

Senior Capstone guidelines for students focusing on Religious Studies (BA, Liberal Arts)

Students have the option of undertaking either an Independent Senior Written Thesis or Collaborative Senior Project to complete the Senior Experience Requirement for the major in Liberal Arts. Procedures for independent senior projects are described below.

Choose One Option

A. Independent Senior Written Thesis

Consideration of the independent senior work should start in the second semester of your junior year and students must meet with the chair prior to registration for first semester senior year classes.

Step 1: Completely self-directed, independent senior projects are individual research or creative projects developed in close consultation with a faculty advisor, allowing students to explore in-depth areas not covered in the senior seminar. Choose a topic you wish to work on and identify an advisor who is both knowledgeable in the area you wish to pursue willing to work with you. A project proposal must be submitted to the program chair for approval, as described above. Projects should be limited in scope in order to allow completion in one semester. (Students wishing to undertake a more substantial project involving additional time should consult closely with both their advisor and the program chair to ensure suitability.)

Step 2: Start developing on your proposal in the summer. Proposals should be 6-8 pages long (doublespaced) and contain the following:

- a) Working title of proposed research paper/creative project.
- b) Name of advisor.
- c) 3-4 page description of the key idea being explored.
- d) 1 page on work already accomplished, such as initial research completed.
- e) 1 page of Bibliography or relevant sources to be consulted.
- f) 1 page on likely results or conclusions that are desired from this work.

B. Collaborative Senior Project

Collaborative senior projects allow students to work together on a more substantial project. Collaborative projects may be developed by two or more students. The procedures for approval of collaborative projects are the same as for senior projects: a project proposal must be submitted to the program chair for approval by the stated deadlines. Provision should be made for assessment of individual work within the collaboration. It should be noted that collaborative projects are not expected to be common; a compelling case must be made for collaboration. Clear delineation of responsibilities within the project is essential to a successful proposal.

Step 1: Same as above

Step 2: The group will work closely with an advisor to submit a 15-page proposal in which the overall project will be described in 3-4 pages. Moreover, each member will individually describe the particular role/function s/he will assume in the project, the research s/he will conduct and the technical expertise s/he will bring to the project. Ideally, work on the proposal should start in the summer for the October 31 deadline and in the winter recess for the March 15 deadline.

Completed proposals should contain:

- a) Working title of proposed research paper/creative project.
- b) Name of advisor.

- c) 2-page description of the key idea being explored.
- d) 2-page description of the methods of investigation to be employed.
- e) 1 page on the relevance of the project to the field of Religious Studies or one of its sub-fields).
- f) 1 page on work already accomplished, such as initial research completed.
- g) 1 page of Bibliography or relevant sources to be consulted.
- h) 1 page on likely results or conclusions that are desired from this work.

Approval for proposals will be communicated to students by November 15 in the fall and April 1 in the spring. Students must then work closely with their advisors to develop and write or produce their projects.

Overall Criteria: Written Projects

All Senior Projects, individually or collaboratively done, must be based in research. Creative elements are possible, but these must be accompanied by research papers that are relevant and substantial. The goal of research projects is to engage with an existing literature in the field of religious studies (or, in any discipline in relation to a topic related to religion), in relation to a specific *question or set of questions*. Generally, projects must therefore be comprised of the following general parts:

1. clear articulation of question(s), placed in context,
2. a review and analysis of relevant literature in the field, with clear explication of relevance to the question(s) at hand, and
3. exploration of question(s) with supporting evidence

Requirements

A *minimum* of 15 books and scholarly articles must be referenced in the work; demonstrated familiarity with the relevant literature is required. For independent projects, students should expect to complete a research project of 50 to 80 pages or equivalent creative work/research combination; substantially more is required of collaborative projects.

Grading

Active and conscientious participation in the project process is essential to a successful senior project. This includes (1) fulfilling the requirements outlined in this document, (2) meeting with the project advisor consistently, (3) providing material for review to the advisor in a timely manner (giving sufficient time for feedback to be provided), and (4) engaging with advisor feedback in a constructive manner. In general, senior projects are graded in accordance with the degree of success of the final product. Though to a lesser degree than in a course, the process that led to the final product and the student's participation therein are taken into account as w.

FINAL APPROVAL BY THE CHAIR OF THE PROJECT MUST BE REPORTED TO THE SENIOR CLASS ADVISOR BY THE FIRST DAY OF ADVANCE REGISTRATION FOR THE FOLLOWING SEMESTER (GENERALLY MID NOVEMBER FOR SPRING AND EARLY APRIL FOR FALL).

See Senior Work Advisor form on next page.

**SENIOR WORK
ADVISOR FORM**

To be completed by students undertaking individual or collaborative senior projects

STUDENT'S LAST NAME: _____ FIRST NAME: _____
STUDENT I.D. #: _____

STUDENT'S LAST NAME: _____ FIRST NAME: _____
STUDENT I.D. #: _____

STUDENT'S LAST NAME: _____ FIRST NAME: _____
STUDENT I.D. #: _____

TITLE/SUBJECT OF PROJECT: _____

To be completed by the Senior Work advisor:

SENIOR WORK ADVISOR'S NAME:

NEW SCHOOL UNIVERSITY AFFILIATION? ☐ YES, DIVISION: _____
☐ NO

FULL-TIME NEW SCHOOL FACULTY MEMBER? * ☐ YES ☐ NO

**If you are NOT a New School faculty member, has your advisee contacted the Associate Dean for approval?*

PHONE: (one of these telephone numbers should be a number where a message can be left)
WORK: _____ HOME: _____

E-MAIL: _____

ADDRESS: _____

Please read and check statement below then sign it.

____ I have read and discussed the Senior Work Proposal with the above-named student, and approve it to be forwarded to the Chair or designee for final approval. If revisions are deemed necessary I agree to further develop the proposal with the student.

Signature: _____