

SENIOR CAPSTONE FOR LITERATURE

Capstone Coordinator for Literature: Prof. Juan de Castro

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To complete the Senior Capstone requirement, Literature students have two options. They can take the Senior Seminar or complete a Senior Thesis.

Choose One Option:

A. Senior Seminar—Spring 2015 (4 credits)

The senior seminar is a 4000-level class in which students research and write a paper, consisting of approximately 30 pages, in a setting that encourages discussion and sharing of ideas. The class is divided into three phases: 1) communal work in classes 2) individual work on the final project with weekly advice from the professor 3) communal sharing of research and class discussion of the course materials towards the end. The description of the spring 2015 senior seminar, to be taught by Juan De Castro, follows below:

Senior Seminar: The Modern Novel in the Margins

In the first part of this advanced course, we read three important modern short novels—*Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad, *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka, and *The Storyteller* by Mario Vargas Llosa—as well as exemplary critical readings of these key works. Despite being two of the most admired authors in the Western canon and a recent Nobel Prize winner, these are writers who come from the margins of Europe and its culture: Poland, Bohemia, and Peru. Moreover, these particular works represent a modern expansion of literary representation into—from the perspective of the European tradition—psychological, geographical, and cultural margins.

In addition to their intrinsic worth, the secondary readings have been chosen to provide examples of alternative approaches to the interpretation of literary texts. Thus, the criticism selected can be loosely grouped as representing belletristic, socially inflected, and theoretical readings of the novels studied in class.

The purpose of reading these primary and secondary works is to provide you with examples that will help you design and complete a 30 page senior work. By the end of the first part of the course, you should have, in consultation with the instructor, selected a topic for your senior work.

The second part of the course will consist of direct work and discussion on your senior work both in class and in personal consultation with the instructor. After each response from the instructor, students

return to work and rework their projects until they submit the polished final version on the last day of class.

Note: Senior Seminar is not offered in the fall semester. Unless you register for the Senior Seminar in Literature in the spring semester (even if you expect to graduate the following fall), you will be required to do a Senior Thesis.

B. Senior Thesis (4 credits)

Preparation for independent senior work should start in the second semester of the junior year. These are the required steps:

Step 1:

- a. Choose a topic (ideally, within an area of literary study with which you already have some familiarity). The key to success is to find a topic that is appropriate for the time available, and for which both library resources and faculty advising are available. Therefore do research in the library and make a careful list of resources you can use before finalizing your choice.
- b. Identify possible advisors who are knowledgeable in the area you wish to pursue. Advisors are full-time faculty members in the concentration. Find someone who is willing to work with you. You should do this early. You **MUST** consult with your chosen advisor(s) when developing your senior work project. Failure to do so **WILL** result in your proposal being rejected. In this case, you will have to take the senior seminar. (Prof. de Castro will make the final decision as to your advisor.)

Step 2:

Start developing your proposal in the summer (if you plan to submit it in the fall and do the Senior Work in the spring), or during the Winter Break (if you plan to submit in the spring and complete it the following fall). Proposals should be 6-8 pages long (double-spaced) and contain the following:

- a. Working title of proposed research paper.
- b. Names of proposed advisors in order of preference.
- c. A description of the key idea being explored.
- d. A description of the methods of investigation to be employed.
- e. An argument about the relevance of the project to the field of Literature.
- f. A section describing the likely conclusions you hope to draw.
- g. Account of work already accomplished, such as initial research completed.
- h. An annotated Bibliography, in MLA format, listing and briefly describing relevant sources you will consult (both primary and secondary).

Think of the proposal as a first draft of an Introduction to your project.

Step 3:

Proposals must be submitted 1) in hard copy and by email to Juan De Castro (decastrj@newschool.edu – 80 Fifth Ave, Rm 525, 212-229-5100 x 2257) Capstone Coordinator for Literature, and 2) electronically to LangLiteraryStudies@newschool.edu, no later than six weeks after the start of the semester prior to the intended project: i.e., Project proposals are due October 14 for spring projects and March 8 for fall projects.

In other words, your proposal is due the semester BEFORE you write your thesis project. You may be asked to revise the proposal, in which case all final proposal revisions are due no later than twenty days after the initial deadline. (Students whose proposals are not accepted will have the option to complete the Senior Seminar as their Capstone.) If you have any questions about your project, contact Prof. De Castro.

Step 4:

Read widely in your chosen area, make careful notes towards the project, come up with a chapter/argument structure, and then work on the substance of the project, allowing sufficient time to do drafts for your advisor's comments, before making your final revisions.

Your advisor will help you keep the project to the right scope and length, design a structure that is most suitable, discover resources you may not find on your own, and act as editor, guide, and deadline setter.

If you choose to do a Senior Thesis, you are obligated to meet regularly with your advisor. Missing meetings will be seen in exactly the same way as missing class. It can mean failure. A written thesis should be 40-60 pages in length, including scholarly notes and a full bibliography, following MLA style.

ALL COMPLETED THESES/PROJECTS MUST BE SUBMITTED in hard copy and by email to your advisor two weeks before the end of the semester: i.e., on or before DEC.7th for fall projects, and May 3rd for spring projects. A second copy in paper and electronic form must be submitted at the same time to the Capstone Coordinator for Literature, Prof. Juan De Castro (decastrj@newschool.edu – 80 Fifth Ave, Rm 525, 212-229-5100 x 2257). His mailbox is in the fifth floor, 80 Fifth Ave. The Senior Thesis will be evaluated and graded by your advisor and by a second Literature professor.