

**Team Y Spring 2017
Capstone Syllabus**

Making the Invisible Visible

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Part I: Introduction

Welcome to Capstone 2017! Our team was chosen to develop a pilot capstone project with the goal of exploring beyond the traditional CGS capstone boundaries. We hope this experience will be as exciting and rewarding for you as it has been for us.

The theme of our team's capstone is "**Making the invisible visible.**" Within that theme you have the greatest possible latitude for finding and exploring a topic. As we move through the semester each of your professors will delve into this theme through the curriculum. As you have no doubt already seen, your CGS courses all explore this theme in various ways, and from differing perspectives. You are already engaged in the process of forming groups, and you'll also want to make time to think about possible Capstone topics as the semester continues. We welcome you to engage in discussions with us about your topic ideas throughout the semester, too.

We conceptualized this capstone as a broad interdisciplinary approach that reflects all of our courses. We decided on a well-articulated interdisciplinary approach so that no question "belongs" to any one division. As a group of three professors, we worked together, all contributing equally to the structure of the syllabus, the theme, and the mechanics of the Capstone assignments.

Where the traditional capstone assigns students to seek solutions to problems, ours focuses on exploring the process of problem-solving. We expect the capstone to be a work in progress rather than presenting us with some sort of final outcome. We predict that in contrast to finding "answers" you may generate more questions than you expected. In general, we prefer a local focus that encourages **experiential investigation** to complement bibliographic research.

Your capstone will produce a lot of thinking, discussion, and process. It will also produce **five main tangible elements**. Each of you, as a part of your group, will participate in and/or produce the following:

1. An individual log that records and describes your experiences
2. A group annotated bibliography
3. A group creative work
4. A cooperatively generated exploratory essay
5. A group capstone defense

We expect that this will be a generative process in which the form of the end product may not be in sight at the beginning of your work.

We believe that doing creative work leads to further experience and discovery, which can lead to unexpected results. With this in mind, we'd prefer not to impose our expectations on the format of the creative work portion of your project. There are times when the process you are involved in may seem ambiguous. This is a healthy part of the process

and we look forward to reading your comments about it. Finally, the work you will be doing should be **exploratory rather than expository**.

We want to encourage your resourcefulness and innovation, habits that you will take with you through your education and career. To this end we hope you will employ all of the following:

- Exploration
- Problem solving
- Incorporating various learning styles
- Reflection
- Interactivity
- Using individual and group strengths
- Compromise
- Thinking in original ways
- Group consensus and mutual respect
- Time management and organization

We are also hoping that your investment in this process will lead to a more contemplative, associative process in which you take ownership and feel connected to the work. Your engagement in the project is super important to us.

Part II. The Five Main Elements of the Team Y Capstone

1. **Your Log**. Make a space on your e-portfolio for capstone, and begin posting a log there. At first, starting right now, keep a **weekly** capstone log; describe the work you have done each week on your capstone project. Include everything – even if that work is just thinking, or discussing the composition of your group, or struggling to come up with an idea. It’s all a part of the process. Starting on March 31, the day of the Capstone Kickoff, start keeping a **daily** log; keep that log going until the day of the Capstone Turn-In, which is April 28. The log is really the only portion of your capstone work that is individual in nature (even though you will, of course, be describing your cooperative group work in your log).

2. **Your Annotated Bibliography**. **(Due via email to all three professors on April 10)**. Your annotated bibliography will include a paragraph description of your proposed project (at the top of the page) followed by approximately thirty annotations. Each student must compose six.

First, write a paragraph describing your proposed project. (For example, you might have chosen prison reform as your focus. You plan to research prison

reform in Massachusetts. You also plan to choreograph and perform a dance that is imitative of this act of invisibility being made visible.)

Next, you will write your annotations. Five of your bibliographic sources must be scholarly sources (for example, biographies, scholarly essays, books of analysis, etc.). One can be a creative piece (film, play, novel, etc.). Specifically, this is what you need:

--two of each six sources need to be from books or essays that you can hold in your hands – i.e., ones that you find in the library, not ones that you find online.

--the rest can be from online sources from appropriate scholarly websites (be careful here – to be safe, find your articles through the web portal of the BU library). NO Wikipedia, no .com websites, etc.

--the remaining sources can be works of art.

The purpose of this annotated bibliography is to get you to identify, locate, and assess available resources for your project. The bibliography should follow Chicago or MLA Style, and each entry should be followed by an entry that is both descriptive and evaluative, explaining how this source (book, article, film, interview, artwork, chapter from book) is relevant to your research/project and assessing its critical worth.

