



AMST 7900

Capstone Student Handbook

November 12, 2009

AMST7900 CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE

Guidelines, Policies, and Forms

Prerequisite:

Completion of 18 credit hours in the American Studies graduate program.

Course Description:

The AMST7900 Capstone Experience is a thesis or project that is relevant to the student's area of expertise and future professional goals for work in American Studies. Regardless of the option chosen, the thesis and project are intended to involve an equivalent level of professional/academic achievement. In the first semester of AMST7900, the student works under the supervision of two faculty members to develop a literature review and proposal for the thesis/project. In the second semester, the student works under the committee's guidance to produce the thesis/project. At the conclusion of the second semester, the student defends the thesis/project. The components of the capstone experience are described in detail below.

THESIS OPTION

The thesis demonstrates a student's ability to carry out independent research. When choosing a topic, the student should take into consideration his or her background and interests, accessibility of research materials, and the probable significance of the project to the field of American Studies. Students are required to follow the procedures established by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for all research involving human participants.

A suitable topic for the thesis option will be interdisciplinary in nature, and conceptualized to draw upon the student's prior course work and additional research. Research and writing of the thesis should draw upon interdisciplinary approaches for scholarly production consistent with work being done in American Studies.

The total length of the research thesis may vary depending on the topic and blend of methodologies employed. The final length should be based on consultation with the student's thesis committee, as this committee will ultimately approve or reject the project. However, as a general guideline, the thesis should be a minimum of 50 pages in length, including literature review, footnotes, and bibliography.

PROJECT OPTION

The American Studies project option invites students to carry out a project that contributes to culture-making in the field by synthesizing and applying knowledge from course work in the program. For students choosing the project option, the project will exhibit learning outcomes consistent with more traditional capstone experiences.

Reflective Essay: Whatever the focus and form of the project, students selecting the project option will write a reflective essay synthesizing knowledge of American Studies within the

context of their applied project and highlighting connections between scholarship in the field and the work achieved through the capstone. (In other words, students will incorporate the literature review into their final reflective essay.) This essay should include citations appropriate to the topic of applied scholarship. The length of this narrative should result from consultation with the student's capstone committee. However, a minimum length should be 25 pages, not including any written material prepared as part of the project itself.

Project Examples

Several examples of the project option are briefly characterized and then described in more detail below. These examples are meant to be illustrative rather than prescriptive.

- A detailed plan for and analysis of a museum exhibit
- A curriculum development project
- A website or multimedia work with content focused on an American Studies topic or set of issues
- Dramaturgy related to on or off campus production

Detailed plan for and analysis of a museum exhibit

A project envisioned as a museum exhibit might have as its core product a concept paper addressing a topic from current American Studies scholarship as it would be presented to a particular audience in a specific type of museum. For example, if describing and analyzing an American Studies exhibit for an art museum, the student might envision a focus such as "Early American Portraiture: A Meditation on the Promise and Reality of American Culture." In planning for this exhibit, the student might compare pre- and post-Revolutionary portraits to illustrate how the American Revolution shaped visual culture of the emerging nation. For a history museum, a student could describe an exhibit organized around a topic such as "Coming to America," which might present the experiences of two different families who immigrated to the United States, one from nineteenth-century Ireland and the other from twenty-first century Iran. In developing a detailed plan, the student might explain how specific components of the exhibit would treat such topics as imagined versions of America versus lived experience, issues of double consciousness, and/or ways that technologies have shaped immigrants' daily lives in differing ways. Similarly, for a natural science museum, a student's project might examine a topic such as "America, the Environment, and the Global Economy" as it would be presented for an audience of elementary and middle school children visiting a science museum. In this case, the student might describe how materials from an array of sources could be used to introduce the museum's audience to the exhibit topic, by drawing from literature (*Silent Spring*), film (*Jurassic Park*), photography, and artifacts from everyday life.

In each of the cases briefly described above, the project product could, for example, include the following: an interpretive essay; diagrams of the proposed exhibit space; examples of primary materials to be used in the exhibit; excerpts from oral histories to be used in the exhibit; a short exhibition fact sheet; label copy for each artifact; and a plan for evaluation of the exhibit (including audience response).

