

Senior Capstone

Writing Studies 4999

Section 001 | Tuesdays, 2:30 - 5 PM

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Office: Nolte 210
Office hours: Wednesdays, noon - 3 PM & by appointment

OVERVIEW

The Senior Capstone course, WRIT 4999, is a culminating experience for all Technical Writing and Communication majors. This course is designed to facilitate individualized student projects that combine previous knowledge, skills, and experiences developed as a TWC major into a senior project. Specifically, students will design and carry out a project of their own design under the guidance of the instructor. To support students through the process of creating a senior capstone, the course is centered around four primary activities

- reflecting on TWC as a major and a field (unit 1);
- identifying a capstone project that challenges you academically and aligns with your professional goals (unit 2);
- completing the necessary research and writing to draft, revise, and polish your capstone project (unit 3);
- compiling a professional portfolio that highlights your senior capstone (unit 3).

COURSE GOALS

In this course, students will be expected to combine skills in problem-solving, research, critical thinking, and communication that have been fostered over the course of the major. In particular, students will be expected to

- use the process of creating a senior capstone project to advance skills in problem identification and problem-solving;
- demonstrate mastery in the field of technical writing and communication;
- conduct primary and secondary research;
- consider and address ethics, diversity, culture, and citizenship throughout the creation and reflection processes.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Readings and resources will be provided on Canvas.

IMPORTANT DATES

January 21

First day of classes

January 27

Last day to drop with a full refund

February 3

Last day to drop with no record

March 9 - 13

Spring Break

April 6

Last day to drop with a "W"

May 4

Last day of classes

May 5-6, 10

Study days

May 7 - 9 and 11- 13

Exam period

May 13

End of spring semester

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students in WRIT 4999 will work on the following UofM [Student Learning Outcomes](#):

1. Master a body of knowledge and a mode of inquiry
 - a. During Unit 1, students will review recent research in the field of technical communication (TC), as well as reflect on their coursework in the TWC major. The first assignment of the course (Analysis and Reflection paper) provides students with the opportunity to document and demonstrate their mastery of the field of TC.
2. Can locate and critically evaluate information
 - a. During Unit 1, students will identify their senior capstone project and situate it within TC scholarship and research. Students will review and analyze research articles and create a literature review for the second assignment (Proposal).
3. Can communicate effectively
 - a. Throughout the course, students will practice effective communication skills during in-class discussions, peer review workshops, and conferences with the instructor. Students will prepare several written artifacts that culminate the genres, skills, and strategies for effective communication garnered during coursework in the TWC major. Students will also practice effective verbal communication during the Expert Interviews assignment.
4. Can identify, define, and solve problems
 - a. The primary assignment of this course, the senior capstone, asks that students identify and solve a problem with TC. Students will spend time in class reviewing literature, surveying the field, and talking to TC experts to help identify and define a problem. Then, students will prepare a capstone project that addresses that problem using the skills and tools of TWC.

CAREER READINGS COMPETENCIES

Students in WRIT 4999 will work on the following UofM Career Readiness Competencies

1. Analytic and Critical Thinking (units 2 and 3)
2. Oral and Written Communication (unit 3)
3. Innovation & Creativity (units 2 & 3)
4. Active Citizenship & Community Engagement (units 2 and 3)
5. Career Management (unit 3)

COURSE COMMUNITY

This class will be committed to being an inclusive and fun learning environment. Therefore, each student is expected to act respectfully, professionally, and with dedication. In an effort to respect and support each member of our class community, please let Dr. K know 1) if you prefer to be called something other than the name assigned to you on the class roster; 2) if you have preferred pronouns; 3) if you notice that anything about the course (e.g. the schedule, environment, technology) is not accessible. Dr. K is committed to making the course a welcome and workable space for everyone.

MAJOR COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

The following descriptions are intended to provide a brief introduction to each graded element of this course. More thorough assignment details will be provided as each assignment approaches.

The primary deliverable for WRIT 4999 is the senior capstone project, which will be submitted in a final portfolio. In addition to the final portfolio, students will create a series of smaller deliverables over the course of the semester to support the capstone project. Full assignment requirements will be provided in class closer to each deadline, however, short descriptions of each major course deliverable follow.

Analysis & Reflection Paper

The first unit of the course guides students through reflection on TWC as a major and a field. At the end of this unit, students will write a short analysis and reflection paper that accomplishes the following: (1) summarizes the student's understanding of TWC as a field and, (2) discusses the skills, knowledge, and experiences the student developed through the TWC major, and (3) analyzes job ads, graduate program descriptions, or equivalent in the student's area of interest to identify skills to develop or showcase in the capstone project.