Please do NOT use any of our course textbooks as a bibliographic source. Find new sources!

These assignments should be written carefully and proofread for errors before being submitted.

HOW TO WRITE ENTRIES FOR AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Annotating a source means taking notes with the intention of using the source in your essay. Another way of explaining annotation is READING like a WRITER.

How do you go about this?

- a. Find a source in the library or through the Mugar library website.
- b. Read and take notes.
- c. Answer the questions below in the order in which they appear.
- d. Once you finish answering the questions, and converting those answers into sentence form, you will have a summary of approximately 6-10 sentences.
- e. Please provide a Chicago or MLA citation for each source.

Questions to guide your writing of each entry:

Summarize: What is the main, or most significant idea of this source? What is the author trying to do (purpose)? What are the main arguments? What is the point of this book or article? What topics are covered? If someone asked what this article/book is about, what would you say? You should include pertinent quotations that you will later use in your exploratory essay. If you are trying to summarize a work of art (film, painting, story, poem) do a close reading and discuss both form and content. For film, briefly analyze how the aspects of film form visually (and acoustically) express the narrative ideas or themes presented in the sequence. The length of your annotations will determine how detailed your summary is. Who is the author's intended audience?

Assess: After summarizing a source, evaluate it. Is it a useful source? How does it compare with other sources in your bibliography? Is the information reliable? Is it this source biased or objective? What is the goal of this source? What parts of the subject does the source emphasize or de-emphasize? What assumptions does the author make about the topic or audience? Is there any bias or slant in the source? Are there obvious omissions that seem important to the ideas being discussed? Does the evidence clearly support the author's main points?

Reflect: Once you've summarized and assessed a source, you need to ask how it fits into your research. Was this source helpful to you? How does it help you shape your project? How can you use this source in your research project? Has it changed how you think about your topic? Don't forget to include pertinent or useful quotations you can later use in your exploratory essay.

Your annotated bibliography may address some or all of these questions, or even others.

Reminder: Of your six sources, five of them must be scholarly/academic to help you achieve a richer understanding of the history, context and critical importance of what you are studying.

TYPES of SOURCES:

References (online encyclopedias, other websites that serve the function of offering summaries of received knowledge; these sources will most likely serve as BACKGROUND sources)

Books (including single-author studies, edited collections of essays—also called anthologies; even though these sources present factual information about an artist, time period, work of art, etc., they are fundamentally different from references in that they contain an ARGUMENT or THESIS)

Journal Articles (refers to peer reviewed essays that have been published in scholarly periodicals intended for an audience of specialists, for example, Gender Studies; if you are not sure what kind of periodical you have found, google the

title to learn more); unless you have found an article in a print periodical, the reference should include the date that you accessed the article and the URL, for example www.jstor.org/stable/1594092. Please check to see that you have followed MLA or Chicago style notation, including page numbers! Ideally, your journal articles should be between 8-20 pages. Once again, these are ARGUMENT sources.

Newspaper or Magazine Articles (refers to journalism; daily, weekly, or monthly periodicals intended for a general audience, written by reporters rather than scholars) make sure you know where your article comes from and don't be fooled by a title like the Wall Street Journal, which is a daily newspaper and not a scholarly journal); when you read these articles, be on the look out for the reporter's angle: what does he/she say is new or different about this subject?

Other (if you have found credible websites that do more than provide background information or summaries of received information that can also be found through online encyclopedias, please list them here); films, artworks, etc.

3. **Your Creative Work. (Due Wednesday, April 19).** Here are some of the ideas for the form that the **creative work** part of your project might take. We came up with these as we brainstormed over the period of several months. You are not limited to the list below – you may also choose any format imaginable for the project. We look forward to discussing your creative work format ideas in our capstone meetings. Some possibilities:

- A website
- A podcast
- Interviews
- A short film
- Performance Art
- Dance performance
- A musical composition
- Poetry
- Visual arts
- A series of maps
- A sculpture you make with legos or zometools
- An app
- Some lines of computer code
- A debate
- A comic book
- A strategy for activism
- A publicity campaign

All of these formats will lead to new discovery. They will be your way of making something that was invisible before become visible. They are sure to involve a lot of group problem solving and creativity.