Curriculum development project

A project envisioned as curriculum might have as its core product a very detailed teaching plan as it would be presented to a particular academic audience—e.g., an introductory American Studies class for university undergraduates, an AP history course in a public high school, an interdisciplinary workshop team-taught by two middle school teachers, or curriculum unit built around attendance at a multi-day conference organized around an American Studies theme (e.g., the anniversary of the publication of a culturally significant novel or film, the exploration of a particular historic site). For example, a unit might be planned for a high school American literature course exploring the Civil Rights Movement as depicted in literature and film. The student might draw from a wide range of sources, carefully explaining how learning activities as well as specific content are selected and organized around concepts from current American Studies scholarship. Similarly, a student could describe and analyze a plan aiming to introduce undergraduates to major methodologies used in American Studies today. In this case, the plan could include both explanations of specific assignments for students to do, descriptions of classroom activities and field trips, as well as summaries of content for lectures and discussions. Along related lines, a project envisioned as a curriculum plan for a large public audience might present an array of explanatory materials that would be provided for schoolteachers and students attending a program linked to American Studies topics, such as a workshop organized to coincide with the opening of a new exhibit or public history site. In this case, the project product might include such items as pre-visit study guides, written directions for learning activities to be carried out at the site, and post-visit curriculum for classroom use, as well as detailed analysis of the links between preparation of these materials and the M.A. student's study of the topic from an American Studies perspective.

Website

For this option, a student could develop a website displaying an online thesis that addresses a topic relevant to American Studies. The final product would be the equivalent of writing a 50-page traditional manuscript thesis. The purpose for creating an on-line project is to publicly present material that cannot be organized and demonstrated in a traditional manner. The online project might present: (1) an interpretive essay, including citations and a bibliography, with an argument that incorporates visually rich evidence, while it also demonstrates the significance of the work to the field of American Studies; (2) numerous artifacts with detailed labels for each photograph, film clip, or document that you plan to include in your site; and also (3) a links page to relevant Internet material.

Example topics:

- African American women's representations in American films
- The cultural work of photographs/film clips from the Great Depression
- The effects of media bias on American public policy

For an example of an online thesis, visit the following website:

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MA99/diller/mammy/>

Dramaturgy related to on or off campus production

In conjunction with the planning and rehearsal stages of the production of a play relevant to AMST, the dramaturgy project might include, for example, some of the following components: images, video, and/or music relevant to the production concept, transcriptions of interviews with cast and crew, notes written for the program, an essay related to the style of production, a study guide geared towards teachers and high school or middle school students, a journal annotating various meetings with the director and/or designers during the process, and a presentation (with Audio/Visual support incorporated into it) geared towards a general education (e.g. 1107) KSU course. Given the collaborative nature of such work, students will work with TPS faculty to consider and describe how they will work and communicate with community and university partners. For examples of production dramaturgy for AMST-related projects, see: <http://www.kennesaw.edu/theatre/dramaturgySites.html>

CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE GUIDELINES

Statement of responsibility

Each student is responsible for adhering to the requirements set forth in this document. Any deviation from the requirements set forth in this document must be reviewed and approved by the MAST director.

Capstone Committee

During the term prior to preparing and revising the capstone thesis/project, the student will consult with the MAST Director or a faculty advisor about appropriate members for the capstone committee. The two committee members should be familiar with the student's work in the program.

The student is responsible for asking faculty members to serve on the capstone committee. After the student has secured the agreement of both committee members, the student will inform the MAST director by turning in a Capstone Committee Selection Form. The Capstone Committee Selection Form shall also include a communication plan for how the student will get advice from committee members about project materials and how the student will respond to that advice, e.g., meetings, e-mail attachments.

Students should plan ahead in assembling a committee. Depending on how many committees a faculty member is already serving on, he or she may not be available to serve on another team in a given term.

Capstone Committee Responsibilities and Policies

The capstone committee consists of two graduate faculty members with shared responsibilities.¹ At least one committee member shall be affiliated with American Studies.

Committee member responsibilities include advising the student about:

- drafting and filing a Capstone Committee Selection Form before the last day of classes in the term preceding enrollment for the Capstone
- determining the focus and format of the capstone thesis/project
- planning the focus, shape, and content of the thesis/project
- assembling a reading list or avenues of research
- creating a schedule and timeline for completing research and writing
- monitoring the schedule of tasks and the timeline, taking into account the official incomplete policy in the Graduate Catalog

Committee members will also facilitate the completion of the thesis/project by:

- reading drafts of documents, annotating the drafts, and providing feedback in a timely fashion
- conferencing with the student about the thesis/project's tasks and timeline
- conferencing with the student regarding theoretical issues and/or readings for the capstone thesis/project

¹ Faculty with graduate status and the instructions for applying for graduate status can be found here: <http://www.kennesaw.edu/graduate/faculty.html>

- reading and approving the final versions of capstone thesis/project
- participating in formal evaluation of the thesis/project
- signing all attendant documents verifying completion of the thesis/project

Committee members receive one course release for the supervision of six successful capstone experiences. Credit for supervision can be counted after the student enrolls in the second semester of AMST7900 Capstone. The MAST office will maintain a record of faculty supervision of capstone experiences.