Proposal

Before beginning the senior capstone project, students will first write a proposal that outlines their projects. Each proposal should discuss the capstone project's goals, scope, and form. The proposal should also articulate what problem/concern/question the capstone project will aim to address and how the capstone project will be guided by rhetorical, ethical, and inclusive principles.

Expert Interviews & Summaries

Over the course of identifying and creating the capstone project, students will be required to conduct two short interviews (15-30 minutes) and write short summaries of these interviews. The first interview should assess your capstone project's feasibility and connection to TWC. The second interview should collect feedback on your capstone project itself. Both of these interviews should be conducted with experts related to your project. After each interview, students will write up a short 1-page memo that discusses what the student learned from the interview.

Capstone Project

The capstone projects will vary based on individual student interests, expertise, and goals. Past capstone projects include writing a 7-10 page research paper, crafting a series of public-facing documents, or developing a website. Every capstone project must be based in primary and secondary research, clearly advance the student's knowledge and skills, and be grounded in the TWC major.

Final Portfolio

The final task of this class will be compiling your final portfolio that will showcase your capstone project alongside a few additional materials that represent you as a technical writing and communication specialist. In addition to your capstone project, you will be asked to include four additional documents in your final portfolio:

1. A cover letter that introduces your portfolio to readers.
2. Professional materials such as a resume, professional website, or a statement of purpose for graduate school application.
3. Secondary writing or project sample such as a paper or project you created for another class or in an internship. This sample should showcase something unique about your TWC skills or knowledge.

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4. Reflection that summarizes what you learned through WRIT 4999 and by creating your capstone project.

Discussion Responses

In addition to the major course deliverables, each student will be expected to participate in weekly discussion responses. Each discussion response will be graded.

Grade Breakdown

Analysis & Reflection Paper - 25 points
Expert Interview & Summary #1 - 15 points
Peer Review #1- 20 points
Proposal - 25 points
Expert Interview & Summary #2 - 15 points
Peer Review #2 - 20 points
Final Portfolio - 50 points
Discussion Responses - 30 points
TOTAL - 200 points

Grade Scale

A 93 - 100% C 73 - 76%
A- 90 - 92% C- 70- 72%
B+ 87 - 89% D+ 67 - 69%
B 83 - 86% D 63 - 66%
B- 80 - 82% D- 60 - 62%
C+ 77 - 79% F < 60%

COURSE POLICIES

Dr. K maintains the right to revise the syllabus or calendar at any time. In the event that a revision is necessary, students will be notified in writing and with ample time to adjust to the changes.

Course Completion

Students should expect to spend 8-10 hours per week on assigned readings, activities, and engaging with the course site. Weeks with writing assignments due will require an additional 2-3 hours. Students should plan to log into our Canvas site several times throughout the week.

Late Work

In the professional world, meeting deadlines is key to being successful, and in this class, meeting assigned deadlines is critical to demonstrating progress and ensuring appropriate time for feedback on assignments. Therefore, you will be expected to submit assignments on or before the due date (as posted in the course calendar). In the event that you find yourself unable to turn in work by the assigned due date, the following late work policy applies:

- For every day past the deadline that an assignment is late, one letter grade will be deducted from the grade. For example, one day late = no higher than a B+ on the assignment.
- Extensions may be granted in extenuating circumstances, but you must email Dr. Kessler at least 24 hours before the assignment deadline to request an extension. When requesting extensions, please provide the reason for the extension and a new proposed deadline for yourself. If an extension is granted, students must meet the new deadline in order to receive full credit.
- When in doubt, contact Dr. Kessler in advance if you are struggling to meet a deadline. The more you communicate with Dr. K, the more accommodating she can be!

Honesty in Academic Writing

Because the University of Minnesota seeks an environment that “promotes academic achievement and integrity” (“[Guiding Principles](#)”), all work in this course must be completed in a manner consistent with the University of Minnesota’s Board of Regents Policy. You are expected to do your own academic work and cite sources as necessary. Failing to do so is scholastic dishonesty and consists of any of these:

- Plagiarizing
- Incorrectly citing sources in your documents
- Using a past student’s essay or an essay that you found online and claiming it as your own
- Cheating on assignments or examinations
- Engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work
- Taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission
- Submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement
- Acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement
- Altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record
- Fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis

If plagiarism occurs and work is not submitted according to the description mentioned at the beginning of this section, the student will fail the assignment (with little chance for a redo) and Dr. Kessler will need to report the student to the Office for Student Conduct and Academic Integrity (OSCAI). If it is determined that a student has cheated, he or she may be given an “F” or an “N” for the course and may face additional sanctions from the University. For more info see the [Student Conduct Code](#) and policy on [Academic Freedom](#).

