

SENIOR CAPSTONE FOR LITERATURE

Capstone Coordinator for Literature: Prof. Juan de Castro - DecastrJ@newschool.edu

Literature students have the option of undertaking one of the following to complete the Senior Capstone requirement: Senior Seminar or Senior Thesis.

Choose One Option -

Students will choose the Senior Seminar if they prefer a combination of class work and independent study, and the Senior Thesis if they prefer to work with one faculty advisor on a particular research topic.

A. Senior Seminar (4 credits)

There is no Senior Seminar offered in the Fall semester. Unless students register for the Senior Seminar in Literature in the Spring semester (even if they expect to graduate the following Fall), they will be required to do the Independent Senior Work Project in Literature.

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 seminar offered in Spring 2010 will be taught by Inessa Medzhibovskaya:

Senior Seminar: Bildungsroman

This advanced course allows students to acquire mastery of the genre vital to modern literature and its very identity--- Bildungsroman (or novel of education). The opening weeks are reserved for close readings and discussion of several texts fundamental to the tradition of the genre and illuminating major directions in which it developed (e.g. Goethe, Tolstoy, Joyce, Scott Fitzgerald, Nabokov, Butor). Students simultaneously learn how to investigate the nature and notion of Bildung and its fraught, multifaceted impact on the literary and intellectual evolution of modern writing. In the next several weeks, students familiarize themselves with key texts in critical theory and literary criticism that explain and problematize the genre. Using this preparation as a necessary springboard, students take another week to identify the novel(s) and critical angles with which to work on their final projects, which may be in one or more significant incarnations of the genre (diachronic or synchronic, national or transnational, etc.). They submit extensive plans and bibliographies for approval, and then proceed to produce early drafts. After they receive the instructor's feedback, they return to their projects and submit the polished final version.

B. Senior Thesis (4 credits)

Preparation for independent senior work should start in the second semester of your junior year.

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 which 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. Begin to identify possible advisors who are knowledgeable in the area you wish to pursue. Advisors are full-time faculty members in the concentration, with very few exceptions.

Find out who is willing to work with you (bearing in mind that your first choice may not be available, and so you would be wise to work on the advisor question early and to have more than one option to suggest).

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 in the Winter Break (if you plan to submit in the Spring and do complete in the Fall. Proposals should be 6-8 pages long (double-spaced) and contain the following:

- a. Working title of proposed research paper/creative project.
- b. Name of advisor (or the names of potential advisors, if you have not secured one)
- 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 that are desired from this work.
- g. Account of work already accomplished, such as initial research completed.
- h. An annotated Bibliography, in MLA format, listing and briefly describing relevant sources (both primary and secondary) to be consulted.

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

Step 3:

Proposals must be submitted in duplicate to Leah Weich, senior work advisor, who will pass them on to Juan de Castro, Capstone Coordinator for Literature, by the official date of **October 10** for spring projects and **March 10** for fall projects. In other words, your proposal is due the semester BEFORE you write your thesis project. Project must sign off on the proposal before it can be submitted. 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.

Step 4:

Read widely in your chosen area, make careful notes towards the project, come up with a chapter/argument structure, and then settle down to working on the substance of the project, giving enough time to do drafts and submit them to your advisor for comment, before making your final revisions.

Your advisor will make sure you keep the project to the right scope and length, design a structure which is most suitable, discover resources you may not find on your own, and generally 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, with scholarly notes and a full bibliography, following MLA style.

ALL COMPLETED THESES/PROJECTS MUST BE SUBMITTED IN DUPLICATE TO LEAH WEICH ON OR BEFORE DEC. 9th FOR FALL AND MAY 4th FOR SPRING. The Senior Thesis will be evaluated and graded by your advisor and by a second Literature professor.