First Semester: Literature Review and Proposal

In the first semester of the capstone thesis/project (3 credit hours), the student shall prepare a literature review and thesis/project proposal and have both approved by the committee. The student is responsible for getting the Literature Review and Proposal Approval Form approved by the last day of classes.

The literature review must place the proposed thesis/project in context of the relevant American Studies (or other) literature.

The thesis/project proposal should include

- a detailed statement of the rationale for the capstone thesis/project
- a list of the components of the thesis/project
- a plan for the research, drafting, revision and/or production of the elements of the thesis/project
- a timeline for the completion of the parts of the thesis/project

The literature review and proposal may be prepared as one integrated narrative.

The student shall submit the approved literature review and proposal and the completed, signed Literature Review and Proposal Approval Form to the MAST director for the student's file. The MAST director will then permit the student for enrollment in the second semester of AMST7900.

Second Semester: Completing of the Capstone Requirement

The student shall distribute final copies of the thesis/project to the committee at least three (3) weeks prior to the defense.

Students completing the thesis/project shall schedule a defense of the thesis/project with the committee. The student shall begin the defense with an introduction to or overview of the thesis/project, and then expect to respond to questions from the committee regarding the thesis/project in the context of his or her educational experience. The defense shall take place at least three weeks prior to the dates of graduation.

After the student successfully completes the defense the committee members sign the Certificate of Approval. When the student has made all corrections required by the committee, the committee members sign the Notice of Completion. The MAST staff forwards the notice to the Registrar.

Other Policies:

In exceptional circumstances, and with approval of the Capstone Committee, students may enroll in all six credits of AMST7900 in a single semester.

In exceptional circumstances, if a student fails to complete the thesis/project in the second semester, the student shall enroll in additional semesters of AMST7900.

Calendar

Due date	Action
1 month prior to the beginning of first semester of capstone	Student submits signed Capstone Committee Selection Form to MA Director
Prior to the first day of final registration for the second semester of capstone	Student submits literature review and proposal and signed Literature Review and Proposal Form to the MA Director. MA Director permits student to register for second semester of AMST7900.
Three weeks prior to defense	Student submits final copy of the thesis or project to the committee
Three weeks prior to graduation	Student defends thesis or project. Committee signs Certificate of Approval and Notice of Capstone Completion. Student submits Certificate of Approval and Notice of Completion to MA Director.
One week prior to graduation	Student submits final project or thesis to DigitalCommons@KSU MA Director submits Notice of Completion to Registrar.

Grading

AMST 7900 receives a grade of "S" or "U." "S" indicates that credit has been given for completion of degree requirements other than academic course work. "U" indicates unsatisfactory performance or progress in an attempt to complete degree requirements other than academic course work.

Final Deposit of Capstone Project Copies

All degree candidates must submit their final work electronically to DigitalCommons@Kennesaw no later than one week prior to graduation. Although the thesis or project itself must be submitted electronically, most supporting documents must still be submitted in paper form. Any student who fails to meet the final deposit deadline is automatically removed from the graduation list.

DigitalCommons@Kennesaw

Theses and projects are now permanently archived through the DigitalCommons@Kennesaw. Authors will complete a Non-Exclusive Licensing Agreement as part of this process. Note that students are free to reuse the content elsewhere. By signing the license, a student affirms that he or she has the right to grant the rights contained in the license and that the submission does not infringe upon anyone else's copyright.

DigitalCommons@Kennesaw can support a range of thesis/project formats. Theses will be generated as PDF files according to the following guidelines. Students using video, websites, audio documentaries, or other formats for their project shall work with the MAST director and his/her committee members to identify acceptable submission guidelines.

Copyright

Students and their advisors should carefully consider the desirability of registering the copyright for the thesis/project. General information regarding copyrights can be obtained from www.copyright.gov. There is no MAST or KSU requirement to register the copyright.