Accommodation & Accessibility

If you are registered with Disability Services and have a current letter requesting reasonable accommodations, please contact Dr. K as early as possible to discuss how the accommodations will be applied in the course. Students with short-term disability, such as a broken arm, can often work with Dr. K directly to minimize classroom barriers. In situations where additional assistance is needed, students should contact the Disability Resource Center or ask Dr. Kessler for assistance with these resources. For more info visit the [Disability Resource Center website](#) or call 612-626-1333 or see the U-MN official Disability Services policy [here](#).

Email & Etiquette

Dr. Kessler reserves the right to a 24-hour response time for all email. For example, if you email Dr. K the night before an assignment is due, she reserves the right to not respond for 24 hours, even if that happens to be after the deadline. Please use your University of Minnesota email account when corresponding with Dr. Kessler. All emails for this course will be sent to your official University of Minnesota account. Because this is a *professional writing* course, Dr. K expects that students use proper format, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization in your emails and other correspondence for this course. Unprofessional emails may be ignored.

Technology

You will need access to a computer, a word processor (e.g., Microsoft Word or Google Docs), and the internet for this course. If you need help securing any of these technological materials, let Dr. K know; there are plenty of discounted or free resources available to students.

STUDENT RESOURCES

The following resources exist to support you to optimize your University of Minnesota education and experience. Many of them are free (or, rather, resources that you're already paying for through your tuition). I encourage you to reach out to the resources appropriate to your situation.

Library Services

In WRIT4999, you will be required to consult experts' work, much of which will be found through the [UMN library system](#). The Department of Writing Studies has a specialized library, Kate Peterson (katep@umn.edu), who is willing to answer any questions you might have.

Student Writing Support

If you want additional input at any time throughout the writing process, I encourage you to seek out the [Center for Writing](#). This department provides *free* writing instruction for all University of Minnesota students--graduate and undergraduate--at all stages of the writing process. To set up a consultation, call them at 612-626-7579, visit them in Nicholson Hall 15, or check out their [website](#).

Health Services (Physical and Mental Health)

If you aren't feeling well (in the broadest of terms), I encourage you to visit Boynton Health Services since good health is essential for long-term academic, occupational, and personal success. Boynton Health Services provides a range of services, including mental health services, primary care, dental care, eye care, etc.

Mental Health and Stress Management: As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance and may reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. UMN services are available to assist you. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the [Student Mental Health Website](#).

Sexual Harassment

The term sexual harassment means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or academic environment in any University activity or program. Such behavior is not acceptable in the University setting. For additional information, click [here](#).

Equity, Diversity, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action

The University provides equal access to and opportunity in its programs and facilities, without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. For more information, click [here](#).

Course Calendar

Week	Topic & Readings	Activities & Assignment
Unit 1: Reflecting on TWC		
1	Course Overview & Recap of TWC Field - Miller, Humanistic Rationale - Selfe & Selfe, Boundaries, Artifacts & Identities	
2	State of the Field Review Volume 34, <i>JBTC</i>, Issue 1 & 2	
3	State of the Field Review Volume 34, <i>JBTC</i>, Issue 3	
4	TWC Futures Review Volume 34, <i>JBTC</i>, Issue 4	Due: Analysis & Reflection Paper
Unit 2: Identifying a capstone project		
5	Capstone Project Expectations & Requirements - Review sample capstone projects - Read 3 research articles related to your topic area, bring them to class.	
6	Designing a Project & Writing a Proposal Creswell & Creswell, Chapter 4	Conduct Interview 1
7	Peer Review Workshop: Proposal	Conduct Interview 1 Due: Interview Summary & Proposal
Unit 3: Completing the Capstone Project		
8	Conducting Research - Creswell & Creswell, Chapter 2 - Summary vs Synthesis Packet	
9	Workshop 1: Bring 25% of your completed capstone project to class for review	
10	Situating your Project / Professional Materials Bring 5 job ads in your TWC speciality area, bring them to class.	
11	Workshop 2: Bring 50% completed capstone project & a draft of second portfolio sample	
12	Compiling Portfolios & Writing Reflections	

	• Portfolios (University of Minnesota) • What is a portfolio? (Clarke University)	
13	Conduct Interview 2 with completed portfolio draft / Conferences	Due: Interview Summary
14	Peer Review Workshop: Full Portfolios	
15	Final Presentations	Due: Final Portfolios