4. **Your Exploratory Essay Compilation (Due at Capstone Turn-In Ceremony, April 28).** Your Capstone experience is one of investigation and discovery. You have begun by finding scholarly sources that helped you better understand the particular topic you have chosen to explore, and produced an annotated bibliography that lists those sources. You have been working to make something invisible visible, and, thus, along the way you have drawn on the work of other scholars as well as your own imaginations.

Now you must craft an **exploratory essay**, describing the journey of the semester.¹ Each of you will write a 6-7 page exploratory essay and an introduction to one of your other group members' essays. These essays and introductions, along with one page of epigraphs and a 1-2 page introduction, will be bound together and handed in at the beginning of the Capstone Turn-In.

An exploratory essay is problem or question-driven. The structure is that of an intellectual **quest**. Traditionally the exploratory essay has been viewed as a literary form rather than an academic one, although more recently it has been gaining a reputation as a non-traditional or experimental academic form. It is subjective in outlook and embraces the uncertain, the skeptical.

Is the exploratory essay the same thing as a free-write or “extemporaneous” essay (i.e. an essay you write in one draft and do not revise)? **No!** Even though writing an exploratory essay usually requires a good deal of free-writing in the early stages, it needs to be carefully revised and structured, no less than an expository essay, to communicate ideas effectively to the reader. Whereas a freewrite is “writerly” (i.e. it serves the needs of the writer, first and foremost), an exploratory essay is “readerly” (it has been revised and polished to serve the needs of the reader).

Structuring an exploratory essay is challenging because there are no simple rules as there are for the expository essay. The important thing is that you must begin with a question, a genuine and engaging question, and take it from there.

Eventually you'll need to figure out a structure for the essay that works for the reader. To my mind, the best way to understand the structure of the exploratory essay is to think of it as the story of your quest for the solution to a problem, a story with situations, characters (chiefly you, the writer), events, situations, turning points, even some kind of plot.

¹ The description of the exploratory essay has been adapted from an assignment originally created by Associate Professor of Rhetoric Matt Parfitt.

Think of this assignment as an opportunity to be creative, to take risks. Yes, you definitely can use the word “I.” The tone and voice of an exploratory essay are more subjective than the tone and voice of the expository essay. Above all, your essay should represent your genuine concerns, questions, feelings and ideas — not simply some notion of a “right answer,” or acceptable argument.

Some questions to get you started: Why did you choose this topic? What have you learned about the topic throughout this process? What have you and your group been trying to make visible during the capstone process? What were your major successes or breakthroughs? What were your main disappointments, struggles, or even failures? How did you and your group manage challenges? What have you learned from this process that you might be able to apply to your future academic work, or to your life in general? What did you learn about yourself during this process?

Summary of Exploratory Essay Compilation Components:

- One page of epigraphs
- A 1-2 page introduction (composed by group at END of project, the last thing you do)
- A 6-7 page exploratory essay from each group member
- A one-paragraph introduction to each exploratory essay, written by a group member other than the essay author

5. **Your Capstone Defense (a two hour block during one of the first two weeks of May).** All groups will participate in a final element of the project, traditionally called the capstone defense. Your group will meet with all three professors and have a conversation. We will discuss your exploratory essays. We will ask you questions, follow up on loose ends, and ask you to elaborate both on the things you produced and the things you learned along the way. We will also ask whether, and if so how, you plan to continue the work you started during your capstone.

Part III: Team Y Capstone Calendar

Monday, February 13: Capstone groups due. The sign-up sheets are posted on Professor Mackey’s door – room 403c. If you don’t have a group you prefer to work with, or if your group is smaller than the required 6-7 members, we can help you. We can match people up with groups who need members. Once your group has been fully formed, choose a Communications Officer (CO). Your CO will be the person in charge of communications between your group and the professors. The CO will email assignments to the professors, email to inquire about meetings, etc. All other communications among your group can be handled however your group chooses, but the CO will be the liaison between the group and the faculty.

Wednesday, March 1: Topics due. Have your CO email your topic idea to all three professors.

March 31: Capstone Kickoff. Attendance is mandatory, as it is for meetings

Monday, April 3 and Tuesday April 4: first meetings.

Monday, April 10: Annotated bibliography due. Have your CO email it to all three professors. Bring three hard copies to the second meetings.

Tuesday, April 11 and Wednesday, April 12: second meetings.

Wednesday, April 19: Creative work due. Form of turn-in depends on the format of your creative work.

Friday, April 28: Capstone Turn-In Ceremony.

First two weeks of May: Capstone Defenses.