FORMAT FOR THESIS AND REFLECTIVE ESSAY PORTION OF PROJECT

The following guidelines apply to a thesis and the reflective essay portion of a project. Students intending to produce projects in other formats shall work with the MAST director and his/her committee members to identify acceptable submission guidelines.

The written portion(s) of the capstone project shall utilize the footnote/bibliography format as outlined in the latest edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

The thesis or reflective essay portion of the project shall include the following elements in the order indicated:

- 1) A title page in the format of the example attached.
- 2) The Certificate of Approval containing the signatures of the student's committee. (The Certificate of Approval containing original signatures shall be submitted to the MAST office and place in the student's file.)
- 3) A table of contents (in the case of a thesis).
- 4) The text of the entire thesis or reflective essay.
- 5) A curriculum vitae, biography, or résumé. The student should include a vita, biography, or résumé (not to exceed three pages) that highlights his or her achievements..

Title page:

The title page shall appear as follows, center-justified:

<TITLE IN UPPERCASE AND BOLD LETTERS>

[ten single spaced blank lines]

A Thesis

Presented to

The Academic Faculty

[three single spaced blank lines]

By

[three single spaced blank lines]

<Student's Name>

[four single spaced blank lines]

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in American Studies

[six single spaced blank lines]

Kennesaw State University

[one single spaced blank line]

[Month, Year of graduation]

Margins

Each page must have a margin of 1" on all sides. On the first page of every major division (e.g., chapter, table of contents, references, etc.), a 2" margin is required at the top. All tables and figures must conform to the margin requirements.

Fonts

Times Roman shall be used throughout the text, with 12 point font for the main text and 8 or 10 point font in the footnotes.

Page Numbering

Beginning with the title page, every page is assigned a number. The preliminaries (items 1 through 3 above) are numbered in lower-case Roman numerals placed without punctuation in the center of the page ½" from the bottom of the page. The title page and the Certificate of Approval are considered to be pages i and ii, but numbers are not typed on these pages.

Text and reference pages are numbered consecutively in Arabic numerals beginning with 1 on the first page of the text. The numbers are placed without punctuation in the upper right corner 1 inch from the right and at least ½" from the top of the page. All pages of the text and reference material, including appendices, references, and cover sheets (if used) are counted and numbered.

Spacing

The general text of the capstone project is double-spaced. Single spacing is used for long tables, itemized or tabular material, footnotes, multi-line captions. Long quotations and reference entries should be spaced following the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

Footnotes and Bibliography

The thesis should include footnotes and a bibliography formatted according to the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

Printing

The final copy of the thesis/project (including Approval pages, but without signature) shall be saved as a PDF file for uploading to the DigitalCommons@Kennesaw

**Master of Arts in American Studies
Capstone Committee Selection Form**

To be completed prior to enrollment in AMST7900 Capstone Experience. It is the student's responsibility to obtain the faculty signatures and return the completed form to the MAST office.

Please type directly into this form.

Student name:

KSU#:

Projected Completion Date:

Title of thesis/project:

Communication plan:

Committee member:

Department:

Signature: _____

Committee member:

Department:

Signature: _____

MA Director approval: _____

**Master of Arts in American Studies
Capstone Literature Review and Proposal Approval Form**

To be completed prior to enrollment in the second semester of AMST7900 Capstone Experience. Please attach the literature review and proposal to this form. It is the student's responsibility to obtain the faculty signatures and return the completed form to the MAST office.

Please type directly into this form.

Student name:

KSU#:

Projected Completion Date:

Title of thesis/project:

Committee member:

Department:

Signature: _____

Committee member:

Department:

Signature: _____

College of Humanities & Social Sciences
Kennesaw State University
Kennesaw, Georgia
Certificate of Approval

This is to certify that the thesis/project of

has been approved by the committee for the capstone requirement for the
Master of Arts in American Studies
in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Thesis/Project committee:

Member

Date

Member

Date

Original filed in MAST office.

Kennesaw State University
Master of Arts in American Studies
Notice of Capstone Project Completion

Student name:

Semester/Year of graduation:

KSU#

Degree Program: MA in American Studies

Title of thesis/project:

Date of oral defense:

Thesis/Project committee approval of thesis/project and oral defense:

Member

Date

Member

Date

MAST director

Date

Original to Registrar
Copy to student's file
Copy to MAST office