CAPSTONE FOR WRITING: The Senior Seminar

For students graduating Fall 2020, your Statement of Purpose is due:

Friday, April 17, 2020

OVERVIEW:

The Capstone in Writing is a four-credit intensive seminar taught by Lang faculty, divided by genre, through which you will produce a Capstone project.

The seminar and the project provide an opportunity for all graduating Seniors to reflect on their Writing studies at Lang, polish a substantial body of creative work, and articulate their vision for this work in a critical introduction.

All graduating Seniors will take the Senior Seminar in their primary genre: Fiction, Nonfiction, or Poetry.

The instructor of your Capstone seminar may prepare a syllabus beforehand, or the syllabus may be worked out collectively based on students’ unique projects. This will always include workshopping and peer editing, but, depending on instructor, it may also focus attention on perceived deficits, such as literary history or grammar; “real-life” questions, such as the writing process or writing after college (jobs, cover letters, applications, grad school, etc.); generative exercises; or some combination of the above.

In completing a portfolio, you will substantively revise original work in your primary genre culled from previous writing courses, which may, in turn, entail the creation of a small amount of new material. The Capstone seminar, however, is not the forum for beginning a novel, or conceiving or writing three new stories, or a new long poem, or a new research-based project. No matter the genre, each seminar will examine issues of craft, form, content, process, and critical context.

Your final Capstone manuscript should represent polished work that exemplifies the skill and craft of an accomplished writer, with (approximate) lengths of 20-30 pp. for poetry, 30-40 pp. for fiction, and 30-40 pp. for nonfiction. For all genres, the critical essay or artist’s statement of 10 pages is required.

The completed Capstone will be due to your instructor typically on the last day of your Capstone class, or earlier as decided by them, which will be made clear to you at the beginning of the semester. An electronic copy will also be submitted to the Senior Secretary of Literary Studies. Your instructor will go over these details with you in the
Note: Some capstones, as in the case of Fall semester graduations, are done as independent studies with a faculty member in your genre, with whom you work closely to fulfill the regular capstone requirements and complete the capstone project, though these situations are rare. These Capstone independent studies follow the same Lang procedures for approval and registration as regular independent studies. All requirements for the proposal and project due date remain the same.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

All students will write a Statement of Purpose (between 750 and 1,000 words, 3-4 pages, double-spaced), in the semester before they take the Capstone course, outlining the work they hope to do in their Capstone.

This gives your Capstone instructor the opportunity to learn about your project beforehand, customize the class according to the group, and incorporate your plans into the course design.

For Statements of Purpose in all genres—Fiction, Nonfiction, and Poetry—please be sure to include the following:

1) A detailed summary of the work you intend to include in your final portfolio, including a run-down of the existing work you are bringing in from past courses, and any new work (ex: a few more poems, or finishing a short story, etc) you plan to complete in the course. This can take a “past, present, future,” approach, where you discuss what’s done, what’s in progress now, and what needs to be completed.

2) A revision plan that describes what kind of editing or polishing you have in mind for your project, as specifically as possible, with reference to features of your genre. For example a Nonfiction statement might discuss research methods or narrative technique, while a Poetry statement might discuss established schools of poetics or forms used in the manuscript.

3) Your ideas about what you need before you leave Lang with a degree in writing

4) A discussion of the major literary influences on your writing thus far,, including influential authors, collections, essays, or ideas. Please be as specific as possible at this stage of your work.

Your Statement of Purpose should be attached to an email and sent to the Senior Secretary of Literary Studies, Stephanie Belk at sbelk@newschool.edu by the due date.
The filename of your document should be your last name, first name, and primary genre, in that order. (E.g. “Equiano, Olaudah-Nonfiction.docx,” if your name is Olaudah Equiano and Nonfiction is your genre.)

Registering/Follow-Up: You will register for your Senior Seminar/Capstone in the appropriate genre before you have sent the Statement of Purpose. You don’t need any special permission or approval to register. The names Capstone and Senior Seminar are equivalent.

Direct any further questions you might have to the Capstone Coordinator: Prof. Wendy Xu xuw@newschool.edu