may create a website.
- The student may develop a marketing and communication campaign (must include design elements).
- The student may write a screenplay or adaptation of a novel.
- The student may create a script for a theater performance

### **Timeline**

The following is a suggested timeline, but discussion with the chair of your project committee may lead to a modified timeline:

- No later than the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester in the program, and one semester prior to the semester when the creative capstone credits would begin, the student should find a faculty member who is interested in their general creative area of interest to chair their committee. We strongly advise that the student also try to find the two other faculty committee members at this time.
- No later than the 3<sup>rd</sup> semester in the program, the student must enroll in COM5955 to write and defend the project proposal and begin research.
  - In this semester, the student is responsible for finding a mutually agreeable date and time for all committee members for the required defense of the written proposal, no later than two weeks prior to exam week.
  - During the proposal defense, committee members should agree on what materials should be reviewed by the full committee and what materials should be reviewed by the chair during the final semester. This should include the final review prior to the defense.

- No later than the 4<sup>th</sup> semester in the program, the student must enroll in COM5955 to work on, complete, and defend the creative capstone project.
  - In this final semester, the student is responsible for finding a mutually agreeable date and time for all committee members for the required oral defense of the project, two weeks prior to exam week.
  - When the project is successfully defended, the chair must submit the graduate exam clearance form, signed by all committee members.

**Selecting a Creative Capstone Project committee:** All students completing a master's Creative Capstone Project must have a minimum of three thesis committee members. At least two must be from the School of Communication. According to University policy, all three members of a student's thesis committee must have master's directive status (MDS). A list of all departmental faculty members with this distinction is available from the departmental office; outside faculty member's status can be checked by looking at the "University Faculty, Professional and Administrative Personnel" in FSU's *General Bulletin*.

- *Committee chair/major professor:* Next to the student, the project committee chair (or major professor) is arguably the most important individual in the process. The committee chair is the individual who will work closest with the student during the process. Because of this, the student should keep in mind three key questions when approaching a professor about serving as her/his/their chair: (1) Is this professor the one individual on faculty who is most knowledgeable about the creative medium that I want to use? (2) Does this professor find my topic engaging?; and (3) Can I work together with the professor to achieve my goals? Because the creative capstone project is typically a multi-semester investment, the answer to each of these questions is ideally a resounding "yes." When approaching a faculty member to request that they serve as committee chair, the student is strongly encouraged to provide a one-page brief description of the proposed project. Also, because of the time commitment, the student should allow the professor a few days to consider the request before answering.
- *Committee members:* In addition to the committee chair, a minimum of two faculty members must serve on the thesis committee. It is not uncommon (though also not required) for the student to request suggestions from the committee chair about the two additional committee members. In general, the two additional members should also serve as specialists in the chosen medium and/or topic. Additional members (above the three required) from inside or outside the School are optional, but should only be added with a strong rationale and upon the approval of the committee chair.

**Registering for Project Credits:** As a reminder, all students pursuing the Creative Capstone Project option must complete 27 hours (24 of which must be letter-graded) of coursework in the program in addition to Creative Capstone Project credit. Although it is not required that the coursework be completed prior to registering for creative capstone project credit, it is customary that students will complete the project as the final element of their program. Students must enroll in COM5955 in the semester in which they will defend their written proposal and the semester in which they will complete and defend

the creative capstone project. Registration for the hours can be accomplished by having your committee chair complete a Reference Number Request Form (available from the departmental office) during your registration window.

**Writing the Creative Capstone Project Proposal:** The purpose of a Creative Capstone Project proposal is to provide the student's committee members with a concise description of the proposed study, so they can determine the soundness of preparation and conceptualization of the project. In essence, the proposal represents a type of *contract* with the committee regarding the nature and scope of the project, and once the committee has approved it, the student is responsible for fulfilling that agreement. Accordingly, the proposal is a suggested plan for the project, which directly solicits the advice, evaluation, and approval of the committee members. Obviously, the more developed the proposal, the more enlightened the committee members will be about the potential of the planned creative capstone project and the more helpful in advising the master's candidate. The expected length of the proposal should be discussed early on with the committee chair, with the negotiated result being shared with the other committee members.

**Guidelines for the Written Proposal:**

Though the nature of each proposal will dictate certain specifics, a good proposal will include: (1) student's educational and artistic background (2) project information and (3) significance/impact statement:

*Educational and/or Artistic Background*

- List and describe relevant completed courses.
- Summarize and cite the communication and other relevant theory that is relevant to the project.
- Describe your experience working within your artistic medium.

*Project Information*

- Describe the project, including specific information about the objective and activities to be included, as well as your creative approach.
- Submit a project timeline.

*Significance/Impact*

- Explain the public, artistic, social and/or theoretical significance or impact of your project.

**Submitting the Written Proposal:** Once completed, the written proposal should be submitted to the student's committee chair for review. Only after she/he approves the proposal should the student submit it to the other committee members. Also, it is expected that students will provide committee members at least two weeks prior to the defense to review the proposal.

**Defending the Written Proposal:** Once the committee chair has approved the proposal for distribution, the student should contact all committee members to arrange a date for the proposal defense. Again, the defense should be set at a minimum of two weeks from

the date that the proposal is distributed to committee members. Each committee chair will have a unique manner for conducting a defense; therefore, the student should meet with the committee chair beforehand to discuss her/his expectations about the meeting. In general, though, the defense offers the full committee the opportunity to help the student prepare to complete the creative capstone project. Therefore, most proposal defense meetings will involve the student providing a brief overview of the proposed creative capstone project, with each professor asking questions and offering suggestions. Rather than fearing the defense, the student is encouraged to look forward to the defense as a forum for constructive feedback and making the project stronger. Although many meetings do not last this long, a minimum of 90 minutes should be allowed for the proposal defense. The student should work with his/her committee chair to determine where and how the meeting should be scheduled.

**Making Progress:** Committee chairs approach creative capstone project work in different ways. So, each student must negotiate with the committee chair issues such as organizational meetings, status reports, viewings of creative work in progress. The student is expected to primarily work with the committee chair on the project; the other committee members serve a supporting role and should be thought of accordingly. Nonetheless, students are encouraged to keep the other committee members apprised of how the project is progressing and to approach those members with questions or issues that they are uniquely qualified to address.

**Defending the Creative Capstone Project:** Typically, professors are less available in the summer semester; so, creative capstone project defenses during those months are extremely rare and should be discussed with the full committee well ahead of time. Each committee chair will conduct the defense in a unique way; therefore, the student should meet with the committee chair beforehand to discuss her/his expectations about the meeting. But generally, the creative capstone project defense will be similar to the proposal defense: the student provides a brief overview of the creative capstone project, with each professor asking questions about the finished product. Defenses regularly take at least 60 minutes to conduct; therefore, a minimum of 90 minutes should be allowed for the creative capstone project defense. The student should work with his/her committee chair to determine where and how the meeting should be scheduled.

**Grading the Creative Capstone Project:** Students will receive a grade of *S*(atisfactory) or *U*(nsatisfactory) for their COM 5955 Master's Creative Capstone Project courses. Because students typically take more than one semester to complete the project, a grade of *I*(ncomplete) will be recorded for all semesters of creative capstone project work until the project is defended.

For the written proposal semester, a Satisfactory will be given for students who successfully defend their proposals following the criteria outlined in this document.

For the defense semester, a Satisfactory will be given for students who successfully defend their projects following the criteria outlined in this document.