

THE 498
Senior Capstone Thesis
Fall Semester

Faculty Director:

Secondary Reader:

Student:

Course Objectives:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the content and methodologies of the major sub-disciplines of Catholic theology by examining issues through the lenses of each of the sub-disciplines.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of how these sub-disciplines inform and support one another by approaching a particular issue through the combined lenses of two or more of these sub-disciplines.
3. Demonstrate a theological understanding of the ethical aspects of both individual and social actions by writing essays that examine the ethical side of human actions in a manner that is coherent, analytical, and theologically reflective.
4. Demonstrate an understanding of religious faith.
 - a. Discern the place of faith in one's own life.
 - b. Discern the place of faith in the lives of others.

Tasks to be completed:

1. **(This first step should take place in the spring semester of the student's junior year.)** The student chooses a paper from a previous course as the foundation for the capstone project. The student meets with the head of the theology majors' advising team to choose a capstone director. The student and the director will then discuss this syllabus and the possibilities for a secondary reader. The student will also register for THE 498 for the following fall semester.
2. **Meetings with Capstone Director:** The student must meet with his or her capstone director a minimum of four times throughout the semester. To encourage steady progress, these meetings should constitute an agreed upon research/writing schedule. At least one meeting should take place after the work-in-progress presentation.
3. **Presentation of Work-in-Progress:** This event will take place at the mid-point of the semester. In the presence of the theology faculty and other theology students, the student will give a 10 minute presentation in which they (1) briefly address each section of the essay template, (2) address how their project achieves the course objectives listed above, and (3) provide a 1-2 page handout that includes an annotated bibliography. The student will then receive feedback from those present.

4. **Capstone Essay:** The student will write an essay that (1) fulfills the demands of the template and (2) is no less than 12 pages. A rough draft should be written and submitted early enough to allow the student at least two weeks of revision time before the final due date.

Grading:

1. The meetings with the capstone director will account for **25%** of the student's final grade. The capstone director will assign a grade based on the quality of the student's preparation for each meeting.
2. The presentation of work-in-progress will account for **25%** of the student's final grade. The capstone director will assign a grade based on (1) the quality of the verbal presentation and (2) the quality of the handout.
3. The essay will account for **50%** of the student's final grade. The capstone director will utilize the grading rubric found at the end of this syllabus.

Schedule (TBD with faculty director):

The following schedule must be agreed upon **no later than the first week of the fall semester.**

Meeting #1:

Meeting #2:

Meeting #3:

Work-In-Progress Presentation:

Meeting #4:

Rough Draft Due:

Final Draft Due:

Template for the Essay:

This template is provided to assist students in conceptualizing their capstones, laying the groundwork for their research, and preparing for their presentations.

1. **Title of the Paper**
2. **Statement of the Problem: What?** State the question that your study pursues. This question should articulate the thrust of your paper, which, in turn, will govern your research and your development of its content. If you begin with a general question, you should make it more specific through posing subsidiary questions.
3. **Significance of the Study: Why?** Why did you choose this question? What is the value of your topic—for instance, in relation to contemporary issues or problems being pursued in a specific field? What contribution will your study make? What is the personal/subjective reason for your choice?
4. **Method: How?** How will you pursue the question of your study? What method will you use? A method is a particular strategy for examining and answering a question. In conversation with your advisor, determine how your method will combine the lenses of two sub-disciplines of theology.
5. **Scope and Limitation:** What aspects of the question does your study cover (scope) and what does it not cover (limitation)? In a short paper, it is important to determine the boundaries of your study.
6. **Bibliography and Resources:** Where will you find bibliographical sources for your capstone? Are there other resources available? Having answers to the scope and limitations of your capstone will help you in looking for useful materials.
7. **Organization:** How will you organize your capstone paper? In conversation with your capstone director, you will need to develop an outline that clearly shows the structure of your paper's argument, and that includes a thesis which articulates your paper's response to the question you are asking. Your thesis should take into account the scope and limitations of your paper; and the presentation of its structure should articulate the line of argumentation that you will use, and how each part of your argument relates to the thesis and moves the paper toward its conclusion. Your outline should also include a working bibliography.

Grading Rubric

Five Point Scale: 1=weakest, 5=strongest

Introduction

1. No introductory paragraph
2. Not aligned with the ideas developed in the essay
3. Very general
4. Related to the focus of the essay and with some interest
5. Compelling, preparing the reader well for the essay

Selecting/Evaluating, and Integrating Sources

1. No evidence of sources
2. Limited evidence, little or no relevance
3. Some relevant evidence, largely unexplained
4. Good selection and adequate use of sources, little or no integration
5. Excellent and fully integrated selection of evidence from strong sources

Thesis/Controlling Idea (appearing within introduction)

1. No discernable thesis or controlling idea
2. Imprecise
3. Acceptable but not strong
4. Well-focused
5. Sharp and worthy of development

Conclusion

1. No discernable conclusion
2. Moving in an irrelevant direction
3. Adequate but overly broad or fluffy
4. Good, relevant, helpful
5. Integrating, engaging, and impactful

Organization/Structure/Coherence

1. *No discernable structure*: unfocused body paragraphs and missing transitions

2. *Disorganized*: body paragraphs with limited focus, not well connected to each other and the introduction/thesis
3. *Discernable but with problems*: body paragraphs focused but at times lacking transitions and clear flow from the introduction/thesis
4. *Mostly cohesive*: body paragraphs focused, flowing from introduction/thesis but with minor organizational problems within paragraphs; has some transitions
5. *Cohesive*: clear and focused body paragraphs; strong transitions; fully carries out thrust of the introduction/thesis

Grammar/Mechanics/Citation/Lower-order Concerns

1. *Overwhelming major errors*: ungrammatical sentences, little or no evidence of punctuation; no use of Chicago manual of style for footnotes and bibliography
2. *Repeated major errors*: much unclear sentence structure, many incorrect mechanical errors; little evidence of proper use of Chicago manual of style for footnotes and bibliography
3. *Distracting sentence-level problems*; many errors in use of Chicago manual of style for footnotes and bibliography
4. *Mostly error free on the sentence level*; errors not distracting or confusing; some errors in use of Chicago manual of style for footnotes and bibliography
5. *Few sentence-level errors*; correct use of Chicago manual of style for footnotes and bibliography